February 25, 1974

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Barbara Butler Ruf, entitled "John Davis: Poet, Novelist, and Traveler." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Richard Beale Davis
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

George Mills Harper

John G. Hansen

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Chancellor for
Graduate Studies and Research

JOHN DAVIS: POET, NOVELIST, AND TRAVELER

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Barbara Butler Ruf

March 1974

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With pleasure I acknowledge my gratitude to the members of my committee: to Professor Richard Beale Davis, who first aroused my interest in this study, and to Professor Ralph W. Haskins, who encouraged me to pursue it. Their enthusiasm in the subject and their confidence in me shall always be deeply appreciated. The manuscript has greatly benefited from their reading of it, and also from the judicious criticism of Professors F. D. Miller and J. A. Hansen, who have made many valuable suggestions.

I am also indebted to a host of kindly and concerned librarians and archivists, who have afforded me every courtesy and aided materially in culling facts pertinent to my research. Grateful thanks are particularly due to Ms. Pamela Stewart, diocesan archivist in Salisbury, and to Mr. George Richardson, town clerk of New Sarum, both of Wiltshire; to Mr. N. Long-Brown, registrar at the Charterhouse, and to Mr. A. J. Farrington, archivist of the India Office Records, Foreign Commonwealth Office; to Ms. M. E. Varco, deputy county archivist at the Hampshire record office in Winchester; to Dr. Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., librarian at the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia; and to the reference department staff at the University of Tennessee library, Knoxville.

My greatest debt is owed to my husband, Rolland, and our three sons, Rolland Jr., Warren, and Stephen, who have cheerfully accepted John Davis as a member of our family. Without their tolerant understanding, patient cooperation, and abiding faith in the outcome, this work would never have been completed.

B. B. R.

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an examination of the life and works of John Davis (1774-1854), English traveler and writer who spent a number of years in the United States during the early nineteenth century. Intellectually an Augustan and emotionally a Romantic, in the long course of his literary career he reflected in his writing multiple vogues, from the vigorous picaresque tradition with its comedy and burlesque, to the sentimental sensibility fashion of the late eighteenth century, through the Victorian temper of the mid-nineteenth century. Imitative in technique, he was often innovative in concept. He attempted one of the first novels of American manners; one of the first historical novels on American themes; one of the first nautical novels; and one of the first, and few, novels of England's merchant service. His Travels is in a class by itself--not an ordinary travel book of the prosaic journal type, but a study of a young man seeking his fortune in a new country. The American Mariners, the most innovative of all his works and the most imaginatively conceived, stands as the definitive American epic for its time.

The first chapter presents a brief biography reviewing his early life in England and his years of naval service in the East India Company and in the Royal Navy; his years in the United States in which he traveled up and down the Atlantic seaboard, tutoring for his livelihood, publishing his works, and making friends with people, illustrious and common; and his latter years as a bookseller in England and as a resident of the Charterhouse. Within the context of this chapter, an attempt has

been made to discuss briefly some of Davis's lesser works--the translations, the Life of Chatterton, and a few of the fugitive periodical pieces.

Chapter two considers his first three novels, all of which were published in the United States: The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth, Farmer of New-Jersey, and The Wanderings of William. Written in the late eighteenth century, they reflect Davis's experimentation in popular fictional modes of that century. Chapter three is devoted to a study of the Travels, a record of his adventures during a four-year residence in the United States from 1798-1802, the book for which he is best known, often quoted for its candid observations of life in the young republic. Chapter four contains an examination of Davis's poetry, which he began composing in early youth and was still writing in book length at age sixty-two, having delved into almost every mode from the short lyric to the extended epic. His poetry as well as his fiction demonstrates the changing fashions of his transitional age.

Chapter five concerns his handling of the Indian tales which had captivated his attention soon after his arrival in America. His greatest contribution after the Travels, if not equal to it, is the popularization of the Smith-Pocahontas legend in such books as Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas and The First Settlers of Virginia. He also wrote Walter Kennedy, a tale of life among the Indians in the wilderness frontier of the upper Mississippi Valley. The final chapter considers another subject for which Davis had particular fondness, the sea. He incorporated into such works as The Post-Captain and Jack Ariel his own youthful experiences. In any study of the English sea novel and of nineteenth century popular best sellers, a consideration should be made

of John Davis's contributions. However mediocre his works might seem now, they added vitality to the literature of the period in which they appeared--in America the seeding time for the later blossoming of the nineteenth century.

If Davis is not a major figure in American literature, he is an important one historically. Much of his writing was composed and published in America; even more of it was about America. While some native writers were apostrophizing nightingales and larks, Davis was communing with mockingbirds and whippoorwills. While native poets searching for epic materials were looking backwards at Columbus and events far removed from the concerns of the burgeoning republic, Davis, looking ahead in vision, was writing an epic celebrating the modern American spirit. When many national writers were decrying a lack of historical past, Davis was re-creating the saga of Jamestown; when many Americans were either sentimentalizing the "noble savage" or disparaging the animal savage, Davis, as a follower of Jefferson and forerunner of Cooper, was portraying the Indian as mortal man, both good and bad.

He was among the earliest imaginative writers to delineate in fictional characters the regional differences among Americans, to transpose to paper the diverse dialects, to catch in characterization both the small distinctions later accepted as sectional stereotypes, and the large elemental qualities of the American character--hospitality, generosity, friendliness, and the idealism and buoyancy of spirit derived from a democratic climate.

Intellectual and moral concerns were not primary to his work. He was a writer of the individual heart, most effective when re-creating a mood, an emotion, a reaction. His best writings are those in which he

spoke with his own voice--the essays, the Travels, Jack Ariel, and brief passages in various other works. None of his fictional characters could match the lively appeal of his own candid personality.

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INTRODUCTION

John Davis, a writer never quite admitted to the accepted canon, has been unknown to the anthologist and ignored by most literary historians. He has been ignored, in part, because he is a hybrid--not an American writer for he was born in England and lived most of his life there; not an English writer for much of his work was composed in America about American themes. His position in the long parade of belletrists is admittedly a minor one, quite obscure; and yet his name keeps cropping up here and there, often no more than in a brief reference of two or three lines indicating that he had been in a certain place at a certain time, like George Washington or Kilroy, and had mentioned it in his Travels. From such illustrious obscurity one would never suspect that he had turned out a prodigious amount of writing--over two-score books in one ten-year period alone--and that for certain years, though primarily a prose writer, he was the most frequently printed poet in such literary journals as Joseph Dennie's Port Folio, Charles Brockden Brown's American Review, and the British-published European Magazine.

He has been called many things in the epithets which usually accompany those brief references--a literary vagabond, a Grub Street hack writer, a liar, a defamer of the United States, an English snob, an opportunist, an egotist, a plagiarist; all of which are accurate--up to a point. But these categorizations offer a very incomplete picture of the man. Like photographic negatives, which reverse the positive print and blur the definitive details, they fail to show all the nuances of the subject portrayed.

Most people have been forced to accept the epithets without further investigation since additional information was not readily available. The most complete study to date has been Thelma Louise Kellogg's excellently researched "The Life and Works of John Davis."[1] Two other studies, much briefer, complement Davis's own account of his American sojourn: Robert Adger Law's "The Bard of Coosawhatchie"[2] supplies information about Davis's brief stay in South Carolina in 1799; more recently, George Raddin has devoted a chapter to Davis's assocation with Hocquet Caritat, the New York bookseller and publisher.[3] My debt to these scholars is extensive. Fifty years have elapsed, however, since Davis's life and works have been examined in any detail. An up-dated study seems in order, partly because new particulars can now be added to the biography and several new titles to the bibliography. Moreover, during the intervening years numerous examinations of American letters in the early Federal period have provided an understanding of the literary milieu not possible earlier. This should aid in evaluating the intrinsic value of Davis's work in the context of its time and its significance in literary history.

The first chapter presents a brief biography. The purpose has not been to recapitulate in detail material already covered by earlier writers, but to provide a concise review of the main facts, pausing in

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[1] University of Maine Studies, 2nd Ser. 1 (1924), [3]-125. This study was presented as a Master of Arts thesis.

[2] Texas Review, 7 No. 2 (1922), [133]-156.

[3] George Gates Raddin, Hocquet Caritat and the Early New York Literary Scene (Dover, N.J.: Dover Advance Press, 1953), pp. 61-75. This was written originally as a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University.

some areas for amplification and in some areas for interpretation, although a psychological evaluation has certainly not been the main object of the study. Within the context of this chapter, an attempt has been made to discuss briefly some of Davis's lesser works--the translations, the Life of Chatterton, and a few of the fugitive periodical pieces.

Chapter two considers his first three novels, all of which were published in the United States. Written in the late eighteenth century, they reflect Davis's experimentation in popular fictional modes of that century. Chapter three is devoted to a study of the Travels, a record of his adventures during a four-year residence in the United States from 1798 to 1802, the book for which he is best known, often quoted for its candid observations of life in the young republic, and a book misunderstood in purpose by the majority of his contemporary critics. Even today it is often bracketed completely within the travel genre, when in reality Davis's object in writing it, which he himself realized only years later, was in the mode of another genre entirely. Chapter four contains an examination of Davis's poetry, which he began composing in early youth and was still writing in book length at age sixty-two, having delved into almost every type from the short lyric to the extended epic and having utilized the poetics of the Augustans and tried out the newer forms of the Romantics. His poetry as well as his fiction demonstrates the changing fashions of his transitional age.

Chapter five concerns his handling of the Indian tales which had captivated his attention soon after his arrival in the United States. His greatest contribution after the Travels, if not equal to it, is the

popularization of the Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas legend. He used it over and over again, never seeming to tire of it. The final chapter considers another subject for which Davis had a particular fondness, the sea. From the time he first shipped on an East Indiaman at age fourteen, the sailing ship and the life of a sailor fascinated him. The first book which he wrote was the story of his own experience at sea, an experience which, like the Indian stories, he incorporated also into later works. His last book, published when he was seventy-three, chronicles his early voyages, bringing his life almost full circle. In any study of the English sea novel and of nineteenth century popular best sellers, a consideration should be made of John Davis's contributions. However mediocre his works might seem now, they added vitality to the literature of the period in which they appeared--in America the seeding time for the later blossoming of the nineteenth century. Even his wars, genuine and feigned, with the critics, fought close combat in the newspapers, served to stimulate latent interest in literary affairs in pages otherwise devoid of all but commercial news.

Just as the man's literary work cannot be easily written off, so neither can his personality. He was contradictory and complex. Often the object of scorn--for he made himself obnoxious in many ways, particularly through his egotism and pride--he could also be gracious, amusing, and affectionate. Easily attracting the admiration of important, well-bred, and educated people, he had an ability to make friends with the high and the low; yet he could be abominably patronizing. He stoutly maintained the superiority of the English government and implied the superiority of the English people, yet wrote most enthusiastically about

freedom in America, the American way of life, and the effect of that life upon its citizens. Almost in spite of himself and in spite of his frequent rages at American critics, he had a love affair with the United States that was life-long. At a time when America had few enough friends abroad, his defense of the American character should earn him American gratitude.

He was intellectually an Augustan by training and emotionally a Romantic by nature. He loved the urban life of the city, but longed for the quiet and peace of the country, like a true follower of Rousseau and Goldsmith. He extolled the virtues of the noble savage, yet spent much of his life promoting the importance of a classical education. He wrote rollicking, risqué sea tales at the same time that he was translating with indefatigable industry the authors of Greece and Rome, writing countless imitations of Ovid, Horace, and Virgil. His chief vocation for many years was teaching. He had a pedagogical flair that seemed to require a didactic justification for much of what he did; yet he hated the schoolroom, despised the boredom of training his pupils, and dreamed of freedom from the rule and slate. He was scrupulously honest about certain subjects and lied blatantly about others, particularly those concerned with his literary efforts. His frequently reiterated claim to have been a self-educated sailor has often deceived those who were not aware that he had received a superior early education and that he had mingled in circles of society considerably higher than those between decks.

He could castigate other people's writings brutally, attacking also their characters and their persons with no mercy at all, yet could not endure the least bit of criticism of his own work. And in that lies

perhaps the secret of Davis's tragedy, for as versatile as he was in different genres, he never seemed to find his place or to know where his strong points lay; and he was too proud and too vain, from some wound suffered early in childhood and remaining raw throughout most of his life, to accept the well-meant counsel of others. In consequence, a study of his life is disheartening. He worked hard, wanted much to succeed, possessed many talents, and died in what was the equivalent of a poorhouse, a charity home for genteel but decayed merchants, his most artistic works forgotten or ignored, his most popular works credited to other authors. One is tempted to say if only he had not done this or had done that, but he didn't. And now all one can do is to examine, attempt to explain, and try to appreciate where it is appropriate to do so.

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE AND LESSER WORKS

A. Early Life in England, 1774-1798

"John Davis, of Salisbury," as he is often designated to distinguish him from numerous other men of the same name, was born August 6, 1774. The epithet is ironic, for he cherished no love towards his native region and, despite an affinity for autobiography, has given little clue to his family background and early life.

His parents, James Davis and Ann Gast Davis, were members of Sarum St. Edmund, the oldest and largest of the three parishes of Salisbury. Their marriage license bond, dated January 13, 1766, records that Ann was twenty-three and that James, a woolen-draper, was twenty-four. They were married on February 1.

The name Davis dates back in Wiltshire to before 1544, when members of the Davye family held part of the lands in fee. Throughout the years several members of the family, often named John, were prominent as agricultural leaders, clergymen, and administrative officers of the town. A John Davis who may have been his grandfather served as subwarden (manager) during the years 1730-1766 for the Hospital of the Holy Trinity, which was closely connected with the corporation of Salisbury.

That the family had enjoyed an atmosphere of literary culture is suggested by several details. John refers to the family library as "a roomful of books"; the titles which he cites are important scholarly works of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. His grandfather,

also a John Davis, was a poet of sorts, as witnessed by the philosophical disquisition "In Uxoris Orbitum," purported to have been written "some forty to fifty years ago" upon the death of his wife and submitted by John to The European Magazine in 1797. John's older brother James showed literary aspiration too by sending at least one piece, and possibly more, to The European Magazine during his service as a military officer with the East India Company.

The family also seems to have enjoyed better than average financial resources. As a woolen-draper, James was associated with the dominant industry of the region. Throughout the centuries the production of a fine type of wool cloth had enabled Wiltshire to escape most of the periodic economic depressions, but during the 1760's and 1770's, largely because of problems with the colonial trade, even industry suffered some decline. Nevertheless, judging from entries in St. Edmund's poor rate books for 1766, Mr. Gast lived in quite a substantial dwelling located in the Three Lions chequer, and both he and Mr. Davis were merchants or shopkeepers with premises consisting also of a warehouse and tenement in the Blue Boar chequer. This was right in the heart of the city, with Blue Boar Row forming one side of the market square; so John's remark that he was "reared in the lap of opulence,"[1] was probably only slightly exaggerated.

Supporting John's claim of prosperity is his attendance at the grammar school in the Cathedral Close. During the early eighteenth century, the Cathedral school, established in 1314 originally for the choristers, had undergone an academic transformation to provide the

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[1] The First Settlers of Virginia, 2nd ed. (New York: I. Riley and Co., 1806), p. [275].

education for young gentlemen demanded in that age of elegance--"preparing scholars for the universities, and producing men of national distinction." In the period of John's attendance, the academic reputation of the school reached its zenith under the headmastership of Dr. John Skinner (1780-1801), with university scholarships in classics, "'proper masters' for French and drawing, dancing classes with genteel balls, and theater and concert visits."[2] Most important to Davis was the fact that this institution had "initiated Addison in the elegancies of literature," to which he had been early inclined: "From my infancy I felt a disposition to write verse, and at a tender age of seven years scribbled an epigram upon my grandmother in a blank leaf of her prayer book."[3]

Why John did not remain at Dr. Skinner's school and continue the logical route to the university can be only speculatively answered. If the James Davis, a Salisbury alderman who died in May 1781, was his father, then the family finances, perhaps already weakened by the recent economic depression, were possibly weakened further at that time. And in the absence of a father, perhaps Grandfather Gast, son of that forebear who "had always such an unconquerable aversion to literature that [he] was frequently heard to exclaim, 'Oh! that I had been at the burning of the Alexandrian Library!'"[4] assumed a more significant role in

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[2] R. B. Pugh and Elizabeth Crittall, eds., A History of Wiltshire, The Victoria History of the Counties of England Series, V, (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 357.

[3] "An Author's Midnight Thoughts," South Carolina State Gazette and Timothy's Daily Advertiser, 24 September 1799.

[4] "Noctes Americanae," [N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser, 24 January 1801.

deciding the destiny of the two boys.

The school to which John was next sent stressed other disciplines, as training perhaps for what had been decided should be his career:

> I afterwards embraced the mathematics, under Mr. Roy, whose academy in Burlington-street, London, enjoyed a high reputation for those pursuits; and I yet remember the lively pleasure which I experienced, in being taught by him to regard celestial objects in angular position, and to express the result of my reasonings on their elevation and motion, as viewed from the earth's surface, in terms of the arcs of the angles observed reduced to sines, tangents, secants, &. The lexicon, the dictionary, and the Gradus ad Parnassum, had hitherto hooded my intellect. It now began to expatiate after noble quarry. From Roy's revered threshold my next step was on board the Essex, East Indiaman, Captain Strover, bound to Saint Helena, Batavia, and China.[5]

Psychologically important also had been some of his reading:

> I had read, or rather lisped, four books that determined my future life; namely, Robert Drury, the unfortunate Englishmen, Pierre Vaud, and Capt. Richard Falconer. Nothing would satisfy me but going to sea, and a ship was the idol of my mind. (First Settlers, p. [275])

In January 1788 at the age of fourteen (not eleven as he often claimed), John entered the service of the East India Company as a seaman. He received in wages 23. 4. 6., less stoppages, for the eighteen-month voyage. He returned to England "charmed with sea life. The voyage seemed nothing, and before I had been ashore six months, I again, if I may so express myself, shoved off my boat" (First Settlers, p. 276).

It was actually nine months later in April 1790 when his name appears again on the Company's receipt books, this time as a midshipman,

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[5] John Davis, Saint Cross. A Poem, (Winchester: Printed for the author, 1836), pp. 228 -229. The enthusiasm for mathematics expressed here is explained by his advertisement in this same publication for mathematics students.

although his monthly pay remained the same.[6] After a service of sixteen months, he was home again by the end of August 1791. In the meantime his brother had embarked as a cadet for Madras.[7]

It is probable that his brother's absence and the death of a John Gast at Salisbury, April 11, 1791, aet. 81, who may have been his maternal grandfather, induced young John to remain at home with his mother for a time. But other inducements were present also. During that second voyage he had rediscovered the excitement of academic pursuits, especially the adventures to be found in "belles lettres." He was never to be the same again, and he immediately took up the training for what was to become his real profession in life. Recalling the experience he wrote:

> We took out a hundred company's recruits to Bombay. Among these was a German (Oberstien) of dissipated fortune, but elegant education. Now did my mind first catch a ray of intellectual light: now was it ordained I should not be all my life illiterate. I began to learn French under Oberstien; . . . and in the main top of an East Indiaman, under a cloudless tropical sky, when the breeze was so steady that for days we had no occasion to start either tack or sheet, I began to cultivate the language of the court of Lewis the fourteenth.
>
> I was several months on shore at Bombay. I lodged at the country tavern. It was kept by Mr. Loudwick, and shaded with cocoa nut and bananna trees. My landlord had a complete set of European magazines; I rather devoured than read them; and it is to the perusal of these volumes that I ascribe that love of the belles lettres which has always made me loath the mathematicks and other crabbed sciences. For who ever, after having lived in a beautiful country, where all was fruit and flowers and fragrance, could seek an abode in a rugged, bleak and dreary region. (First Settlers, pp. 277-279).

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[6] Wage Receipt Books, India Office Library, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London.

[7] This is the brother whose burial, September 14, 1797, according to Thelma Kellogg, is recorded in the Register of St. Mary's Church, Fort St. George, at Madras. Davis mentions no other brothers or sisters and refers to James only once (First Settlers, pp. 279-280). He adds that James died a captain and compliments his account of the Sepoy soldiers in India (The European Magazine) as "full, elegant, accurate."

Back in Salisbury he attacked the family library with characteristic zeal, in a climate which was still not encouraging: "I was always dissuaded by my friends from the pursuit of knowledge. They were not descendants from the family of the Medici. Literature would never have been indebted to them for its revival" ([Charleston] City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 24 September 1799).

> When I read, it was by stealth; either in my walks, my messages, or before the family was risen. It was Spence's Comparison between Hill and Magliabechi, that kindled in my breast a love of the Latin language, and with no other implements than half an Ainsworth's Dictionary, a torn edition of Mant's Phaedrus (with a parsing Index), and old Lily's Grammar,--I laid a foundation in the language of Tully; on which I have since superstructured at my leisure. ([N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser, 24 January 1801)

A deep-seated feeling of inadequacy over the university education denied him crops out many times: "It was never my fortune to repose under the shade of Academic bowers. This, however, was not owing either to the angusta res domi, or local circumstances (First Settlers, p.[275]). . . . While contemporary writers were wandering in imagination with Ulysses and Aeneas, and growing giddy with the violence of poetical tempests, I was performing a sailor's duty in a ship of nine hundred tons, and encountering the gales of the promontory of Africa."[8] Sometimes the bitterness overflows into derisive swipes at those who have been more favored: "But I cannot read Virgil like those youths who were bred at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the professors who assist at their elbows. Such I am told can go through the whole of the Mantuan Bard . . . without betraying any emotion, or uttering one word of explanation" ([N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser, 24 January 1801).

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[8] Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America; During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802 (Bristol: R. Edwards, 1803), p. 7.

Early in 1793 he was impressed into the Royal Navy, serving about four years in the frigates Active and Artois. As the India voyages had offered the stimulation of exotic climes and intellectual adventure, the navy years afforded the excitement of battle and the association of gentleman officers whom he greatly admired. Captain Nagle,[9] his commanding officer, presented him to his uncle, the famous Edmund Burke, and assigned him escort duty to Lord Holland. Many years later, wistfully remembering what must have been a golden day for the young seaman, Davis inscribed St. Cross to Lord Holland:

> My Lord,
> When you were on your travels through Andalusia, . . . you visited the 'Active' frigate, lying in the beautiful bay of Cadiz, and Captain Nagle appointed me to the honour of conducting you through the divisions of the seaman assembled at the main-deck cabin, where, during the whole afternoon, the conversation subsisted chiefly between your Lordship and me; kept up on my part with an entire freedom from constraint, for such is the charm of your presence, that you make every one feel at ease and happy in your company.

Following the capture of the French Revolutionnaire, the Artois's most important action of the war, Davis was made acting-lieutenant of the prize under Lieutenant Oliver: "But (who can control his fate?) my former employment in the merchant-service was nugatory in the navy, and both Captain Nagle and Lieutenant Oliver expressed their sympathy that my appointment could not be confirmed" (St. Cross, p. 233).

His navy service terminated sometime early in 1797, Davis returned to Salisbury and once more took up his self-education, adding this time an intensive writing program. It is likely that in 1795, the same year in which his brother's essay had appeared, John had also contributed

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[9] Afterward Sir Edmund Nagle (1757-1830), equerry to King George IV.

some essays to The European Magazine. Orthography, content, and the pseudonym all point strongly to his authorship. By August 1797 he was regularly sending the editor letters and miscellaneous pieces under his own name: "Souvenir d'un Séjour à Bombay,"[10] in September; a letter containing the poem supposedly written by his grandfather, in November; "A Short System of Self-Education," which outlines his own success method, in December; and in January 1798, "An Essay on Biography and Egotism in Writing." He was also composing some verse under the inspiration of a young friend Eleanor, an amateur poet whose work he later submitted to several periodicals, but his concentration during this period was in prose.

What Davis wrote about during this period is not as significant as what he did not write about. A young man in his early twenties, of an impressionistic and romantic temperament, just returned home from a prolonged absence of about nine years, might have been expected to find some interest in the long familiar objects of his youth now seen in the light of new experience and maturity. And Salisbury was not lacking in stimulating subjects. Besides offering a cultural milieu of a comparatively high quotient, it comprised a geographical area of natural charm and beauty. Yet, Davis, so eloquent about the beauties of India and America, is here strangely silent. The specifics of America which were to affect him most--the deep forests, the flat sandy pine-barrens, the Blue Ridge Mountains, the rushing rivers, and, of course, the sea--were not those which could in any way remind him of the quaint, fertile valleys or high

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[10] He claimed to have published this essay independently previous to its submission to The European Magazine. No trace of it is found today.

upland moors of his native Wiltshire. Nor was the area lacking in historical riches. A few miles north lay prehistoric Stonehenge; Roman fortifications dominated many acres; nearby stood the only complete Saxon church in England, St. Laurence at Bradford-on-Avon; a large number of Norman churches were still extant. Yet John, imbued with a better than average historical sense, seems not to have been touched by any of these things, and his only reference to the ancient Cathedral, for which the city is best known and which ranks as one of the first of its kind in Gothic expression, is mocking and sarcastic:

> For several centuries the boast of the people of Salisbury, was, that they had a great tall church in their city, which contained as many windows as there are weeks; pillars as there are days, and gates as there are months in the year; with a deal more of skimble skamble stuff about their spire being twice the height of the monument in London. (Travels, p. 433)

Even after an absence of four years and a half in America, as his ship neared England and the sight of the Channel islands stirred feelings of patriotic affection, he is moved otherwise by memories of his native heath:

> But I image Salisbury and its inhabitants to my mind with frigid indifference. I am led from my own emotions to suspect that the passion a man professes for the place of his birth is rather artificial than natural.
>
> What's Salisbury to me, or what am I to Salisbury,
> That I should cleave to her?
>
> The inhabitants are divided by birth. To obtain access to the people in the Close, a man must have blood to recommend him. But blood is every thing. If he has blood, it is of very little consequence whether he has any brain. I doubt whether there be three people in Salisbury who care for me three straws. But no matter. I am even with them. For he has but little acquaintance with human nature who knows not that even the place of a man's birth, and all the tender charities of relation and friend, give way by long absence to another climate, and a succession of new objects. (Travels, pp. 433-434)

The passage hints of disappointment in an expected preferment. And Davis had a pride easily offended. He was perhaps a product as much as a victim of Salisbury as it was in the late eighteenth century: "In the Salisbury Journal is ample record of the absurd social rivalries that throve in a narrow provincialism. Rival musicians, rival schoolmistresses, rival dancing-masters all compete for our favours in the advertisement columns, and a mask of politeness and good manners gives only a thin veneer to the jealousies seething below."[11] Whatever experience marked his memory so bitterly also marked his personality in ways which were to remain with him wherever he went. In December 1797 he left Salisbury once more, this time bound for America.

B. THE MIDDLE YEARS, AMERICA AND ENGLAND, 1798-1822

The next few years constitute the best documented period of his life, primarily for his own account in the Travels and also for the

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[11] Dora Roberts, Sarum Close (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 224. Ms. Roberts chronicles the atmosphere permeating Cathedral society from the religious revival of the early 1700's through a mid-century period of great magnificance and worldliness, until the end of the century when "the life of the spirit burned low":

Although the Close was "comfortable, and the divines well seated," the Cathedral had been allowed to fall into such decay that drastic repairs were needed. John Byng wrote after a visit in 1782, "The Churchyard is like a cow-common, as dirty and as neglected, and thro' the entry stagnates a boggy ditch" (p. 248). By 1796 some rebuilding had been done, to the sad destruction of the old Gothic magnificance. "People flocked from far and wide to see the Cathedral in its new guise. So profitable a matter did it become to show it to visitors, that court action was required between two men for establishment of sole right to show the Cathedral and receive all fees and profits therefrom" (p. 256).

Davis's familiarity with the self-seeking decadence of these affairs must play a part in his attitude not only towards Salisbury, but towards the clergy in general. He nearly always portrays priests as selfish, worldly, and hypocritical.

rich trail of material which he left in periodicals in various parts of the country.

According to the Travels he arrived in New York on March 18, 1798.[12] Only twelve days later the [New York] Time-Piece printed a proposal "for publishing by subscription, a small poem, by a gentleman lately arrived from Europe, entitled, 'A Tribute to the United States.'" As a recommendation for its merits, a portion was included. Within a few weeks the entire poem of over 200 lines had been issued in an eight-page pamphlet. In the meantime, besides advertising for a tutor's position, Davis had made friends with another enterprising newcomer, M. Hocquet

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[12] A more detailed account of his voyage can be found in "A Voyage from Bristol to New-York," The Monthly Magazine and American Review, September 1800.

Davis's statement that he arrived in New York in the middle of March 1798 has been challenged by George Gates Raddin, Jr. in Hocquet Caritat and the Early New York Literary Scene, p. 63. Raddin's challenge rests on the basis of the following entry for Sunday, December 17, 1797, in the diary of Dr. Alexander Anderson of New York City. Listing his evening callers, Dr. Anderson writes, "Next entered . . . Dr. Debow and an Englishman who, as I afterwards understood, is lately arrived and professes to be a private Tutor." (New-York Historical Society MS., New York City.)

That this friend of Dr. DeBow's need not have been Davis is evident by a scanning of the New York papers of the fall of 1797 and early winter of 1798. Tutors advertised regularly. During February and March 1798 one advertisement in particular was running periodically for a British man of letters desiring twenty students. The prospective tutor might have been Davis, except that he claimed to have been educated at a British university, a claim Davis never made. Dr. DeBow's companion could have been this man or any number of others, many of whom probably resided in rooming houses as Dr. DeBow and Davis did. The search of newspapers reveals no evidence of Davis's presence in New York before March 30. His advertisement for pupils, very plainly identified by his name and address and announcing that he is "lately from England," appears first on April 9.

Davis lied quite blatantly about certain things, but his traveler's pride seems to have made truth a point of honor respecting itineraries. Unfortunately, American port records were not kept before 1820, and English port records for this period were destroyed by a London fire in the mid-nineteenth century. Although the Time-Piece regularly printed ship arrivals, it failed to do so from January 1798 to the following June.

Caritat, who was invigorating the New York literary scene with his circulating library, bookstore, and publishing activities, and who would prove to be a good friend to Davis's literary efforts for several years to come. Davis was understandably elated that Caritat, a native of France and a patron of the arts, commissioned him translator of François Pommereul's The Campaign of General Buonaparte in Italy, in 1796-1797,[13] a work which had just been received from France and which would wait another year before being translated in England.

He gives an amusing picture of his labors: "While the Doctor [DeBow] was reading the Life of Don Quixote, I was to be seen toiling at my translation like Cruden at his Concordance. The original was an octavo of four hundred pages, and every time I opened the volume it seemed to increase in bulk; but the golden dream of reputation fortified my diligence, and I corrected the proof-sheets with lively sensibility" (Travels, p. 21).

Though the French author was identified in the volume only as "a general officer," Davis's pompous and combative two-page "Translator's Preface" left little doubt about his part in the production and provided an all-too-revealing insight into the facets of his personality which so often antagonized:

> On bringing to a conclusion the translation of a work, whose end I perceived with the same eye of sorrow that the traveller casts upon departing day, I seek new pleasure in original composition, and luxuriate or repose in a preface as a congenial kind of writing.
>
> It is not my design to soften the severity of criticism by a formal deprecation, nor to conciliate the indulgence of the public by a modest submission to their clemency. I shall neither degrade myself in my own estimation by the

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[13] New York: Printed at the Argus Office, 1798.

> one, nor absurdly expose myself to contempt by the other. Yet it seems required from me to make a few observations upon a work, in the execution of which I have literally run a race with the press. The translation which I now offer to the public was produced in little more than the space of six weeks. . . . The book is now before the public and I lie exposed to every blast of criticism and gale of censure. (p. iii)

Five more paragraphs expounded his ideas of the translator's role ("Be careful not to let the blossoms of elecution fade away, but watch the felicities of diction"), his admiration for Buonaparte's dazzling "coruscations," and reminded the reader that his "translation was performed under circumstances that to others might have been insuperable obstacles." Some apology was certainly needed, for the translation was a poor one--too literal, often non-idiomatic, showing either haste or ineptitude. In conclusion he predicted that it would "probably be read avidly by the public." On the latter point he was correct. Because of its timeliness and a generous advertising allotment by Caritat, the book rewarded the diligence of its translator with a certain amount of reputation on which he capitalized for several years. The Campaign in June was followed in July by The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth, Davis's novel which, according to Evans, was also published in French.[14]

Although he had acquired in only five months a certain amount of fame from his three publications and had met some influential friends, his pocket had not been much enriched: "My occupations at New-York, however agreeable, did not repress my desire to explore the continent before me; and I thought it best to travel while I had some crowns left

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[14] Charles Evans, American Bibliography, XI (Chicago: Columbia Press, 1931) Nos. 33607 and 33608. Evans says that both this book and its French translation were printed and sold by Caritat.

in my purse" (Travels, p. 31). It is likely that sufficient pupils had not been forthcoming and would not be, with the imminent approach of the annual yellow fever epidemic and the resulting migration out of the city by most of its populace.

Accompanied by his friend Dr. DeBow, he spent about two weeks in Philadelphia but, finding business already suspended there by the plague, embarked for Charleston, South Carolina, by packet. Why he chose Charleston he never explains. But an advertisement for Buonaparte's Campaigns had appeared in the [Charleston] City Gazette and Daily Advertiser on July 28, over two months before Davis arrived there--an advertisement which puffs the translator outrageously and leads to the speculation that perhaps he had already been in correspondence with Peter Freneau, editor of the Gazette, as a consequence of his contacts in New York with his brother Philip Freneau, editor of the Time-Piece. Davis mentions that immediately upon his arrival in Charleston the Gazette editor assured him of a hundred applications in response to his advertisement for a place as a tutor. Possibly he had inquired before going there just what opportunities for employment he might expect.

Openings were thus numerous enough that he was able to pick and choose his post. An interview with the principal of the College of Charleston[15] resulted in a teaching position, but after six weeks he and the College severed the relationship, to their mutual satisfaction.

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[15] Davis identifies this scholar only by the name of "Mr. Drone." J. H. Easterby, (A History of the College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C.: Published on the occasion of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the chartering of the college, 1935, p. 42), says that there can be no doubt that "Mr. Drone" is Thomas Bee, Jr., second principal of the College, a man associated with it in one capacity or another for over thirty-five years. He adds that recollections of William Gilmore Simms and others substantiate Davis's characterization.

Fruits of the experience were Davis's "Ode on Charleston College," and, more important, a warm friendship with Lucas George, a young Irishman from Roscommon, teacher of Greek and Latin and fellow follower of "the Muse." This friendship, the most lasting one that Davis is known to have sustained, served as a spur to the writing endeavors of each, sometimes for good, sometimes for not so good.

Soon after his separation from Charleston College, Davis accepted a position as tutor in the home of Thomas Drayton, a prominent and distinquished South Carolina planter. To Davis, as to many writers, travel was a precondition to creativity. Just as he had been inspired to a period of intense activity after his East India cruises and again after his Royal Navy service, so surrounded now by the fascinating charms of a landscape new to him and responding to the gracious company of the Draytons and their friends, he settled contentedly into a period of concentrated studying and writing:

> It is usual in Carolina to sit an hour at table after supper; at least it was our custom in the woods of Coosohatchie [sic]. It was then I related my adventures to Mr. and Mrs. Drayton, in the eastern section of the globe, who not only endured my tales, but were elated with my successes, and depressed by my misfortunes.
>
> About ten I withdrew to my chamber and my books, where I found a sparkling fire of wood, and where I lucubrated, smoked segars, and was lost in my own musings. The silence of the night invited meditation; but often was I to be seen at three in the morning sitting before my chamber fire, surrounded like Magliabechi by my papers and my books. My study was Latin, and my recreation the Confessions of the eloquent Citizen of Geneva. (Travels, p. 76)

He wrote essays in both French and English, worked on the Travels, tried his hand as a literary columnist, and polished up an account about his East India adventures, which he entitled Two Voyages. So far as is known, this was also the period of his most intense lyric production.

Many of the poems were published in the Gazette and later sent to The European Magazine and The Monthly Magazine and American Review; fourteen were printed in a little volume entitled Number 1: Poems, Written at Coosohatchie, in South-Carolina (Charleston: Printed by T. C. Cox, [1799]). Some of them even caught the attention of Joseph Dennie, up in Walpole, New Hampshire, who praised them in The Farmer's Museum.

For a number of months in 1799 he and Lucas George under their own names and assorted pseudonyms flooded the editor of the Gazette with a marvelous variety of verse, including a number of mutually complimentary "effusions," which were eventually assaulted by the brickbat satires of another Charleston would-be poet. Readers of the Gazette were subsequently amused and shocked by the fiery verbal outbreak of a Grub-Street war which gave the impression of ever-expanding dimensions. Actually the combatants were only "Alienus,"[16] a former Charleston College pedagogue who apparently had an animosity against George, and Davis and George who artificially fanned the flames by writing pseudonymous high-spirited attacks and flowery panegyrics upon their own works, thereby giving the illusion that many more participants were active in the fray.[17] It was so much fun that they repeated the game two years later in the

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[16] For a study of the identity of "Alienus," see Robert Adger Law, "The Bard of Coosawhatchie," Texas Review, 7, No. 2 (1922), [133]-156.

[17] An incriminating relic of Davis's devious ways has survived in a MS. at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Gratz Collection. Apparently his translation of "the Abbe Cassiani's Italian Sonnet" had appeared in a periodical. The MS. is a letter in Davis's own hand, dated August 4 from Charleston, addressed to the editor of the publication, declaring the interpretative translation of "Mr. D___" to be superior to the original. It is signed "C.H.", a pseudonym which appears several times in the Gazette during this period in communications which are almost positively those of Davis, and which are always in praise of the work of either George or Davis.

columns of the New York Commercial Advertiser.

In December 1799 after thirteen months of migrating with the Draytons according to their seasonal habits from outplantation, to Charleston society, to the resort atmosphere of Sullivan's Island, Davis took his leave of South Carolina. The anticipated loneliness of a second winter at the Coosawhatchie plantation and the constant threat of yellow fever were the motives recorded in the Travels, but the disappointment of not having succeeded in publishing Two Voyages probably helped to activate his wanderlust once again. It had been a relatively happy time of his life. The affection which he felt for the Draytons is evident in the following note written sometime after his departure. It is the only known extant personal letter.

> Dulce, mari magno turbantibus aquora ventis,
> Eterra magnum alterius spectare laborem.
>
> J'aime à vous mettre tout mon coeur sur le papier, comme je vous l'ouvrais autrefois dans nos conversations.
> Je m'occupe à présent à mettre la dernière main à notre Henriade.
> Mettez-lui bien le coeur, ou plutôt quelque chose de mieux au ventre.
> Adieu, charmant and unique ami.
> Je ne répondrai jamais aux satires qu'on fera sur mes ouvrages; il est d'un homme sage de les mépriser.
> Qu'on attaque mes ouvrage, je n'ai rien à répondre; c'est à eux à se défendre bien ou mal.
> ecrivant à la campagne et n'ayant presque d'autre secours que mon porte-feuille et ma mémoire.
> Adieu, mon ange; portez-vous bien, et aimez moi, et écrivez-moi.
> Permettez, Madame, que je mets à vos pieds un des exemplaires de mes voyages.
> Comptez que je pleure quelque fois d'être loin de vous.[18]

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[18] New York Public Library, Manuscript Division. An identifying note at the top of the MS is signed by Thom. S. Grimké, who in 1810 had married Sarah Drayton, one of the three older Drayton children whom Davis had tutored.

By February 5, 1800, Davis had arrived back in New York, followed soon after by Lucas George. Within a few days he took up employment as a tutor for the three youngest sons of Daniel Ludlow, the most prominent merchant and banker in the city at that time,[19] but the goal foremost in his mind was a literary career. With unrelenting efforts he pursued that end. He sought out Charles Brockden Brown, who was living in New York and whose Ormond and Wieland Davis had translated for Caritat's French editions.[20] From January through December of 1800 Davis's poems comprised a large percentage of the total number printed in Brown's Monthly Magazine and American Review. Several of his essays were also included. By December his second novel, Farmer of New-Jersey, had been issued, and he had immediately begun work on a sequel, The Wanderings of William. In the meantime Caritat had published an enlarged volume of his poems. By January 1801 Davis had expanded his efforts to the columns of the Commercial Advertiser in a variety of genres; advertisements for his books and puffy reviews written either by himself or by George, letters to the editor, proposals for publishing William, and a prospectus for A Volume of Modern Poetry, to be published by Caritat and edited by Davis. He also used the newspaper column for "The Reviewers Reviewed," a vilification of the critics who had found Farmer of New-Jersey less than inspired, and, probably aided by George, pieced together a column entitled "Noctes Americanae," a collection of essays patterned after The Spectator. The title was most likely inspired by

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[19] Joseph A. Scoville, The Old Merchants of New York City (New York: Carleton, 1865), p. 106.

[20] Evans, Nos. 35246, 35249.

the "Noctes Atticae" written by the original Aulus Gellius (ca. 123- ca. 165).[21]

In June 1801 he left New York for Washington, animated by Aaron Burr's assurance that he would receive employment in the office of Albert Gallatin, secretary of the Treasury. En route he spent some time in Philadelphia seeing The Wanderings of William through the press. Charles Brockden Brown, who had moved back to his home in Philadelphia, introduced him to Asbury Dickins; and Dickins introduced him to Joseph Dennie, who in turn introduced him to members of the Dennie literary circle, the brightest cluster of stars in America's literary firmament at that time, or as Davis described it, "a constellation of American genius, in whose blaze I was almost consumed." Davis and Dennie had already been corresponding sporadically since the summer of 1799 when Dennie had first made notice of Davis's poems in the columns of The Farmer's Museum. Dennie had since moved to Philadelphia and in association with Asbury Dickins had begun publication in January 1801 of the Port Folio. The meeting was most fortuitous for Davis; under Dennie's sympathetic eye much of his American work would be published and commented on in the Port Folio pages. His interview with Gallatin in Washington was not as productive; therefore, he journeyed on to Alexandria and soon found a position as tutor in the home of a wealthy Quaker near Colchester, Virginia.

There was little communion of spirits between the new tutor and his employers--Davis had little empathy with Quakers--but the few weeks' residence on the banks of the Occoquan supplied inspiration for much

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[21] For a more detailed account of these activities, see Appendix A.

literary activity. Several of his most widely known poems romanticize the natural beauties of the region, and it was apparently at this place that his interest in the Indian and specifically in the Pocahontas legend was nurtured and developed. He was also projecting the publication of the Travels, or at least a version of it, for on August 31 he wrote his first letter to President Jefferson:

> Sir,
>
> Having lately visited that Scene which you have pronounced one of the most stupendous in Nature, and proposing to return to Philadelphia in a month, where I shall publish my Travels under the title of A Journey from New York to the Passage of the Potomac through the Blue Ridge Mountains, I take the liberty to entreat permission to dedicate my Work to you. If Gadiemus [text is blurred here] travelled from the remote parts of Sparta to behold the Historian of Rome, I can affirm from the very bottom of my heart that I would have gone much further to see the Author of the Notes on Virginia,--the first and greatest Work that ever taught one to reflect; but the etiquette of a refined Age would not allow me this honor at Washington; and [so]? I can now only hope for your sanction to my literary undertakings by epistolary intercourse.
>
> Chastellux is, perhaps, the most interesting Traveller through the United States. His volumes enlivened with anecdote, and abounding with remark, seldom fail to hold the mind in pleasing captivity. Indeed from so great a personage much was expected. He was a Member of the French Academy, the Correspondent of Voltaire, the Companion of Princes, and a General officer in the French Army. On military subjects he could not be otherwise than au fait; and he stalks over the field of battle with the grace and dignity of a soldier. . . . I have rather made Chastellux than Brissot the model of my Tour. The Narrative of the one yields flowers of fragrance, transporting the reader on fairy ground; while that of the other inspires no emotion of pleasure, but casts gloom over every scene.
>
> I have, perhaps, Sir, the honor of being slightly known to you. You may possibly have seen a Translation of General Buonaparte's Campaign in Italy; and Mr. Gallatin informed me that he had presented you, pursuant to my entreaty, with a small Collection of my Lyric Poems. A mistake of Mr. Burr, to whom I have the honor of being personally known, was the occasion of my coming to Virginia; but having been a Traveller from my childhood, having visited China, and resided both on the Coast of Malabar and Coromandel, I rather rejoice at, than deplore an event, that has caused me to gratify my disposition for roving. I conclude with repeating

> my entreaty that you will allow me the honor of inscribing to you my Journey; or flatter myself that you will not withhold an answer from me studiis florentem ignobilis otti; an Otium which would be rendered Nobile by your condescension.
>
> I am, Sir, your most
> obedient, humble Servant,
> John Davis[22]

The above letter is quite different in subject and tone from that printed in the Travels, which, of course, was published in England, not Philadelphia, did not come out until 1803, and comprised not just a brief tour from New York to the Natural Bridge, but the entire tour of four and a half years in the United States, including his "remarks on the character, the customs and manners of the people," as claimed in the published letter. One wonders if Jefferson would have been as willing to have such a comprehensive experience dedicated to him when he knew so little about either the author or the book.[23] The original letter with its carefully penned lines and elaborately flourished signature is characteristic of Davis's modus operandi when seeking favor--the flattery, the appeal to common interests, the name-dropping, the intimidating self-importance. When the Travels was finally published with the President's gracious reply long since in hand, he apparently forgot or felt free to alter the deferential details of his original letter. The episode is characteristic of the man.

Time sequence would indicate that even before his quarter term had

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[22] Dated 31 Aug. 1801, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[23] In part the President responded, "Such a testimony of respect from an enlightened fellow citizen cannot but be flattering to me, and I have only to lament that the choice of the patron will be little likely to give circulation to the work. Its own merit however will supply this defect." In the published version "fellow citizen," a clue to how little Jefferson knew about Davis, had been changed to "Foreigner."

expired, he had already left "the banks of the Occoquan; those Banks on which I had passed so many tranquil hours in study and meditation"; but as he had earlier observed: "The lover of solitude finds the grace of novelty gradually fading and sighs for the smoke and novelty of the town" (Commercial Advertiser, 18 March 1801). "Bored by the briars and thorns" he took a quick swing through Philadelphia and New York, renewing literary acquaintances and visiting Lucas George, then headed south again, "impatient of being without any determined pursuit." He settled for a few months in Baltimore, where according to the usual pattern his poems began to appear in the Baltimore publications, along with advertisements for the place of a domestic tutor.[24] Always alert to a timely opportunity, he found one in the following incident:

> During my sojourn ment at Baltimore, a cheese of no ordinary dimensions was landed from a vessel to be transported to Washington. It was a present from the farmers' wives and daughters of Cheshire, in Massachusetts, to the President of the United States. . . .
>
> I know not the weight of the "greatest cheese in the world," but it was I believe equal in circumference to the hind-most wheel of a waggon. Its extraordinary dimensions induced some wicked wag of a federalist to call it the Mammoth Cheese; and by this name it is known throughout the States of the Union.
>
> The curiosity of the inhabitants of Baltimore was universally excited; men, women, and children flocked to see the Mammoth Cheese. . . . The cheese was drawn in a waggon to the city of Washington by four horses richly caparisoned, . . . and the President of the United States received the present with every polite acknowledgment, and invited the Republican Members of the Senate and House of Representatives to tender to the homage of their respects, and the respects of their homage. (Travels, pp. 329-330)

For many years to come the mammoth cheese supplied Joseph Dennie and other Federalists food for jest; Davis utilized it otherwise by

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[24] Baltimore readers had already met Davis in the Baltimore Weekly Magazine (21 January 1801). "Ode to a Mockingbird" had been attributed to "John Davis, the neglected poet of South Carolina," an epithet undoubtedly supplied by the neglected poet himself.

publishing a pamphlet, possibly in ballad form, entitled "Adventures of the Mammoth Cheese, giving an account of its Birth, Parentage, and Travels by land and water; together with the reception at Washington and description of that city."[25] On January 28, 1802, the very day it was issued from the press, he sent off a copy to Jefferson with the following explanation:

> . . . at the moment I am about to usher into the World a pamphlet of my production, which I beg permission to present you with. I shall be pardoned, I hope, for having taken a slice from a corner of the Massachusetts' Cheese, when I observe that it has filled my purse, and enabled me to prosecute my studies more uninterruptedly.--Such productions are apparently trifling, but I think it is recorded of some British Statesman that he thought the ballads of a Country might propagate just or false notions.[26]

The President's reaction is not known; he apparently did not respond, nor is a record of the pamphlet to be found today in the catalogs of his library. Some hint as to its contents, however, is suggested by the following announcement which appeared in the [Baltimore] American for the Country (28 January 1802) immediately below the original advertisement for the pamphlet:

> Having purchased the copy right of a work entitled 'The Mammoth Cheese,' from Mr. J. Davis, I put it to press, and after having had thirty six pages printed off, I gave it to the author to correct--he returned it after a detention of four days in so mutilated a state, and so much altered from the original state, that I could not consider it the same work . . . . I find he has entered into engagements with a Journey-man Printer, given him only a page at a time to print . . . and that it is this day published under a new title of 'The Adventures of the Mammoth Cheese' . . . I am in no way concerned with the publication in question, and . . . as it abounds with a party spirit, I declare my unqualified

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[25] Baltimore: W. Pechin, 1802. As cited by Roger Pattrell Bristol, in Maryland Imprints 1801-1810 (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1953), pp. 19-20.

[26] Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

disapprobation of such a measure. . . . Henry Semple Keatinge.[27] Once more Davis had managed to stir controversy and animosity.

Despite the financial rewards claimed of the pamphlet, his purse was soon depleted, but Vice-President Burr generously reinforced it with an expiation for having misled him about the possibility of a position in the Treasury Department. This enabled him to pay his Baltimore debts and travel on to the Pohoke, Virginia, plantation of Mr. Spencer Ball, where under the auspicious blessings of Spring he "opened what some called an Academy, and others an Old Field School."

The period seems to have been one of mingled pleasure and frustration. He settled comfortably into his own little building with ample leisure for writing and visiting. The Balls, a family of superior refinement and grace, were pleasant and compatible; his feminine pupils responsively eager to learn. But there are evidences that perhaps the whole adventure had palled. The haughty disdain and irascibility which always lay close to the surface of his temperament were cropping out impatiently with his "boy" students (extending in age to thirty), "more disposed to play truant than enlighten their minds;" with some of the less cultured parents in the neighborhood; and even with the terrain of Virginia, earlier so pleasing to him. When he "was commanded officially to resign" at the end of the three-month term, he lost little time in embarking on August 3, 1802, for England and home.

During his stay in America Davis had been keeping his name before the English reading public through regular contributions to The European Magazine. That he had been doing so with an eye to his return is

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[27] Bristol, p. 20. Keating was a Baltimore bookbinder, bookseller, and printer.

evident in his letter to the editor printed in the September 1802 issue. "My ambition is not to be known on the Banks of the Hudson, but those of the Thames." With characteristic self-importance he adds, "I, however, rejoice that I sacrificed to the laurel-god in the woods of Carolina. Coosahatchie, which before was not known, may now be said to live in song, while the name . . . belongs exclusively to myself." He concludes with the declaration that he "pants to revisit the Land of the Muses," England. Having returned, he continued to contribute material of various kinds--poems, letters, and stories, utilizing in some of them the fruits of his American experience which he and the editor both knew would appeal to the English reader's insatiable curiosity about life in America.

"The Lovers of the Blue Ridge Mountains. An American Tale" (The European Magazine, April 1802) is the sentimental account of two precocious fifteen-year-olds, Ursula, a Virginia "cow-girl" and Valentine, her male counterpart and beloved. When the gullible Valentine elopes with his seducer, a wealthy and wicked summer visitor from Alexandria, brokenhearted Ursula climbs to "that very high point of land which Mr. Jefferson has noticed, and which the villagers have denominated Jefferson's rock," and throws herself headlong into the Potomac. The story ends up as a jarring blend of rustic boobyisms and classical pastoral, where the author has tried, but inconsistently, to simplify the style in order to match the subject matter and presumably the manner of American story-telling. However unsatisfactory, it does represent a conscious attempt in the democratic spirit of the new Romanticism. "A common, every day writer of tales . . . would search the palace for a hero, and bring the heroine from the clouds; for my part, I am sick of

Kings, Queens, and Princessess: the attention retires fatigued from a new story of Spanish Ladies and Cavaliers: I like better the innocent amours of Blue Ridge cow-boy and cow-girl," he explained. Certainly Ursula and Valentine are more humble, in the Wordsworthian tradition, than even the New Jersey farmer of wandering William had been. The story is also significant for including one of the earliest written transcriptions, if not the earliest, of a favorite American folk theme, the 'lover's leap' motif, and was probably a novelty in England on that account alone.

In January 1804 The European published "The Story of Dick the Negro," which had appeared earlier as an interpolative tale in the Travels. To the English reader more often exposed to the problems of slavery through the medium of social and moral polemics, it provided a first-person point of view and intimate glimpse into the mind of a slave. It is a more successful story than "The Lovers." The writing is more honest, the voice more consistently sustained. Slavery and any use of force to control men's lives were always repulsive to Davis; when he sought to expose them he wrote effectively.

In August of that same year, readers of the magazine were treated to another piece of Americana, "Anecdotes gathered from Conversation in the American States, but never before published," a collection of short and whimsical anecdotes objectively narrated and ranging in subject from General Washington's delight in anecdote to the strange wording of American newspaper advertisements. If "The Lovers" and "Dick the Negro" had not presented a very flattering picture of life in America, at least they were not malicious and neither were the anecdotes. He had also published a pamphlet propounding that the controversial Junius letters

(England 1772) had been written not by John Dunning, Lord Ashburton, but by Dunning's friend Maj. Gen. Charles Lee of the British army, who had supposedly revealed his identity in the fall of 1773 while stationed in America. This theory had already been circulated without much credence on this side of the Atlantic as early as 1803, and he had probably picked it up here. He offered the pamphlet to The European for one pound, asserting as usual that his labor in considering and re-considering the pages of both writers had been extensive and assuring the editor that "this Essay no man in England will pass over, if it be published in your Magazine, unless he is a Schoolmaster."[28]

But the magazine work was only peripheral to much larger projects. The change of locale had worked upon him, as often before, by activating great industry. During the two years in England he wrote at a prodigious pace, turning out material which would finally bring him to the notice of some of the country's leading literary figures.

The first title to come from the press early in 1803 was the Travels, if not his best seller, certainly the one which would most firmly establish his reputation as a writer of serious talent. During the next eighteen months it was reviewed by such prestigious British journals as The Edinburgh Review, the Monthly Review, and Arthur Aikin's Annual Review and History of Literature, the latter carrying a sympathetic review written by Robert Southey.[29] Davis quoted notices also from the

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[28] MS. letter, 1 Aug. 1804, from London. New York Public Library.

[29] Although printed anonymously, the piece is acknowledged by Southey in Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, John Wood Warter, ed. (London: Longman, 1856), I, 336-337.

A review not now identifiable was also written by Charles Brockden Brown. See Diary of William Dunlap (New York: Printed for the New-York Historical Society, 1931), 369; and Harry Redcay Warfel, Charles Brockden

Critical Review and the British Critic. Granted that the reviews contained criticism as often derogatory as favorable, to have the book so widely noticed was success in itself. Besides, all American travel books in that strongly factional climate were denounced by at least half the critics anyway.

In November 1803 Southey wrote to his friend John King:

> A book of Bristol printing is come to me, which you should read,--Davis's "Travels in America." . . . He is a vain man, and I should distrust his moral feelings, but most undoubtedly a man of great talents: by all means read his book; it will affect you in parts, and you will easily pardon the faults of a self-taught man, struggling with poverty, and consoling himself by pride.[30]

One of the affecting portions, an anecdote about the American mockingbird, Southey recounted in a long footnote to his Madoc,[31] a work which shows in its numerous references Southey's astonishingly eclectic knowledge of literature. Davis could well have felt honored that among such citations his work was praised as a "singular and interesting book." In 1822 he repaid the "distinguished favor" by dedicating The American Mariners to Southey, recalling "the complacency with which you make mention of me in a work composed in the maturity of your taste and judgment."[32]

Brown, American Gothic Novelist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949), p. 231.

[30] Warter, pp. 245-246.

[31] Madoc (London: Longman, 1805), p. 553.

[32] The American Mariners (Salisbury: Brodie and Downing, [1822]), p. [iii]. In October 1805 The European Magazine carried a long anonymous review of Madoc. It makes particular mention that the work is "a better fruit than even those blossoms (productions of his younger age) promised which his early genius displayed." The similarity of thought to Davis's dedication raises the interesting possibility that he himself might have been the reviewer. Madoc's Missouri River locale, his hero's rescue from death by an attractive female, and the roles played by the North American savages are all elements Davis had already dealt with in his own writing.

Other prominent writers added the Travels to their libraries; Wordsworth's The Excursion[33] and the writings of Mary and Percy Shelley were very possibly influenced by it.[34]

Of more immediate concern to Davis's career was the fate of at least three other manuscripts for which he was attempting to find a publisher. He had submitted one of them to Longman and Rees, who had asked Robert Southey for an evaluation. On January 26, 1804, Southey conveyed to Longman his reaction to the book along with an amplified analysis of its author:

> If Mr.____'s little tale (which reached me last night) be long enough for publication, I should think it possesses sufficient interest to be saleable. The author is, in my judgment, a man of very considerable, and indeed extraordinary, talents. This _____ he has probably written hastily, and, I fear, upon the spur of want.
>
> Having myself sought after information respecting the countries on the Mississippi, I can say that the descriptions and natural history are, as far as my knowledge goes, accurate, and therefore it is fair to presume that such circumstances as were new to me are equally true to nature.
>
> I know nothing of _____ but from his Travels; from that he appears to be a self-taught man, who has all his life long been struggling with difficulties; and the book left upon me a melancholy impression, that however much adversity had quickened his talents, it had injured his moral feelings. Pride and vanity are only defensive vices in a poor and neglected man of talents; and being defensive, they cease to be

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33 Gilbert Chinard, "Un Frere Cadet de René en Amérique," in Mélanges d'Histoire Littéraire Générale et Comparée Offerts, à Fernand Baldensperger (Paris: Champion, 1930), I, 138.

34 Frederick L. Jones, ed., Mary Shelley's Journal (Ardmore: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), p. 81. The relevant entries are for June 14 and October 9, 1817. Allan Kline in "The 'American' Stanzas in Shelley's Revolt of Islam: A Source," Modern Language Notes, 70 (1955), 101-103, attempts to show that Shelley's reading of Jefferson's inaugural address in the Travels inspired a new lyricism for democracy in these stanzas which were written between May and December 1817, and probably induced additional references to American democracy found in his other writings during this same period. It is possible that the Shelleys' reading of Madoc in 1815 had spurred their interest in the Travels.

> vices. Something of the same palliation, may be pleaded for an evident libertinism of heart and thought which is everywhere too manifest in his book; in this he resembles Smollett and Defoe, which last truly great man he resembles also in better things.
>
> Should you execute your design of the Collection of Voyages and Travels, which I hope and trust you will, this man might be made exceedingly useful to you. Being himself a sailor, and having seen and observed many countries, you will rarely find one so well qualified to digest many travels into one full account. I had begun a letter to you upon the subject of the Collection some months ago, but laid it aside when the alarm of invasion seemed to suspend all literary, and indeed all other, speculation. Should you resume the scheme, I will willingly send you an outline of what seems to me to be the most advisable plan."[35]

On March 1 Southey was still recommending the Travels and looking forward to the arrival of another Davis manuscript, one which would be of particular interest both to him and to his correspondent Joseph Cottle of Bristol, with whom he had collaborated on an edition of Chatterton's poems: "Longman is to send down for my perusal a Life of Chatterton by John Davis, a man who printed Travels in America, at Bristol last year--a book which if you have not seen is, with great defects, well worth seeing, for he has genius."[36] On March 14, he wrote to S. T. Coleridge: "More manuscripts of Davis came down to-day. I have run through his Life of Chatterton, which if flimsy and worthless. I shall not advise

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[35] Charles Cuthbert Southey, ed., The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey (London: Longman, 1850) II, 252-253. The editor has deleted name and title, but there can be no doubt that Southey was writing of Davis. The title involved might have been either Walter Kennedy as suggested by the second paragraph or The Post-Captain as suggested by paragraphs three and four. Longman did publish the former in 1805, and Southey would seem more likely to have recommended it than the truly libertine Post-Captain. On the other hand, Walter Kennedy cannot be considered particularly libertine; and The Post-Captain does contain one American passage which might occasion the second paragraph above.

[36] Typescript, Special Collections, University of Tennessee Library, courtesy of Professor Kenneth Curry. Original MS. in the Henry W. and Albert Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

Longman to print it, and shall warn the writer to expunge an insult to you and to myself, which is not to be paid for by his praise" (Southey, II, 275). Longman did not accept the manuscript. In 1806, two and a half years later, Thomas Tegg, then an upstart publisher and bookseller, printed it in a cheap edition.

The insulting material to which Southey alludes is found in Davis's criticism of the various panegyrics written upon Chatterton's death. At the end of the list, he considers Coleridge's "Monody," allowing it to be the greatest production of his muse and, referring to Coleridge's American project, makes the following comment:

> In the conclusion, however, Mr. Coleridge counteracts his own pathos. He had in the enthusiasm of a political fancy imagined Happiness to himself as the inhabitant of a particular region; he thought she was to be found either in some forest, or on some river's bank, in the states of America; he contemplated a voyage to her, and hoped by crossing the ocean to leave every care and anxiety, and vexation behind him.

After quoting the last stanza of the "Monody," he adds as if in gloating superiority:

> All this is mere sound, signifying nothing. We well know that neither Chatterton nor Mr. Coleridge would have spread the canvass to the gale, nor turned waggoners in America, and driven the tinkling team. Neither is it very likely that Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. Southey, and Mr. Lovell, would have assembled at eve round Chatterton, and hung enraptured on song. They would more probably, have damned his song with faint praise, or heard it with sad civility. (Life of Chatterton, p. 131)

It was an unnecessarily depreciatory remark sure to offend those who had already been quite generous and who might yet have been his friends and benefactors, but it was the kind of irrational attack with which Davis often defeated his own self-interest. Southey had an additional reason to abandon his charity towards Davis and feel put upon; the collection

of Chatterton's poems which Southey and Cottle had edited had been undertaken to benefit Chatterton's destitute mother and sister.

Despite the fascination that biography always held for him, The Life of Chatterton represents Davis's only full-scale attempt at it. Unfortunately the book is less the biographer's production than the plagiarist's reproduction, long passages having been lifted intact from George Gregory's "The Life of Chatterton," which had recently been reprinted in Southey's The Works of Thomas Chatterton (London, 1803). Davis also relied heavily for sentimental anecdotes and melodramatic heightening on The Reverend Herbert Croft's Love and Madness (London, 1790); and his demure footnote acknowledging that "for several of the critical remarks found in this volume, I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Warton," gives little hint of the vast amount of material which had been appropriated verbatim from Warton's The History of English Poetry (London, 1778) and An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley (London, 1782). Obviously he wrote with one hand while shuffling either Gregory, Croft, or Warton in the other.

Despite his great dependence on Dr. Gregory, the end result is very different. Gregory's tone is consistently that of an eighteenth century gentleman bringing the full weight of eighteenth century reason --scholarly, objective, contemplative--to grapple with the difficult and perplexing problem that Chatterton represented. Davis's biography is omniscient in point of view without benefit of documentary evidence, intuitive in its judgments, romantic in its emotional involvement. Ignoring all facts not in support of his thesis and freely misinterpreting much of the rest, Davis's Life ends as an hysterical apology for Chatterton as man and poet, the earliest of the sentimental, commiserating

treatments of Chatterton's life.

In a letter to Jefferson, Davis claimed the book to be "highly praised by the Reviewers." Actually, most of the critics who deigned to notice it apologized for doing so and expressed their dismay at its gross plagiarism and its morally indefensible attempt to prove the propriety of Chatterton's forgeries. The London Review was also repulsed at the license with which Davis "indulged himself with respect to the sensibilities of others," and listed eighteen "Hapless victims" whom he had damned in the book, including Coleridge and Southey.[37] Little wonder that Southey, who had earlier expressed his distrust of Davis's "moral feelings," added in his letter to Coleridge, "We formed a just estimate of the man's moral stamina, most certainly, and as for mending, I have no hopes of it. The proverb of the silk purse and the sow's ear, comprises my philosophy upon that subject" (Southey, II, 275). Much better for Davis and his reputation in England had he never written it.

The chief value to be found in the book today is not what it tells about Chatterton, but what it reveals about Davis, and why he chose to write it, aside from the fact, always very attractive to him, that Chatterton's tragedy still generated high interest among readers. Also, temperamentally Davis, like Chatterton, was a romantic and Chatterton's new poetry appealed to him. A more significant reason becomes obvious

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[37] The London Review, I, No. 2 (1809), 223-224. Other reviews are found in The Annual Review and History of Literature, 7 and in the British Critic, 31 (1801), 298-302, which praised the author in all the wrong places, specifically the passages which were not in any way his own. A short review of the book also appeared in The European Magazine for July 1808. Dealing almost entirely with the excellencies of the author's style and approach, and echoing a retort to some of the other critics, it is almost positively from Davis's pen.

only upon an examination of the facts in Chatterton's life which Davis emphasizes and which he might have seen as a parallel to his own: a young boy left fatherless, a mother's inadequacies, his forced attendance at a school not well-suited to his needs, a system of self-education, a struggling poet who "knew no tutor, no friend, no parent--at least no parent who could correct or assist him," and who was often hastily forced into print by financial exigencies.[38] The identification of Chatterton and Rowley with the fifteenth century St. Mary Redcliff church must have reminded Davis of the dominance of Salisbury Cathedral in his own youth. Even Chatterton's attempt to escape Bristol by a life at sea found a parallel in Davis's experience.

In character Chatterton, like Davis, had a reputation for talent, application, and ambition. Nonetheless recognition had eluded them, esthetic souls broken by a materialistic society. Surely Davis was also thinking of Salisbury when he wrote satirically of Chatterton:

> He appears to have nourished an invincible contempt for Bristol, a contempt not affected but sincere. But for this he deserved reproof. He was mortified because the inhabitants of Bristol were insensible to the beauty of Rowley's muse. But the inhabitants of Bristol were not the children of Apollo, they were sons and daughters of Mammon. Their genius was not literary but commercial. Though Orpheus might have had the power to soften the rocks and bend the knotted oaks of Clifton, yet the Bristolians would have been insensible to the harmony of his lyre. Poetry was not their element. When they sought relaxation from their primary pursuit of heeping up riches, they found it not in the Muses, but raree-shows. (Life of Chatterton, pp. 40-41)

Perhaps even in personality Davis felt a bond of kinship. Chatterton

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[38] Significantly, Davis changed Gregory's statement, "He had been gloomy from the time he began to learn," to ". . . the time he was sent to the blue-coat school. . . . The teacher of arithmetic could not discern the future poet."

was generally acknowledged to have been ungracious, churlish, impetuous, proud--qualities all attributed to Davis at one time or another. These qualities in Chatterton he carefully blamed on discouragement caused by indigence and public indifference. Clearly his concept of Chatterton as the impoverished genius, victim of a hostile world, was the same as the picture he often bore of himself, and the passionate fuming of the latter part of Chatterton is a reflection of that self-identification.

It is easy to understand why Davis felt a need to justify Chatterton's forgeries. One of the arguments he sets forth calls to mind his own literary deceptions. "Every man of critical taste will rejoice at the fiction of Chatterton. Independent of the beauty of his poetry, the fiction produced a controversy which has enlightened the human mind" (Life of Chatterton, p. 38). Perhaps this is one way he rationalized his own newspaper controversies, the frequent recourse to pseudonyms for reasons other than mere anonymity, and the miscellaneous plagiarisms and forgeries.

By August of 1804, Davis was making plans for his return to America. Publication of the Travels had helped to "elevate him into immediate notice," and by sending copies to prominent persons such as William Godwin he was expanding his notability. Three books remained still in manuscript form, not having been snatched up by the English publishers as readily as Davis would have expected them to be, and a fourth, Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, was ready for the press with Dr. Jenner's approval of the inscription already obtained. Probably feeling that he had done as much as he could to expedite the three, and that the fourth would be more enthusiastically received in America than in England, he arrived back in the United States, steerage class, late in December of

1804 or early January 1805.[39]

He landed characteristically--off and running, advertising on January 26 the opening of a bookstore and evening school, and submitting a poem, "Ode to the River Raritan," for the Port Folio the same day. Joseph Dennie, who had been reprinting brief, random excerpts from the Travels in Davis's absence, although without identifying their source, greeted him with gentle praise and, as if sensing that some encouragement might be in order, added: "In all his wanderings through this world of care, we cordially wish that Felicity may greet him at every turn, and that his literary adventures may be always productive of profit and praise."

That he was suffering a sense of rejection from the English publishing world is suggested in the "Preface" to Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, written about this time:

> And now, O Book, I resign thee to thy fate. Whether thou ever reach England, I am little solicitous; for a wanderer from my earliest years, I have no particular local enthusiasm, but embrace the great globe as my country. No, my book! remain where thou art! Wish not to traverse the wide Atlantic waste. Let thy vision hover over the banks of the Delaware, the Hudson, and Potomac; let it visit thy parent streams that lave the structures of Richmond and James Town; and on the shores of these majestic rivers be thou in the fair hands of the daughters of Columbia.[40]

His letter of February 16 to President Jefferson suggests a new note of stability and permanency in his plans: "The object of my return to this Country is to establish myself as a Tradesman, and in the congenial

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[39] Davis's letter to The European Magazine (February 1806) contains a brief report of his latest passage and a longer account of the plague in New York in the fall of 1805.

[40] Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, An Indian Tale (Philadelphia: Printed by Thom. L. Plowman, 1805), pp. vi-vii.

vocation of bookseller, be enabled to cultivate my mind" (Dated 16 Feb. 1805, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress).

He had already launched the Juvenile Book Store at 86 Arch Street. Close observation of M. Caritat's establishment in New York and those of Asbury Dickins and M. Dufief in Philadelphia would have suggested that the bookstore business was profitable and congenial. Davis probably felt himself qualified from his knowledge of literature and his experience in education, and he certainly possessed the merchandising flair which would have seemed to assure success. The idea that it be a shop specializing in juvenile books might have germinated from his contacts in England with William Godwin, who at that time was commencing a similar business venture. But the pacific dream of a "congenial vocation" and "cultivation of the mind" was short lived. Within a month, infuriated by a parody of the Raritan ode which had appeared in the Port Folio, Davis was feuding with the Philadelphia literary circle and in March had published The Philadelphia Pursuits of Literature, A Satirical Poem[41] which berated them all. For Davis and Lucas George, his long-time collaborator in affairs of this sort, The Pursuits represented purgation of revenge and rollicking good exercise in their favorite fun game of Augustan satire. The objects of their barbs were less easily amused. By July of that year Davis had given up the book store and the school, moved to New York, and announced his intention "to make this city the place of his permanent residence." For the next six months he advertised a "Private French and Latin Academy" for the accommodation of twelve young gentlemen, but seemingly without much success. Six months later (mid 1806) evidence

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[41] Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1805.

indicates that he had moved to Richmond, Virginia, hoping perhaps for a more hospitable reception. He had written rather wistfully:

> I, however, have no further desire to travel. It is true I should like much to cross again the Atlantic, but then that would be to go home. I am only a sojourner in America. When the cold turf presses against my breast, I hope it will be one dug out of the vallies of my native land.

To the above paragraph he appended a footnote which reveals to what extent his mercurial feelings had altered in the few months since he had returned to the United States determined to settle down to a "congenial vocation" and seemingly glad to be rid of England:

> I have been in the four quarters of the globe, yet never saw I a spot that pleased me like my own little England. Oh! it is a nice little island! a tight little island! Its cities are not disgraced by dirty Editors of Papers--apostates--"wicked sarpents;"--Blackguards, as destitute of any real politics as they are of religion, calling themselves, risum teneatis amici, Republicans and Federalists! One daubing Jefferson with a plasterer's trowel, the other pelting him with human excrement! Qui capt ille facit. Let the galled jade wince. (First Settlers, p. 283)

This outbreak had been sparked by a suggestion of the editor of the New York Evening Post that some of the testimonials and puffing reviews Davis was fond of sporting might have been forged. The man had good reason to suspect them. The incident and Davis's response suggest eloquently that perhaps his temperament was not best suited for the edification of young gentlemen.

However disappointing some of his projects had turned out, the years 1805 and 1806 bore the fruit of his extraordinary literary application. The Post Captain, Walter Kennedy, and Chatterton were published in England; in addition The Philadelphia Pursuits of Literature, Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, and two printings of The First Settlers of Virginia were published in America. Also during this time, he produced two

translations from the French.

The first translation, The Life and Campaigns of Victor Moreau appeared in February 1806.[42] General Moreau had served as a brilliant field commander of the French armies in the early days of the Napoleonic era, but after a falling out with the Parisian regime had been banished to the United States in August 1805 and had settled near Trenton, New Jersey. Charming, attractive, and sophisticated, he and his wife were much in the news and lionized by New York and Philadelphia society. It is possible that Davis is the author of a nineteen-page pamphlet entitled Buonaparte and Moreau. A Comparison of their Political and Military Lives which appeared in Philadelphia in 1805. The 1806 work of 288 pages is a translation of a work "by an officer of the staff" who remained unidentified, but Davis's role as translator was prominent once again in his preface:

> I will be frank in expressing what I have done, though it may be at the hazard of incurring the imputation of vanity. I am not the negative translator of the book that has been put into my hands; I have felt an ardor to supply a work that should gratify enquiry, and where I found the original wanting in information I have made up the deficiency by laborious, patient, and perservering research.

The book was indeed far more than just a translation. Displaying extensive knowledge of the material under consideration, Davis added numerous footnotes, and gradually interwove so much supplementary material into the text that the work became almost a new one entirely, and in some sections less the story of Moreau than of Napoleon. Despite the evidence of extensive research and the proximity of Moreau's presence, he seems not to have had the benefit of the General's aid in areas where

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[42] New York: Printed for David Bliss, 1806.

he had to conjecture certain actions. The book sold well enough that a second printing was issued later in the year.

As the Moreau had given opportunity to indulge in his love of history, so the second translation, Travels in Louisiana and the Floridas, in the year, 1802 . . . , by Berquin-Duvallon,[43] gave him opportunity to exercise other favorite interests, those of geography and travel. The book came out late in 1806 and included Davis's 1798 poem, "A Tribute to the United States." Following the Louisiana purchase in 1803, American readers were eager to learn more of the new territory, and the book was most timely on that account.

It is likely that he spent some time in Richmond during the latter part of 1806, but by March of 1807 he was settling in Petersburg, Virginia, and had produced Notationes in Virgilium,[44] an eight-page pamphlet of critical remarks on the versification of Virgil. Written entirely in Latin, perhaps to impress prospective students and their parents, it contains a flowery compliment to Petersburg as "loco hospitalissimo, et celebri urbe et copiosa, atque eruditissimis hominibus liberalissimisque studiis affluente." He sent a copy to Jefferson as usual and also one to Dennie, who commented on it in the Port Folio (January 1809):

> These notes appear to us to be little more than a transcription of the usual critical remarks, prefixed to the works of Virgil, in the common editions, with an English version. . . . But as our annotator has, in some instances, broken the shackles of servility and thought for himself, and as, in many of

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[43] New York: I. Riley and Co., 1806. The original French edition had been published in 1803 with the title Vue de la Colonie espagnole du Mississippi, ou des provinces de Louisiane et Floride occidentale; en l'annee 1802. A German translation appeared also.

[44] Petersburgi: excudebat Joannes Dickson, 1807.

> his citations and commendations he appears to feel somewhat of the enthusiasm of the poet, we were inclined to preserve his communication.

Davis was also once again planning a school of his own. His advertisement printed in the Notationes indicates that in changing his locale from Philadelphia and New York, he had also changed his emphasis from French to the classics.

> Junior Department $8 per quarter. English from letters and spelling to the pungency of Junius and the euphony of Gibbon. --Grammar, History, Writing and Arithmetic. Geography rendered pleasing as an Eastern Tale. Senior Department $10 per quarter. English in its scrupulous purity, embracing Composition, Rhetoric and Declamation. Latin comprehending every writer of the Julian and Augustan Ages. The Poets read with an eye to their tropes, figures and fine turns. The structure of their verse examined as it depends on caesure. Their verse scanned and proved. The Orators and Historians read with the application of prosody, and special attention paid to the cremert (sic). Composition according to the genius of the purest prose. Greek--The Greek Grammar rendered familiar as the Latin. The Greek Authors parsed with critical exactness. Geography by extemporaneous Lectures. Astronomy and the Mathematics. (I have studied these sciences in two voyages to the East Indies.) Chemistry. The French Language. (I learnt French in Paris.)[45]

The months in Petersburg appear to have been happy ones. Davis felt an affinity for and appreciation of Virginians which dated back perhaps to his early encounter with Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, a book which he claimed was "the first and greatest work that taught me to reflect." Although he deprecated their preoccupation with liquor, cards, and horses, he admired their "good breeding" and several times in the course of his walking tours remarked that "hospitality is the prominent feature in the character of a Virginian" (Travels, 376). He reserved for them his most explicit paean, a passage which contrasts

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[45] This statement is seemingly in conflict with his earlier claim to have taught himself French in the main top of an East Indiaman.

sharply with those of the irascible satirist and the cynical critic:

> The higher Virginians seem to venerate themselves as men; and I am persuaded there was not one in company who would have felt embarrassed at being admitted to the presence and conversation of the greatest Monarch on earth. There is a compound of virtue and vice in every human character; no man was ever yet faultless; but whatever may be advanced against Virginians, their good qualities will ever outweigh their defects; and when the effervescence of youth has abated, when reason asserts her empire, there is no man on earth who discovers more exalted sentiments, more contempt for baseness, more love of justice, more sensibility of feeling, than a VIRGINIAN. (Travels, 389)

Understandably then, feeling such an empathy with its citizens, the best in Davis responded to the wealthy and cultured atmosphere of Petersburg, and his school was well patronized by sons of the most prominent families. He wrote optimistically to Jefferson: "I have young gentlemen of this place under my tuition, who, at twelve years of age, know all Horace's Odes . . . ; in some measure owing to the pains I take with them, but more to their own genius: Virginia is the soil of genius."[46] In addition to his absorption in the Latin, he reported, "I am now cultivating the Greek language day and night. . . . I love this enthusiasm."

It was also a period of stimulating social and intellectual contacts. John Randolph of Roanoke, whom he had met and admired many years before in Washington, was nearby. So was his old friend and benefactor, Aaron Burr, although in considerably altered circumstances, his lengthy trial for treason dragging on from May through October of 1807 in Richmond. The French royalist emigré and highly respected professor of languages at William and Mary College, Louis H. Girardin, was in and out of Petersburg during this period. Davis had corresponded with him for several years and had dedicated the Notationes to him. John Daly Burk, the fiery

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[46] Dated 1 Sept. 1807, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

Irish playwright, whose young son attended Davis's school, was enlivening the scene with his charismatic personality and was working on his multi-volume history of Virginia, in which Davis had more than a casual interest. He was soon projecting his own third "Indian Tale," writing with renewed inspiration now that he was living in the historic area so closely associated with Pocahontas.

By June of 1808 the school was apparently prospering to the extent that Davis could expand his curriculum and staff. The Petersburg Intelligencer announced: "Book-keeping. Mr. Wm. Fraser of this Town, will teach Book-Keeping in the Petersburg Academy, and attend for that purpose at my present School.--The parents of my Pupils are referred to Mr. Fraser for terms."

From Dr. Thomas P. Atkinson, a student at the school at the time, comes a rare description of Davis's person and his plans for an even larger school:

> He was tall, rawboned, and stoop-shouldered. His schoolhouse was on Back [East Bank Street now] on the south side--the second house, west of the corner, next below the residence of William Robertson, Jr. . . .
>
> There was at one time a scheme on foot of building an academy near Walnut Hill (Wilcox's farm), not far from Brown's old mill, in the valley, south of the Delectable Heights. Davis sometimes walked out there with some of his schoolboys, to look at the proposed site. He wrote articles on the subject of the projected academy, and published them in the Petersburg paper, over the signature of "Academicus." The plan, however, was never carried into effect.[47]

By early July he announced that his new book was ready for the press,

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[47] I am indebted for this quotation to Mr. Edward A. Wyatt, IV, of Petersburg. It is taken from some reminiscences of Dr. Atkinson as jotted down by the historian Charles Campbell and printed in the Petersburg Daily Index, 3 August 1868. Dr. Atkinson also included a list of some of the scholars at the school.

but it seems never to have appeared. On July 26, the following notice was inserted in the Intelligencer: "VACATION. I affectionately acquaint my scholars, that I shall give them a vacation 'till further notice."

His next message, appearing first on September 9 and repeated for several weeks, was postdated from Richmond: "The subscriber acquaints those inhabitants of Petersburg to whom he may be indebted, that he will embrace the first opportunity to pay them respectively their demands, but that at present it is totally out of his power." Whatever caused his sudden removal from Petersburg, seemingly so compatible and responsive to his presence, is not found in the columns of the newspapers. Nor can it be explained by a lack of available positions in the area; the papers reflect numerous openings for tutors and teachers. On September 9 the Richmond papers began carrying his advertisement for a "Belles-Lettres School," supplemented by testimonials from the master of a rival school and from Louis Hue Girardin. Girardin's statement is especially impressive in the light of his letters to Jefferson which express little approval or confidence in the quality of the teaching in the numerous area schools:

> Mr. Davis is the author of several opuscules in Latin, French, and English, which evince a knowledge of those languages equally extensive and accurate. To him a long, and I might say, enthusiastic study, has rendered the British classics perfectly familiar. To these qualifications Mr. Davis joins a spirit of indefatigable industry. This Character I have heard conferred on him by several enlightened and respectable persons, who had had occasion to estimate the result of his exertions.
>
> L. H. Girardin, Richmond, August 6 [1808].

A week later Davis offered an added attendance inducement by reducing tuition two dollars a quarter. It marked the last offer of his projected school in the Richmond papers, although he seems to have remained in the area for at least a few months longer.

About this time, after an absence of three years, his contributions to the Port Folio commenced again and continued through July 1809 with several poems on American themes. During all of this period Lucas George, who had found his way to Baltimore and a professorship in Greek and belles lettres at St. Mary's College, had remained a steady and active contributor. Whether Davis visited him during his own trip to Baltimore in November 1808 is an intriguing question. The men had shared the experiences of many years, their friendship remaining constant at least through early 1805, two years after the Travels had been published. In October 1807, however, George wrote to the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review requesting a subscription to the journal. His reference to Davis hints that their relationship was not as warm as it had once been:

> You have, in a former number of your elegant, and useful work, been pleased to speak of me in terms highly grateful to my feelings. I allude to your critique on Davis's American Travels; a production, in which I appear to some disadvantage. I have been traduced, and abused in the Edinburgh Review, and although I had nothing to do with the Travels of Mr. Davis, yet I had the illfortune of being blended with him in their undiscriminating censure. You, on the contrary, had the generosity to elucidate my character in a more candid manner; a proof at once of your justice, and of your honour; honour which is but a mere phantom in vulgar eyes, but has a real existence in generous minds.[48]

Having attained a certain professional status in the college and in the pages of the Port Folio, he was perhaps at this late date embarrassed that his friend had recorded, possibly with some exaggeration, the unguarded,

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[48] Ms., Massachusetts Historical Society. The generosity alluded to is found in the following sentence: "There is so much sensibility discovered by his friend George, that the man of feeling would willingly call him his brother" (Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, 1, No. 3 [1804], 135,136).

spontaneous posings and pronouncements of his less mature years. Evidence indicates that the Anthology and the Greek master found one another pleasing. From late 1809 through the early months of 1811 the magazine printed a number of translations from Ovid, Horace, and Anacreon over several pseudonyms favored by George.

Where Davis spent the next few years following his disappearance in 1809 remains a puzzle. Thelma Kellogg conjectures that he resided in Richmond during the war years, basing her theory quite logically on the Port Folio appearance of two of his poems in August 1812 and April 1814, respectively. The former poem, "Jamestown, an Elegy," is postdated from Richmond. Its appearance in the Richmond Enquirer in January 1812 would strengthen the belief that Davis was in that city during that time, and if one knew positively that he had been there, a case could also be imagined for his authorship of a few other 1812 and 1814 Port Folio pieces sent in from Richmond. But a search of Richmond (as well as Philadelphia and Baltimore) papers through 1817 reveals no additional evidence of his presence. The alternatives are, then, that Davis was in Richmond, but contrary to all previous publishing compulsions did not use the papers for belles lettres or advertisements--a reticence quite understandable for an Englishman during the War of 1812. His period of total silence precedes the conflict, however, and the poems appear just at the time when Americans were most outraged by the provocations of the English. The other alternative is that he was not in Richmond at all, and that the poems and the post-dating come from previously unpublished material which he had submitted earlier during his residence there. This possibility is especially applicable to the Port Folio poems. For several years following

Joseph Dennie's death in January 1812 his successors admittedly "selected for publication articles which were found among the papers of the late Mr. Oldschool" (Port Folio, March 1816), and Davis's poems on historical Virginia themes supported their efforts to put a nationalistic cast on the magazine. They might not even have been aware that the "Mr. Davis of Richmond" was not one of the Davises active in Richmond publishing circles, but was in reality John Davis, the Englishman.

Miss Kellogg further believes that after the war, Davis resided for a time in western New York,[49] before returning to England in 1817. Her reason for placing him in London at that time is the publication of a much condensed edition of the Travels, entitled Personal Adventures and Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America, printed "for J. Davis, Military Chronicle Office, 14, Charlotte Street, Bloomsbury."

But if the above evidence is indication that he was back in England in 1817, one must also consider that in November 1810 a new periodical, The Royal Military Chronicle, was issued in London, "Printed by and for J. Davis," a signature he had begun to use most frequently. The journal continued regularly each month until April 1817 when it abruptly ceased without notice. Readers learned from the publisher's notes that the "J" stood for John.

There are tantalizing reasons for believing that the publisher of The Royal Military Chronicle and the subject of this study were the same man. Most conclusive, of course, is the identification of the Travels

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[49] This is suggested by seemingly autobiographical references in The American Mariners published in Salisbury in 1822, specifically ll. 324 and 325: "and I who sought and found a wild retreat / Where thy Ontario's sea-like . . . billows beat."

with the Personal Adventures. Additionally, in 1813, as one of its periodic supplements, the Military Chronicle Office published The Campaign of General Moreau in Germany, in 1798; with the Memorable Retreat through the Black Forest, which immediately brings to mind Davis's 1806 The Life and Campaigns of Victor Moreau. It is possible that Davis did not write the 1813 version, for there is a distinct shift in emphasis, point of view and style, which might be explained by the shift in public opinion which had taken place in the intervening years and in the specialized type of audience to which the 1813 version was directed. But whoever was responsible for the 1813 version certainly had Davis's account at hand. Many passages are identical.

In 1816 The Royal Military Chronicle issued a series of supplements, The Original Journals of the Eighteen Campaigns of Napoleon Buonaparte, the first of which was Pommereul's Campaign of General Buonaparte in Italy, which Davis had translated back in 1798 in New York. Although the later edition was improved by adoptions from T. E. Ritchie's 1799 translation,[50] the skeletal substance of the 1816 supplement is the same as Davis's 1798 translation. In spite of these parallel publishing ventures, one might still wonder how a poet and romancer who had been less than affluent in Virginia in 1809 could emerge in London in the fall of 1810 as publisher of a monthly military periodical which indicated by paper, printing, and engraving that it was well financed.

The several-fold aims of the new periodical are reflected in its full title, The Royal Military Chronicle; or the British Officer's Monthly

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[50] Campaign of General Buonaparte in Italy, 1796-7 (Edinburgh: Printed for T. E. Ritchie, 1799).

Register, Chronicle, and Military Mentor. Its departments offered a register of transfers and promotions; detailed reports from various battle arenas in the Napoleonic wars and later of the land and sea battles of the American front; biographies of well-known military figures; courses in tactics and logistics; and travel essays describing areas surrounding important continental military bases. In short:

> The main object of the military chronicle is to infuse and cherish a military spirit in the army and country; forcibly to impress on the country what they owe to the army, and to excite in the younger officers of the army, through the medium of the biography of their illustrious fellow-soldiers, a professional zeal, a gentlemanly spirit, and those ornamental manners, knowledge, and accomplishments, which are necessary to complete the character of a British officer, and to render what he ought to be, at once the grace and defence, the Decus and Praisidium, of his country. (Royal Military Chronicle, I, No. 3 [1811], [2])

The talents and experience which Davis could bring to such an undertaking were many. His abilities had often been recognized by men of discrimination; both Caritat and Southey had proposed him as an editor. He had produced at least fourteen books in the twelve years of his publishing career. His experience in the East India Company and in the Royal Navy, and his previous literary work with military subjects proved a certain knowledgeable background; his personal salute to the Royal Navy--The Post-Captain, already a best-seller--proved his spirit for the undertaking. He had a life-long love of history and biography and teaching--even the Indian tales and Chatterton were attempts at popular education. And he could practice respect, good manners, and propriety when he chose to do so. He was, moreover, an indefatigable worker and had a few friends in high places.

The pages of the Chronicle gradually reveal a working policy between

editor and publisher which is unusual but which lends credence to the belief that the publisher was a man whose capabilities and inclinations were similar to those of Davis. In occasional clues, the unidentified editor[51] reveals that he is a former military officer and related to several influential families, most particularly the Hydes and the Villiers, the Lords Clarendon. He had been on intimate terms with the late William Windham, Cabinet Minister of War, who had died in June 1810 and who "was the parent of the Military Chronicle, of its plan, its form, and its design" (Royal Military Chronicle 1, No. 4, [2]). His main function seems to have been to promote editorially many of the army reforms which Windham had espoused and to solicit from his military contacts manuscripts which were sent directly to the London office of the Chronicle. Because the editor spent much of his time at his home in Norfolk or vacationing in Jersey, the putting together of the magazine was the work of the publisher, in which task he exercised a good deal of autonomy, sometimes to the annoyance of the editor. By 1813 the editor's increasing dereliction of duty necessitated the publisher's performing more and more of the work.

From the beginning the journal enjoyed a warm patronage, much to the gratification of the editor, who several times expressed his surprise that "any literary work of mine would meet with such a distinguished reception." Individual issues were frequently sold out; some of the bound volumes saw four printings. As the continental wars wound down in 1814 and 1815, the publishing company turned more frequently to the publishing of miscellaneous

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[51] Neither the British Museum nor the Ministry of Defense Library has been able to trace any information relating to the editor, publisher, or proprietors of the Chronicle, even though the Chronicle seems to have enjoyed a semi-official status at least part of the time of its existence.

independent volumes, usually previously published, successful works designed to educate and instruct the military careerman. When the Chronicle ceased publication in April 1817 and the company seems to have gone out of business, it had probably quite legitimately served its purpose. And if this publisher really was the John Davis of Salisbury, he had remained at one task and in one place for an exceptionally long time.

There are other reasons, psychological and political, to suspect that Davis might have gone back to England late in 1809 or 1810. Relations between England and the United States were deteriorating rapidly. Aliens, particularly Englishmen, were less welcome than they had been before, and Davis had a Tory pride which had often strained the hospitality of his American hosts in more favorable seasons. Furthermore, he had expressed several times a fear of being buried in any soil other than England's; a logical decision on his part would have been to make the return voyage while the opportunity was still present, especially since his fortunes in Petersburg and Richmond were at a low ebb. He might then have come back to the United States in 1817, spent a few years in western New York, and returned to England by 1822. Internal evidence within The American Mariners itself implies that the voyage was taken after 1817. Line 2889 and a footnote to it identify the American president as "Monroe" (1717-1825), and 11.4382-4 refer to the English ruler as "Imperial Brunswick, on his genuine throne," which could suggest a post-1820 date after George IV had become full king and was no longer regent.[52]

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[52] Although the poem appears to identify precise details of the specific voyage from America to England with which it is concerned--areas where Davis the traveller is usually accurate--substantiating verification of names and places are not readily available. The ship, Electra, seems

C. THE LATER YEARS, 1822-1854

Known facts concerning the remainder of Davis's life, though still sketchy in detail, are at least substantial in authority. By April 1836 he had set up shop in Winchester, and as late as 1839 Robson's Commercial Directory of Winchester listed "J. Davis of the Square, bookseller and printer." He published the same year St. Cross, a collection of poems dealing with incidents in Winchester's history. Of "the most melancholy city," years later he would write: "There is an indefinable character of gloom in the scenery around the old Episcopal city; it is, in truth, d'une tristessa faire mourir."[53] He was also advertising for students--this time with a shift in interest which perhaps reflected the changing times:

> J. Davis . . . proposes to instruct a few young gentlemen in the more useful branches of the Mathematics, comprehending the pure elements of Geometry, plain and spherical Trigonometry, the leading properties of Conic Sections, and the principles of the differential and integral Calculus. The mathematical use

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to be plying between Baltimore and Spithead under the command of Captain Delancey and a Lieutenant Hampden, who, if not presently, had been formerly in the service of the United States Navy. A search by the National Archives reveals that the earliest United States naval vessel named Electra was built in 1843. The United States did have a merchant ship Electra about this time, but its port was Philadelphia and its captains were Williams and Robinson respectively during the period under question. Records of the Bureau of Customs give no indication that a vessel named Electra entered the port of Baltimore between 1815 and 1822. A search of the General Records of United States Navy and Wartime Corps Personnel for One Hundred Years (1779-1879), compiled from official records by Thomas H. S. Hamersly (Washington, 1882), fails to list any officers with the surnames Delancey or Hampden. Port records not having been required by the United States until 1820, and then kept quite erratically for a time, efforts to determine Davis's coming and going by this means lead only to dead-ends.

[53] Jack Ariel; or, Life on Board an East-Indiaman (London: T. C. Newby, 1847), II, 217.

> of both Globes, and (if required) the Greek and Latin Classics, together with English and French Literature.[54]

That same year he wrote to Mr. Rich, a London bookseller, "I have not been in London since my return from the United States."[55] It is almost inconceivable that Davis, who had always gravitated towards cities and who had spent much time in London off and on throughout his life, could have been in England for at least fourteen years, living in nearby Winchester part of that time, and had not visited London. His habits and tastes had greatly altered, unless he had recently returned from yet another trip to the United States, or even a trip to Australia. A poem entitled "To Mr. Wm. Wools," placed at the back of St. Cross tempts the latter conjecture. The recipient is identified as "my young friend dwelling near the Antipodes . . . beneath Australia's sky." The poem consists of descriptive details revealing an intimate knowledge of and feeling for several locations in that continent. Whether derived from Davis's life-long reading of geography or from a first-hand knowledge, it poses the possibility that sometime in those fourteen years he might have visited Australia, a continent at that time as exciting to the adventurous traveler as the United States had been in 1798.

The 1830's were not a good time to be in the book business. England had been plunged into a severe depression in 1825-1826, from which the publishers had scarcely recovered when uncertainty caused by the Reform Bill of 1832 prolonged the economic stagnation. In 1839 John Murray, one of the giants, complained that the situation was worse than in the panic

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[54] St. Cross, p [235]. In the British Museum's copy a note in Davis's hand records, "Only one pupil ever obtained, now in the London University."

[55] MS. letter in Davis's hand pasted into the Widener Library copy of The American Mariners at Harvard University.

years of 1826. In 1842 he wrote:

> I am very sorry to say the publishing of Books, at this time, involves nothing but loss and that I have found it absolutely necessary to withdraw from the Printers every work that I had in the press and to return to their Authors every MS for which they required immediate publication.[56]

Davis's fortunes suffered accordingly, their state subtly reflected in the 1836 letter referred to earlier, like most of his letters an interesting psychological barometer. Crossouts increase and penmanship worsens in inverse proportion to his feelings of good-will and success. During the battles with the Philadelphia critics, his letters to Jefferson were hastily and carelessly written, indicating a disturbed frame of mind. Later in Petersburg, the graceful flourishes of the orthography mirrored his prosperity and satisfaction. The letter of 1836 shows marked deterioration from earlier ones. The closing and signature, always especially sensitive to his self-esteem, would be illegible if not already familiar.

By 1841 he had moved to Kensington with his wife and two unmarried daughters, Lucy and Ann. His wife, whom he had probably married before 1822 (as suggested by lines in The American Mariners), died about this time, and the family moved to Clarence Gardens, Regent's Park. On December 1, 1843, he was admitted "entirely destitute" to the Charterhouse to live out his remaining years in the company of about seventy-nine other "decayed merchants and gentlemen receiving respectable maintenance in the institution, each having an income of 26 l. per annum, and, in addition to their lodging, a dinner, besides other 'commons,' provided for them daily

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[56] Quoted by James J. Barnes, Free Trade in Books: A Study of the London Book Trade Since 1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 114.

in the hall."[57]

Davis's appointment to the Charterhouse under the royal patronage of the queen had been effected through the auspices of the Literary Fund Society which had offered his name in answer to the request for the names of persons "in the literary world . . . reduced to poverty, who have not brought it upon themselves by their conduct, and whose exertions in the cause of literature might give them a claim to a charitable provision for life."[58] Commenting on Davis's qualifications, the Athenaeum and The Times cited the Travels, The Post Captain, and his service in the navy.

At last "the poor old man"[59] had found a permanent home and one which must not have been too distasteful to him. The chief building of the Charterhouse, surely appealing to his love of history, was an historic Carthusian monastery dating back to 1349; yet in 1840 a new building, modern and comfortable, had been constructed for the poor brothers, whose "life now followed very much the lines of life in a college at Oxford or

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[57] The Times, 13 December 1843, Sec. E. p. 3. Davis's statements for the official files of the Charterhouse indicate that his two daughters were his "nearest and only relatives." He also admitted for the first time that he had been fourteen when he entered the naval service of the East India Company, not eleven as he had often stated previously. More interesting in the light it might shed on his residence in the United States since he was now apparently being more careful of his facts is his documentation that he had lived here for thirteen years. He had claimed a twenty-year residency at least twice before, even as late as 1836 in St. Cross. Miss Kellogg's chronology would place him in this country for about eighteen years; the alternative projection--that he had spent eight years in America (1798-1802, 1805-1809 or[1810]), was in England from 1810-1817, and returned to the United States for about four years--could add up to thirteen years.

[58] From a letter written by Mr. George Edward Anson, Equerry to His Royal Highness Prince Albert, as quoted in "Royal Patronage and Bounty to Decayed Authors," Athenaeum, 9 December 1843, p. 1092.

[59] Athenaeum, p. 1092.

Cambridge."[60] The former tutor and schoolmaster could enjoy the lively company of the Charterhouse students, of whom there were about 165, remembering perhaps his own schooldays in the Cathedral Close and the pride he had felt at following Addison's footsteps in Salisbury. Now he was once again treading ground where Addison had also gone to school. Or perhaps he took pleasure in musing about the lives of some of his retirement predecessors at the House, men whose interests had in some way crossed his own--Hakluyt, the British geographer and promoter of the Jamestown colony; numerous naval commanders dating back to the days of the Armada; and even Elkanah Settle, made immortal through Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel, a memorial of the Augustan satire he had so much admired.

But his days were not idled away in memories. In contrast to many pensioners, he seems to have been in good health and energetically at work. A new edition of The Post Captain, much revised and improved, came out about this time; and he was apparently still carrying on active correspondence with men in high places. In May 1848 he wrote with a steady hand and beautiful script to John Wilson Croker acknowledging "your humane and obliging attention to my entreaty,"[61] an entreaty possibly related to Davis's last major production, the publication in 1847 of Jack Ariel, the long-awaited Two Voyages, written in 1797 and almost, but not quite, printed in Charleston in 1799. A happy climax to his literary career,

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[60] Gerald S. Davies, Charterhouse in London: Monastery, Mansion, Hospital, School (London: J. Murray, 1921), p. 243.

[61] MS., John Wilson Croker Papers, Duke University. Inquiries addressed to libraries containing Croker's papers have not brought to light his "obliging attention"--whether connected with Croker's literary pursuits at the Quarterly Review or with his naval activities as a former long-time Secretary of the Admiralty.

the book was to see many printings; yet by a cruel twist of fate, like The Post Captain, his other most popularly read work, it was not credited with his name, and the fame which he had often sought so desperately eluded him once more. When he died on April 24, 1854, his passing was not even noticed by The Times, whose editorial for that day saluted the "large, luxurious ocean streamers" then making frequent, fast runs to New York. The world had come a long way since that "miserable sailing tub" The Two Brothers, had first carried Davis to the United States, his greatest adventure and the object of his stormy but long-lasting affection.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST NOVELS

A. THE ORIGINAL LETTERS OF FERDINAND AND ELISABETH

Scarcely four months after arriving in New York, Davis produced his first novel, a slim, 144-page, 15 cm. volume entitled The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth, dated July 1798. His explanation of how he came to write it is recorded in the Travels as part of his early New York experiences:

> The favorable reception given to the campaign in Italy [Davis's translation for Caritat of Buonaparte's Campaign in Italy], of which the whole impression was soon diffused through the different States of the Union, animated Caritat with courage for another publication; and few men knew better how to gratify present curiosity, by directing his attention to temporary subjects.

The basic ingredients for the book were in a seduction-suicide which had taken place in New York the preceding winter and "of which the public had not abated their eagerness to know the particulars. . . . Such deliberate suicide was perhaps, unexampled, and the letters that had passed between the unhappy pair, I dilated into a volume, which Caritat published to the emolument of us both, and, I hope, without injury to the world" (Travels, pp. 26-28).

It is not difficult to imagine the enthusiasm which each party felt for the project. M. Caritat was industriously establishing what was to become the most popular and best known circulating library in New York, a bustling city which quadrupled its population between 1790 and 1820. Knowing the market, he was eager for popular works to satisfy the

increasing demand of the new reading public for novels, novels, and more novels. But authors to produce them were difficult to come by, especially in America. William Hill Brown's Power of Sympathy, sometimes considered the first American novel, had been published in 1798, and in the intervening years only about twenty-five more had been published as original American imprints.[1] Although native readers were eagerly devouring English and European imports, a book with a local setting had special appeal to the growing number of conscious nationalists. Royal Tyler's The Algerine Captive and Susannah Foster's The Coquette, both published in 1797, had been very successful; and Mrs. Rowson's Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth, which though first published in London in 1791, had been issued in Philadelphia in 1794, had already gone through three editions and was eventually to reach over two hundred.[2] There were even similarities between Davis's Letters and Mrs. Rowson's Charlotte Temple. Both were sentimental tragedies of seduction; both shared the New York locale; and if Charlotte Temple could be authenticated, by a grave in a local cemetery, as a "tale of truth,"--a conscience-soothing element looked for by American readers--then Ferdinand and Elisabeth could produce two graves, if necessary. To Davis, Caritat's proposal must have seemed equally felicitous. An untried young writer in a strange land does not often meet with a sponsor who not only suggests the topic and

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[1] James D. Hart in The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 52, reports: "From 1789 to the end of the century imports jumped tremendously and local publishers alone turned out over 350 different foreign novels and 37 American ones, several in many editions."

[2] Frank Luther Mott, Golden Multitudes (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947), p. 39.

underwrites the publication, but who is a flourishing bookseller to boot. With visions of sugar plums dancing in his head, Davis attacked the matter at hand.

The plot with which he was to work was already so stereotyped that his explanation of his source has been written off as merely the tedious repetition of most contemporary novelists that their stories were "based on fact" or "true to life." Even the most sensational novels could wear a certain air of respectability if clothed with the professed drapery of truth. But Davis's claim was more valid than the usual one; the source of his material had been reported in identical copy by at least two New York newspapers[3] and one article was headlined "Fatal Insanity:"

> Yesterday about noon Ferdinand Lowenstern, aged about 40, and a young woman by the name of Elizabeth Folkenham, aged 28, were found dead in a bed, at Miss Folkenham's in the Bowery.
>
> On this truly shocking discovery a jury of inquest was immediately summoned, who found by letters which were on the table from each party, and other corroborating circumstances, that they had mutually agreed to die this way; on which they adjudged, that Lowenstern first shot Elizabeth Folkenham by her consent, and then shot himself.
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> It appears that her sister had sent to the house by a negro boy, but could not get admittance; and while the door was breaking open, the discharge of a pistol was heard; and on ascending both the man and woman were found dead, and two pistols appeared in such a position as convinced the jury of the justness of their verdict. The parties are said to have been disappointed lovers.[4]

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[3] Commercial Advertiser, 28 November 1797; and Time-Piece, 29 November 1797.

[4] How a book's claim of authenticity may diminish is illustrated by comments on this story excerpted through the years. The copy of the novel in the New-York Historical Society Library contains the following note written in antique ink in an antique hand by John Allen, in whose library the volume first found a home: "The names Ferdinand and Elisabeth are fictitious, as well as all the other names. They were Germans or Swiss; they committed suicide in the Bowery in 1797 or 1798. This Union was approved by an Uncle and others. The deed made considerable noise at the time in New York."

George Gates Raddin, Jr. in Hocquet Caritat calls it a "callow

Undoubtedly the deed did make "considerable noise at the time." It was of a nature not often encountered in the cheerful freedom of the new world. It was somehow appropriate that the deaths had occurred in the Bowery, a relatively uninhabited, peripheral appendage to New York City in 1797, and even more appropriate that the principals were "German or Swiss," and that Elisabeth's brother-in-law Wittenburgh, the ostensible villain, had returned from dark, medieval Germany just before forbidding the lovers' marriage. The whole episode needed roots in the decadence of the old world to be believable at all.[5] With the possible exception of Charles Brockden Brown, most American writers would probably have discarded it as too shocking to touch even with the finger of fiction; but to John Davis, newly arrived from England and well-read in the sentimental novels of the eighteenth century, the story must have seemed like a fortuitous gift from smiling fortune.

Innate within the tale was the formula of frustrated love, overwhelming passion, seduction, a tyrannical guardian, murder, and death by suicide--all ingredients for a delicious wallowing in sentimental sensibility. Only one or two slight changes were needed for a comfortable fitting to the mold. Elisabeth's age must be lowered from an unattractive twenty-four to the stylish sixteen which had been adopted by mutual consent of all sentimental novelists as the only acceptable age

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version of the Wertherian story. . . . Even if the suicide took place, which appears doubtful . . . (p. 66)." Most modern references to the book do not grant it even that much credibility, an unconscious tribute perhaps to Davis's skill in adapting his raw material to the accepted vogue.

[5] One is again reminded of Charlotte Temple, whose tragedy began across the Atlantic and ended in the Bowery.

for female romance. The fatal shot should sound not at noon, but at midnight, a decent hour for such goings-on.

The main characters had even most considerately left letters;[6] therefore, the narrative device would naturally be epistolary, and it couldn't have happened at a better time. From the days of Richardson's Pamela (1741) and her numerous descendants, the flood of epistolary fiction had mounted to phenomenal proportions, estimated by one statistician as 1341 titles between 1770 and 1800.[7] During the decade from 1791 to 1801, though the tide was beginning to ebb, Frank Black has counted 142 novels in letters, the majority of them the sentimental-seduction type.[8]

Davis has handled the device with some skill. Achieving a rare brevity as epistolary novels go, he has limited the correspondence to letters exchanged between the two lovers. For the most part he has focused attention where the action is most concentrated in the outpourings of their effusions to each other. The role which he assumes is that of the anonymous, somewhat pedantic editor, who merely presents the letters as he supposedly found them, briefly elucidating when necessary, but actually interrupting only at the very end, before the climactic and final letters of death. His last one-page comment directs the reader's sympathy to the tragedy of the tale and points out the obligatory moral required by the times. It was a device similar to Goethe's editorial

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[6] However, the letters in the volume were obviously written by one person, John Davis himself. Whatever he meant by having "dilated" the originals, the end product is his own creation.

[7] Notes and Queries, 148 (1925), 396.

[8] Frank G. Black, The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century, (Eugene, Oregon: Univ. of Oregon, 1940), p. 2.

role in Werther, which had been utilized many times before.

In most novels of the sentimental-sensibility school the heroine was given the more important role, but in The Original Letters Davis has given the prominence to Ferdinand. He writes the first letter; thus is is through his mind that the reader is introduced to the other characters and to the problem of the book. He writes more letters than Elisabeth, and he writes more personally in passionate confession baring his soul, confidently expounding his ideas, and graphically describing the numerous roles he is playing in various extraneous activities beyond the world he shares with Elisabeth. His first letter gives all the clues necessary to an understanding of the chief facets of his personality, as Davis will develop it:

> My heart bounds with delight when I hear the soft accents of your voice. Oppressed with troubles and disappointments I fly to my sweet angel for refuge, who appeases me with her counsel, and pours consolation into my breast. I am become sick of the vanity and vexation of the world. Oh! that we could steal from the multitude to some unfrequented spot, where echo should not be able to whisper even our hiding-place. The envenomed shafts of calumny should not reach us, nor envy disturb the innocent tranquility of our retreat: but, remote from tumult and noise, we would sail quietly down the stream of life, to the soft music of love. We would be cheerful and happy. We would interchange our caresses without fear or restraint, and converse should succeed the blest transports of love. . . .[9]

Ferdinand's outlook is typical of the hero of the sensibility novel. To him, the world is hard, cruel, and full of pain. He relishes the sweet suffering to be endured from giving up everything or having everything taken away; it little matters which. Alternately ruminating or raging, surrendering or exploding, he is at all times conscious of him-

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[9] John Davis, The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth (New York: n.p., 1798), Letter I, 3-6. Roman numerals in future quotations from this book refer to the letter number.

self as actor in a role. His only happiness seems to be his dream of escape to some Edenic "abode" in "Nature," where with romantic impracticality he expects to dwell in perpetual bliss. His habitual melancholia is his acknowledgment that life will never allow him this release. His reaction to the most normal circumstance reveals a distortion of exaggeration. After resting the night at a tavern during a walking trip to Philadelphia, he rises at dawn and steals quietly out of the inn to resume his journey. "Call this pride, call it folly, or call it what you will, it was one of those romantic impulses which I have been subject to all my life, and which I can no more resist than I can help loving thee, thou idol of my soul!" (XIII, 72-73). He is subject to many kinds of romantic impulse. Elisabeth says of him, "My Ferdinand hates confinement. He loves to be free as the air that respires" (VI, 25). In his ecstatic titillation of every sensation--physical, mental, or emotional--and in his confessed refusal to resist his multiple impulses, there is an undisciplined primitivism reminiscent of Ossian and certainly predictive of Childe Harold and Heathcliffe.

The resulting individual is not a pleasant one. Victim of every passing fancy and emotion, Ferdinand reveals a serious instability. In contrast to this first letter, expressing ardent affection of and need for Elisabeth, his next communication is concerned almost wholly with the narrative of his attendance at a dance, "the emblem of love and gaiety," given by his landlady. His response to the invitation had been a pensive sigh. "Ah! thought I, you little know the state of my heart," referring to his love for Elisabeth. But the girls arrive in the next sentence, and ever-lusty Ferdinand reveals to poor Elisabeth as she reads the letter that even he does not know the true state of his heart.

At any time an interesting feminine form presents itself, Ferdinand can easily forget his sickness "of the vanity and vexation of the world."

His verbal protestations are frequently contradicted by his actions. "My love for thee," he writes, "far from being diminished, is rather increased by obstacles. I do not indulge for thee one of those imperfect passions that a succession of objects will easily remove, but love thee with a warmth and fervour that can never know abatement" (XII, 52). The next letter arrives from Philadelphia, whither he had suddenly taken himself in the hope "that the troubles which oppressed me would be either soothed or diverted by the external objects on the road" (XIII, 53). He exhorts her thus in prose of rhetorical allusions:

> Thou art mine already by a hundred bonds. I have a mind to go forcibly to thy habitation and carry thee triumphantly to the altar. Thou belongest to me, thou art my house, my field, my barn, my house, my ox, mine ass--my any thing! Touch her who dares. I'll smite the proudest He that stops my way in Padua! . . . . Can'st thou forget our declarations of love, and the protestations we have both made of inviolable constancy? (XXI, 108-109)

She should not have been surprised when, a few days later, he marries another woman. His two-fold excuse is quite in character; he had married to make easier Elisabeth's life with her family, and he could not deny that "pride has had its share in this act" (XXIV, 115-116).

His description of what Elisabeth means to him is most significant. She is a "refuge"; she "consoles and appeases" him with counsel. In his visions, he imagines her saying, "Give not thyself up to despair, Ferdinand, for the hour of felicity draws near, when I will clasp thee to my heart, and thou shalt repose on my bosom." Throughout their relationship Ferdinand turns to Elisabeth only when he chooses to and at other times indifferently neglects her. He is quick to find fault when she displeases

him, patronizing about her reading tastes and style of writing, but lavish in his praise when she has pleased him by acting according to his expectation. Describing their idyllic day in the arbor during which Elisabeth served his dinner, he writes, "As she ministered me the cup . . . I was in Olympus. It was Hebe presenting me nectar" (VII, 30). One remembers that Hebe was hand-maiden to the gods. His inordinate vanity is easily fed, even by the casually professional courtesy of his landlady, "whose low courtesy at my entrance denoted her respect for my appearance" (XIII, 68).

He is uniformly hostile to other males. His feelings about Wittenburgh, Elisabeth's guardian, verge on psychosis:

> Ah! how I despise him from my soul! How my blood boils with indignation when I think of his conduct! The infamous manner in which he insulted us yesterday on our return in the chair from Harlem, I cannot, will not forget . . .
>
> I know the cause of his rage: It was because his return did not restrain me from frequenting thy company, and because I had not told him of our engagement. Simple fool. Could he think that I would study to soothe him to complacency, or acquaint him with what he had no claim to know? (XI, 48-49)

In an artful letter of love and tact, Elisabeth suggests that "a gentleness of deportment" on Ferdinand's part could solve the impasse. His reply is characteristic in its extravagance of metaphor: "Did I love thee a thousand times more than I do . . . I would not sacrifice my honour to my love, and irrevocably debase myself by licking like a spaniel the feet of Wittenburgh" (XIX, 103). Elisabeth gently persists: "You have only to make a slight apology to Wittenburgh for not having before acquainted him with our engagement and everything will be restored to its primitive harmony." Ferdinand's last words on the subject are still full of enmity: "Apology to Wittenburgh! Death and fury! Some

daemon whispered this into thy ear. . . . Elisabeth, wilt thou marry me? Will you sacrifice your interest to your love, or your love to your interest?" (XXI, 107).

The last question is especially revealing, following, as it does, immediately after his own declaration that he would never sacrifice his honor to love, a sacrifice Elisabeth had already long since made. It is apparent that Ferdinand is incapable of any kind of relationship except one based entirely on his own terms. Shortly after, Elisabeth writes her farewell letter to him.

In contrast to Ferdinand, Elisabeth is presented as thoroughly admirable in the long tradition of the sentimental heroine. She is young, inexperienced in the world, beautiful, and pious. In addition to Ferdinand's ardent descriptions of her physical beauty, he mentions particularly her bland and mild disposition, her spotless and unsullied character, her modesty and meekness, her unaffected, innocent gaiety. And by the convenient loss of some of her letters, Davis has added to her charm; she never appears over-talky as Pamela and Clarissa do.

Her constant charity towards others is one of the most endearing qualities which Davis ever implanted in a character, and Elisabeth, his first heroine, will continue to be the most admirable and fully portrayed women he was ever to attempt. Despite Ferdinand's frequent abuse, she never attempts to retaliate. Wittenburgh, as villain, must be seen only through Ferdinand's hate-filled eyes; the worst that she says of him is that he is cold and has animosity towards the family. She suffers at his unkindness, but only in her last letter does she resort to rhetoric similar to Ferdinand's in blaming Wittenburgh for the

tragedy, and it is partly by this outburst that the reader can detect how her character has been altered by her ordeal.

Her earliest letters are marked by a disciplined cheerfulness. Her quiet, controlled closing, "Write to me soon," contrasts sharply with Ferdinand's urgent "Write quickly, and soothe my anguished soul. Your letter is balm to my heart." After Ferdinand's letter, describing in lusty detail his "romp" with the "sweet little rogues" with whom, "far from being passive," he exchanged caresses and "sealed their lips with kisses more warm and holy than ever came from an apostle," she comments with characteristic sincerity:

> Though you make a jest of your gallantries with the lasses at the ball, and consider as mere pleasantry the freedoms you took with them, yet let me inform my Ferdinand that I view them in a different light. . . . I assure you that I by no means approve of such proceedings. . . . But you could not have derived real pleasure from an evening devoted to amusement in which your heart had no share. (IV, 15-16)

Following the tradition of the novel of seduction, the plot has left Elisabeth isolated from outside help when danger and temptation threaten. With no family or friend in whom to confide and with nothing to distract from the importunities and sophistries of her suitor, she is vulnerable not only physically, but even more important, psychologically. After her receipt of Ferdinand's letter with its embarrassingly frank and explicitly detailed description of their intimacy in the arbor, she writes as if to assure herself that what has transpired is not a common seduction. "Your letter which I have read over a thousand times, could only have been dictated by a real, undissembled passion. It is not a triumph over female weakness, but breathes the genuine sentiments of the heart." A few lines farther reveal her troubled mind.

"And yet, though I find your absence almost insupportable, though fear, reaching nearly to despair, comes sometimes into my mind, I would not give up the passion my heart now glows with, to enjoy the most placid equability of soul." The letter's ending shows how little equability of soul Elisabeth has left: "Thy absence is become insupportable, I am wan with grief" (VII, 38-43).

In succeeding letters her growing fear is well-developed. Easily dismissed in hasty reading as the trite outpourings of the usual sentimental heroine overwhelmed by tearful moods, the letters reveal a progression which becomes justifiable psychologically in the denouement of her pregnancy. As she becomes increasingly aware of the hopeless situation in which she is trapped, she avoids the excesses of emotion so easily experienced by Ferdinand, and strives with reason and gentle persuasion to effect a reconciliation between him and her family. But when she describes the unhappiness of her situation and begs him for patience and tolerance, he responds sarcastically to the "poor, deluded girl," and when she turns to religion for comfort, he derides such "prejudices of education" and "superstitions." Little wonder that she refrains for several months from telling him of her pregnancy and informs him only after she has independently and irresolutely determined on a course of action.

But alas, for all of her virtues, Elisabeth has erred and, according to the rigidly established pattern of the sentimental-seduction novel, there could be no happy ending, as there was none for the real life Elisabeth and Ferdinand: "The eighteenth century demanded in its fiction almost absolute adherence to the principle of poetic justice.

This overwhelming desire to see virtue rewarded and vice punished is clearly expressed in stories involving sexual betrayal."[10] Following the publication and extensive popularity of Goethe's The Sufferings of Young Werther (1774; first English translation in 1779), suicide became the favorite vogue of punishment.[11]

Even before the matter of suicide injects itself into the book, strong similarities between Ferdinand and Werther have become apparent.[12] The characters share the same excessive, undisciplined emotionalism; neither have vocations to occupy their energies and time; both are fond of dancing and, in contrast, express rapturous delight in the solitude of nature; both pour out their souls in long letters, are psychotically proud and vain, have feelings easily wounded, tempers easily inflamed, express strong class consciousness verging on paranoia, and seem to live in a constant state of rage at and aversion to most of their fellow beings. They view the world as a hostile prison, as unrelieved burden the melancholia of their lives. The habitual pose of melancholia, when carried to its logical extreme, encourages a desire for release from this world. as Ferdinand expresses in the first paragraph of his first letter. This toying with the idea of death and suicide, added to an ennui with the sensations of this life which he had already exhausted as

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[10] John Raymond Lott, "The Vogue of the Betrayed-Woman Theme in English Fiction, 1740-1775," Diss. Duke 1962, p. 355.

[11] Hart, p. 62.

[12] Four imitations of Werther and six more novels which lean directly upon Werther are discussed by Black (p. 79). Two of the latter were published in America: one is Davis's Original Letters and the second is an anonymous work entitled The Hapless Orphan (1793). The latter is strongly akin to Werther; The Original Letters bears remarkable resemblance to them both.

a practising disciple of super-sensibility, leads him to welcome with a new deliciousness Elisabeth's decision for death. Out of ingrained custom he repeats all the trite Wertherian expressions about "this world of wretchedness," but with the exuberance of a small boy offered a new game, he asks, "What think you of poison? What my soul of pistols?"

The game of suicide offers a wonderfully dramatic new role:

> Cruel, damned, tormenting world, replete with mazes, perplexed with labyrinths; full of malice and ARISTOCRACY! vale of misery, of despondency, of despair! I disdain, despise and spurn thee! I will no longer be subject to thy earthly confines. My soul shall throw off its terrestial shackles. It pants for liberty, it longs for freedom. I will perpetrate my own death. I will die, die, die! and if suicide be a crime, why brand me ye cowards with it. . . . Let us not procrastinate. A few, few hours more, and the well-plumed hearse shall bear our bodies to the hollow tomb. Our sensible, warm motion, will become a kneaded clod; a lifeless lump--cold, cold as the earth that cover it. In cold obstruction shall we rot, the food of worms. (XXVII, 130-131)

His hysterical ravings are contagious, for upon receipt of his letter, Elisabeth, who had previously written of death in a calmly resolved tone, is thrown into a passionate frenzy of self-destruction:

> And, oh! with what rapture shall I court death beside the man my soul, my aspiring soul adores; the brave, the intrepid, the fearless Ferdinand! You ask me when, and how I should like to die. Come to me this night! my blessed creature! Bring with thee poison! Bring with thee pistols! and when the clock strikes twelve we'll both become immortal! (XXVIII, 133-134)

Though Davis, through Ferdinand, had expressed amusement at the "susceptibility" of a coquettish young girl who "slept every night with the Sorrows of Werther under her pillow," he would seem to have out-Werthered Goethe in his glorification of suicide. To the discriminating readers who had already expressed concern with the rash of suicides in fiction and their morbidly pathological effect upon less sophisticated readers, Davis's lack of moral rectitude and of rhetorical restraint

must have been especially offensive.

In the Travels (1803) five years later, Davis blames Ferdinand and his deistic beliefs for failing to deter Elisabeth from her resolution of suicide: "Let the reader contemplate the wretchedness of Deistical principles. Had he [Ferdinand] given to piety an early ascendancy over his heart, he might have withheld Elizabeth [sic] from plunging into the vale of misery; he would have sounded in her ears the holy admonition, Return and live, for why wilt thou die! (Travels, pp. 28-29). That Ferdinand is a deist is made patently clear in the novel. His strong antipathy to organized and revealed religion is expressed in several vitriolic denunciations. He emphasizes communion with nature, the superiority of feeling and emotion over reason and restraint, and insists on freedom and liberation. He is strongly anti-aristocratic in theory, though consistently snobbish in his personal relations with others. He argues that he and Elisabeth are as united without benefit of clergy as they could ever be with it, and his primary demand upon her is that she break away from her submission to family obligations and custom to elope with him: "You ought to consult your own heart, and exalt your mind from slavery to independence" (XXI, 109).

But Elisabeth does not share his emancipating views. A Stoic, she places poised judgment and reasoned virtue above emotional indulgence. Practical and realistic, she recognizes from the beginning that "the world we live in demands some deference to its customs." Although she admits that education and religion have misrepresented God, she thinks of Him as just, mild, and kind. While Ferdinand rails at Fate and Fortune, blaming them for his woes, she prays to "a God whom, while I write this, I look up to with confidence and the hope of a better life."

Ferdinand had written to her of Wittenburgh, "Would my sweet girl, therefore, submit her appeal to a being whose disposition is so perfectly irreconcileable with her own?" Throughout the succeeding twenty-nine letters it becomes ironically apparent that in every way Ferdinand's disposition is totally irreconcilable to hers.

This is the major conflict in the novel, and the major problem in trying to understand what Davis was saying. If he was writing a novel with an anti-deistic thesis, there is no hint of that intent in the book itself (except perhaps the word "notorious" in his brief footnote). For despite Ferdinand's unattractive character, despite his self-incriminating words and actions, despite his guilt of seduction (and a very good case could be developed for Ferdinand as a rake-villain), despite all of the deistic philosophy which Davis allows him to expound, while quixotically losing Elisabeth's testimony of orthodox belief and printing only her half-hearted capitulation to Ferdinand's canon, despite Davis's later denunciation of deism in the Travels, the Original Letters itself gives all the winning arguments to Ferdinand. Elisabeth's last letter is a pitiable admission that he has been right all along, that she has brought on the tragedy by refusing to defy her family, that Wittenburgh is the arch-enemy, and that she has remained in the bondage of convention until it is too late.

Lest the reader miss the point, editor Davis in a one-page epilogue adds a warning of his own:

> [These letters] will admonish parents and guardians to consult the hearts as well as interest of their children in the sacred bond of marriage, and exhibit a striking picture of the folly and imprudence of disuniting two young people whose breasts glow reciprocally with the passion of love. Let us not be premature in the condemnation of this unhappy pair. . . . Had we been in the situation of Ferdinand and Elisabeth, should we have acted otherwise than they?

It would appear then that at the time he wrote the novel, Davis did not intend an anti-deistic message. On the contrary, he viewed Ferdinand as an admirable hero. The editor's moral and Ferdinand's argument were one and the same--an argument as old as Clarissa, but in this case not as defensible. Could he have seriously thought that most readers would have acted in a manner such as Ferdinand's? His only condemnation of Ferdinand, even after five years, is that his deism had failed to deter Elisabeth from suicide. But what of his other faults? Elisabeth shouldn't be blamed for not marrying Ferdinand; he's a cad. Though she never realizes it, Davis should have. Both Davis and Ferdinand condemn Wittenburgh; to the reader he was quite properly trying to protect an underage ward from a persistent predator who would not be a suitable husband to anyone.

But since Ferdinand emerges as the spokesman for truth, is the reader to assume that he is also the spokesman for Davis?[13] Is Ferdinand's rationalization of the seduction, also Davis's? Is Elisabeth's final justification of Ferdinand's vanity, anger, and deceit, also Davis's justification of him? The sweet reasonableness of her plea that, but for Ferdinand's stubborn pride, harmony might be restored and their marriage approved, is not easily forgotten. Certainly the aesthetic and moral inconsistencies obvious in the book were not lost on contemporary critics.

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[13] There is more than a little of Ferdinand and deism in the young Davis. Many of Ferdinand's philosophical tenants and character traits reappear in later books, sometimes in identical verbiage, sometimes less emphatically expressed. Ferdinand's letter of his walking trip to Philadelphia is pure Davis, showing an unusual degree of identification between author and character.

The book was not widely reviewed at its release. Perhaps, because the event was such recent news in New York, critics feared that discussion might be misunderstood as judgment on the dead. July, the beginning of the plague season and the consequent annual exodus from the city, was not a propitious time of publication. In August 1798, M. Caritat advertised his "large stock" of the book at private sale "at a discount of from 25 to 40 percent."[14] This may be construed as a publisher's overstock or merely as M. Caritat's method of wholesaling the book to other distributors.[15]

One can hardly argue with a critic who declared it to be a very bad book. The writing style is inflated and flowery. There seems to have been no effort to delineate the peculiar manner of expression each writer should have. Any distinction between the authors of the letters would have to be made, not on how they said it, but on what they said. Character motivation is not adequate. Unity of tone and mood is marred by irrelevant digressions, such as Ferdinand's walk to Philadelphia and the interpolated literary criticism. But these faults were often found in the run-of-the-mill novels of the sentimental-sensibility school.

Yet one can counter with a claim that there are some good things about the book. Davis does attempt an elementary exposition of psychological insight. In Ferdinand he has created, perhaps unwittingly, a consistently disagreeable egoist. In Elisabeth there is charm and pathos.

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[14] [New York] Daily Advertiser, 8 August 1798.

[15] Raddin (p. 56) states, " Charles Brockden Brown and his friends found it unbearably ironic that Davis's highly-seasoned suicide tale eclipsed Wieland in both sales and public interest." He does not give his source of information.

With practise and helpful criticism his ability to delineate the inner passions might have improved, but he never again attempted such in-depth character portrayals. Henceforth, he was to deal with outward actions and let deed and appearance speak for themselves.

Another redeeming quality is the warm feeling for nature glimpsed in the book. When Elisabeth's anxieties and Ferdinand's posturing wear uncomfortably, the "arbor encircled with woodbines and jessamine," or the gravelly roads of rural New Jersey, bordered with red soil and cedars, and cherry trees loaded with fruit, or the casual encounters with the cheerful, homely inhabitants of small villages are more specifically memorable than the final gory scene of the two lovers weltering in pools of blood.

On the limited evidence of The Original Letters, a critic might warily predict that the road to successful progress for the young writer-pilgrim would not be in attempting to follow the fashionable literary paths of the period into the slough of sensibility and the valley of despondency and suicide. But unfortunately, there does not seem to have been a true evangelist to point the way.

B. FARMER OF NEW-JERSEY

Two years elapsed before Davis's next novel. He had spent most of the intervening time serving as tutor in the Drayton and Ludlow families and traveling. He had seen the publication in South Carolina of his first book of poetry. A summer's respite in the relative seclusion of the Ludlow summer home at West Chester allowed him opportunity to produce a seventy-page "tale," Farmer of New-Jersey, which came out in December 1800. Perhaps the disapproving reception of The Original Letters and

perhaps the pastoral environment in which he found himself and which had surrounded him during his year in South Carolina, influenced him to try a kind of story entirely different from his earlier one.

At a time when Americans were calling for more novels of their own manufacture which would depict manners and customs of their own country rather than those of England or France,[16] the title Farmer of New-Jersey was bound to elicit local interest. The opening paragraph offered further proof that the tale was intended to be thoroughly American:

> After a youth spent in contributing to establish the Independence of my country, I retired with my family to a little farm in New-Jersey, that had descended to me from my forefathers. It was a pleasant spot of twenty-five acres, situated on the Hudson, and having a range of salt meadows, on which I fed my cattle.[17]

The personable narrator, Mr. Cheeseman, is a man of about sixty, whose family consists of a wife, two "comely and dutiful daughters," and a promising young son, "ingenuous to a fault." Colonel Brandywine, "the friend and fellow soldier of my youth," his wife, and two daughters have recently moved nearby have become congenial neighbors. The action of the story begins with the unexpected return of nineteen-year-old William Brandywine, who "had been educated at Columbia College, and was designed for the gown, but for some caprice had disobeyed the wishes of his father, to embark for the Indies, whither he had been three voyages."

The story of William's adventures provides a lively conclusion to the quiet Christmas evening which the families had been sharing and also provides insight into the young sailor's character. Soon after leaving

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16 One example of such a plea is Royal Tyler's "Preface" to The Algerine Captive (1797).

17 Farmer of New-Jersey; or, A Picture of Domestic Life, (New York: Furman and Loudon's type, 1800), p. 5.

Malabar, his ship had been pursued by pirates, and the timid captain's attempt to outsail the pirates failed:

> . . . we had no alternative left but that of engaging them. Our captain however was of a different opinion. When he saw me point a gun at the headmost vessel, he tremblingly exclaimed, Mr. Brandywine, Mr. Brandywine, I entreat you not to fire, or perhaps they will return it and do us a mischief. I answered this magnaminous hero as he deserved, by knocking him down on the deck, and took the command of the ship into my own hands. I furled my top-gallant sails, hauled up the foresail, and hove my mainyard aback, to wait for the pirates. But they thought better of it, and after exchanging a few shot, hauled up to the westward. I now gave the ship back to the Captain, who during the action had put his head into a tar-barrel, and the next morning we came to an anchor in Bombay harbour. Here the captain, by his artful representation of my conduct, procured me, not a crown of laurel, but a dismissal from the ship. I was paid my wages, bound over to give security for my good conduct, and severely reprimanded by the American Agent. But I told them both to go to the devil, and as long as my money lasted, lived like a Nabob. I hired a Palamquin, kept my Bibee and Huckabadar, and when the standing part of my last guinea was gone, entered myself mate of a small ship that was bound to Philadelphia. (Farmer, pp. 15-16)[18]

The ill-fitted ship on which he returned had wrecked off the Jersey coast, forcing the crew to swim ashore.

William's presence much enlivens the activities of the two families, and he soon wins the heart of fifteen-year-old Serena Cheeseman with experienced, flattering gallantry. That Serena had already been promised to the son of a neighboring farmer deters the courtship not at all. Mr. Cheeseman, though he had never cared for the rustic Jack Haystack, is disturbed by his daughter's coquettishness, and Jack, her betrothed, is angrily indignant. A confrontation ensues, during which Jack's coarseness causes Mr. Cheeseman to evict him from the house. William and

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[18] The encounter with the pirates is a retelling of a 1790 experience involving the Worcester, an Indiaman, on which Davis served. Davis credits Owen Ellis, the chief mate, "full of fire, fancy and mischief," with saving the ship by taking over verbal command. Only the physical assault on the captain is fictional.

Serena are married on Valentine's Day.

In the succeeding months Serena bears a child, and the colonel buys William a ship to command. In sorrow the families see him embark on a six-months' trip. But a year passes and William does not return. In the meantime Doctor Lovell, who had married the elder Cheeseman daughter, has been called to manage his family's coastal plantation in Georgia. Rather than separate the congenial group, all three families move south and establish themselves in close proximity. The inconsolable Serena, now mother of two, has become convinced that William is a prisoner of the Algerine pirates. The climax of the story occurs on a stormy winter evening. As members of the family attempt to cheer her, Serena suddenly shrieks that she has heard William's cries of distress. At her insistence they all rush to the beach where a ship is seen foundering on the rocks. A small boat, attempting to make land, is overturned by an especially large wave which moments later washes ashore the body of William. Serena falls dead upon his breast. The concluding chapter ends in the grief of the joint funeral and the family's attempt to achieve "patience under suffering."

After the reader has dried his, or more likely her, tears, he might have asked himself what it had all been about. That the author intended a gentle arcadian story revealing the felicities of pastoral life, depicted in the mode of Goldsmith and other pre-Romantics, would seem evident from the number of pages devoted to the description of such a life, from the persona of the narrator, and from the style of writing. But if the point of the story is the felicity of the rural life, it is certainly marred by the emotional ending. The reader can accept the

death of William at sea, but Serena's death does not argue much for the qualities of physical endurance, psychological adjustment, and spiritual stability usually claimed for pastoral living. Even the long arm of coincidence, which wrecks William twice upon his father's doorsteps--though the doorsteps are hundreds of miles apart--is not as difficult to accept as the implausible melodrama of Serena's hearing, supernaturally, William's cries of distress and of her sudden death on the beach.

In the last few paragraphs Mr. Cheeseman warns the attendants at the burial that "every moment may be our last" and testifies that his tears are "of resignation, and not of reproach, at the great Dispenser of all things." If, on the other hand, the theme is the shortness of life and acceptance of trials, no indication of that intent has prepared the reader for it, and it comes as small comfort, artificially tacked on. Had the novel been extended enough to show the family reconciled to its loss and once more living in peace and tranquility, the story might have seemed less vapid, and a theme might have emerged with some clarity.

The ambiguity of theme and the theatrical melodrama of the denouement are more disturbing to the modern reader than to a contemporary one who had become inured to similar ingredients in the sentimental novels. Davis did not anticipate any problems in those areas, but he did not want his readers to miss what he felt would be the most innovative and valuable quality of his work. Therefore, he used the "Preface" to advise the reader what to look for, at the same time taking a sidewise blow at the Gothic mode:

> In this little tale the reader must not look for haunted forests, or enchanted castles, but the exhibition of such scenes as bring before the heart the images of its own feelings. Its sentiments have been enforced by nature, and not supplied by meditation.

In over-all evaluation of the book and in a direct answer to Davis's preface, the reviewer for the American Review and Literary Journal[19] wrote:

> This humble tale may serve, perhaps, a New-Jersey farmer for the amusement of a vacant hour. The story is very simple; and, though conversant with the Vicar of Wakefield, the author will scarcely be deemed a successful rival of Goldsmith. . . . Genuine simplicity is inexpressibly charming; it is the spontaneous effusion of nature, and cannot be attained by study or art. In the endeavor to be simple there is danger of becoming insipid.

Commenting later in the Travels, Davis wrote:

> During my abode at West Chester, I wrote a little Novel entitled, The Farmer of New Jersey; the publication of which inflamed the wrath of the Mohawk Reviewers. In my preface I had disdained to deprecate the severity of their censure, and they besieged me from their attic stories with the javelins of criticism. What these fathers of American criticism chiefly objected to, was the style of the book, in which I had been purposely unambitious of ornament. That they could spy a mote in the eye of their neighbour, and not percieve the beam in their own, the following passage from the Mohawk Review will, I am of opinion, evince. "The slightest acquaintance with the history of literature is sufficient to convince the most ardent admirer of simplicity and of unadorned truth of the necessity of a good style, and of the advantages of an occasional use of its highest ornaments."*[20]
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> Americans! rejoice! the Augustan age of your country cannot surely be remote, when you possess such Reviewers!
>
> *New-York Review, Vol. I, page 16.[21] (Travels, p. 162)

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19 American Review and Literary Journal, 1, No. 1 (1801), 83. This periodical was printed in New York and edited by Charles Brockden Brown.

20 "Mohawk reviewers" is Davis's derogatory name for New York literary critics. He considered this sentence to be such good ammunition against them that he had already used it in "The Reviewers Reviewed," printed in the [New York] Commercial Advertiser, and again in his preface to The Wanderings of William.

21 Davis referred several times to the "New York Review," creating a problem for A. J. Morrison, editor of the Travels, who was unable to verify the existence of such a periodical and therefore assumed it must have been a very short-lived one. His error is perpetuated by Miss Kellogg. Davis was actually referring to the American Review and Literary Journal, which could have been familiarly called "the New-York Review" since it was the only literary review in New York at the time.

That the "Mohawk reviewer" was aiming at more than insipidity of style seems obvious. The tale itself is also insipid. As merely a chronological narrative of certain events, it can hardly be dignified by the name of novel. The plot examines no conflict, no struggle, no complication which engages the characters. Motive cannot be seen as the instrument of their rewards; nor is the reward morally appropriate to their motives. The change from happiness to misery transpires outside of the sphere of the characters' control. They are acted upon, not agents of their own destiny.

Characterization is also insipid. The narrator is merely a bland observer. William sparks some vitality, but his appearance is brief. The other characters are not often shown in action; consequently they remain but paper figures. Even the introductory descriptions are not always borne out by what happens later:

> Of my two daughters--Eliza, now seventeen, possessed every beauty and elegance of form, while Serena, about two years younger, was obviously rising into symmetry and grace.
>
> In their tempers, Eliza was lofty and often impetuous; Serena of a mild and placid equability. Eliza could not restrain the emotions of passion; Serena repressed them with a tear. (p. 6)

But "impetuous" Eliza is courted by Dr. Lovell two years before marrying him; Serena, while still promised to another, accepts William's proposal without the permission of her parents. She marries him within six weeks of their first meeting. Eliza is said to be enamoured of poetry; but Serena is the one who supposedly writes the poems included in the book. And in the end, the "emotions of passion," far from being repressed, have carried Serena quite literally away.

The New York reviewer cited another dissatisfaction. "The manners described, and scenes exhibited in this little volume, do not characterize

a farmer of New-Jersey. He would not talk of last Michaelmas." If the reader was expecting to meet a typical farmer, he had good reason to complain. Both the Cheeseman and Brandywine families more closely resemble those of the country squires of old England. And not many farmers, even in England, could have jumped into the midst of an argument to squelch an opponent with a speech of this caliber: "Hold, wretch, cried, I, this obliquy dissolves a contract which nothing else could make me infringe. Begone, base calumniator, begone from my sight, and know that thy vileness alone can shield thee from my wrath" (p. 39). Few farmers' sons attended a university as had William, and even fewer younger sons who had never been away to school at all would have remarked, as Henry Cheeseman did to William: "Upon my word, Sir, . . . one would suppose that you had come from the shade of academic bowers, rather than the lap of Tnetis. You possess what falls to the lot of few, felicity in writing an ode--which, in my opinion, cannot be had from purchase, but gift-- and a gift per se" (pp. 22-23). Nor were most farmer's daughters as accomplished as Eliza and Serena, who, "though they had received only a domestic education, were well acquainted with history and geography, and had read the best English poets," as well as the Iliad and part of the Odyssey! Few farmers had as much difficulty finding congenial neighbors. In New Jersey even the parson was too crude, and in the south the "ostentatious manners" of the other planters "did not suit the primeval simplicity of our own." Perhaps the title hadn't done so much for the book after all.

Through the peculiarities of two minor, humorous figures, however, Davis did attempt an American gloss beyond the mere geography of the

story. Deborah Cheeseman and Jack Haystack reveal a passion for partisan politics, a passion shared by many Americans at this period in history and noticed by many visiting foreigners. Deborah is presented thus:

> My wife was a thrifty, notable woman, who baked her own bread, and was so often in the kitchen, that it might be said, she cooked her own dinner; but, otherwise, much the lady, without having had the originality of her character smoothed into insipidity by modern refinement. If she had any failing, it was a headstrong attachment to the French Nation and its government. Deborah was a politician, and in her wisdom declared that America could never flourish till she entered into a treaty offensive and defensive with France. (pp. 8-9)

But Democrat Deborah's emphatically held judgments are often erroneous, and Serena's engagement to Jack Haystack is largely the result of her mother's urgings:

> . . . he was a loquacious kind of fellow, and would fight any man that spoke disrespectfully of the French government; my wife was not only blind to his defects, but admitted his addresses to the soft and sensible Serena. For my part, I could never listen with any temper to the inanity of his discourse, or behold, without disgust the distorted muscles of his vulgar countenance; but I was awed into submission by Deborah, who, when politics came uppermost in her mind, was like one possessed. (pp. 8-9)

The inanity of Jack's discourse and that of his father is revealed in what is supposedly American rural dialect. Mr. Haystack's cultural and linguistic levels are exposed in his comments about the changing of the village schoolmaster:

> This new schoolmaster . . . makes a dozen that we have had since last Michaelmas was two years. I would send my little boy Bill to him when he gets out of his coats, for I hear for certain sure he is a man of <u>larning</u>. But it hurts a boy's <u>genus</u> to have so many masters, and Bill has now almost got through his letters. (p. 8)

The one scene in which Jack plays an active role takes place at the Cheeseman home. He has come to reprove Serena for what he thinks is merely her flirtation with William. Jack's speech is even more rustic

than William's is nautical. "Jack Haystack will not look quietly over the hedge while another man steals his mare. I say, Senny, thou art mine. Thou art more dear to me than my house, my barn, or my new team; and I would as soon think of shooting my best pointer bitch as giving thee up to a Jack Tar" (p. 36).

That the only specifically American traits are treated as objects of ridicule could not have endeared the humor to the American reader--even to the ardently anti-Democrat critic of Brown's American Review. But the intended comedy of the scene is destroyed by a more fundamental flaw. Jack's coarseness and ignorance are portrayed with such a heavy hand that the dominant reaction of the reader becomes disgust and incredulity that the supposedly well-bred Cheesemans had ever considered an engagement to such a clod.[22] There is also the nagging knowledge that despite the Cheeseman gentility, poor oafish Jack is morally in the right and has good reason to call Serena deceitful. Serena and her family had been willing to settle for anyone until someone seemingly better came along. But Davis does not seem aware that a fragility of integrity lessens the reader's concern and respect for his heroine and her family.

On January 7, 1801, a few days after the book had been issued, a review appeared in the [New York] Commercial Advertiser, signed by Aulus Gellius, a pseudonym shared by both Davis and his friend Lucas George. It was, as might be expected, generally favorable. To the reviewer the chief charm of the book was its "affecting" passages, in proof of which were quoted excerpts from the migration and beach scenes. In conclusion:

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[22] Only two major scenes in the book are acted out before the reader--the betrothal confrontation and the shipwreck on the beach. The dramatic effect of both is diminished by their lack of verisimilitude.

"He who can write like this will not often write in vain. Here is no hypercritical amplification of sorrow; but natural sentiment expressed in corresponding language. In a word, the Farmer of New Jersey has many faults, but it is not without its peculiar beauties."[23]

A less sentimental reader of a later era finds "peculiar beauties" and academic interest in other facets of the book. It is a unique undertaking--a fictional delineation of American rural life in 1800, as envisioned by an English observer and directed to an American audience--even if the delineation did not convince. However, not only in subject matter, but in style was Davis seriously attempting something relatively new in novel writing. He drew attention to his aim in his preface to the Farmer, saw that it was re-emphasized in Aulus Gellius's newspaper column, and three years later was still affirming it in the Travels--to express natural sentiment in "corresponding language."[24] This attempt, including the use of Negro and rural dialect, might have been applauded by the admirers of the new Romantic writers who were gaining acceptance in England; but American readers were still awed by the inflated and artificial prose of the Della Cruscans, and those who commented in print on the Farmer did not appear to be particularly impressed with what Davis was trying to do, much less on whether he had done it poorly or well.

To the modern reader the book's "peculiar beauties" lie also in the brief, but detailed, specific description of landscape, in the strong feeling for nature--in this case the southern coastal region--and in the

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[23] The lengthy sequel to this article is discussed in Appendix A.

[24] Wordsworth's "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads was also published in 1800, but probably not early enough to have influenced Davis.

catching of the lively and quaint flavor of a dance or other convivial gathering. As in The Original Letters, this kind of material would prove consistently to be Davis at his best. And further, as inconsequential as the Farmer is in its totality, it does introduce the treatment of certain themes which would continue to concern the writer in many later works--a philosophy of education for the young, the plight of the Negro, the romance of the Indian, and the subtle enchantment of the South.

C. THE WANDERINGS OF WILLIAM

> The emoluments I had derived from the publication of my little Novel,[25] induced me to undertake another, which I was resolved to make more voluminous; for Americans expect quantity in a book not less eagerly than in other merchandise[26] . . . .
>
> After revolving many schemes, I was determined to continue my former narrative, by writing the adventures of its principle character; for, in the Farmer of New Jersey, they are only partially related, and William (the hero of the tale), I discovered to be a favourite among the ladies. (Travels, pp. 164-165)

Therefore, scarcely two months after the publication of the Farmer, a half-page column advertisement appeared in the New York Commercial Advertiser[27] announcing a proposal for its sequel. An extract chosen to titillate the American taste was the sentimental description of William's "drawing near home" after his lengthy absence. Proposals were to be left at Mr. Caritat's library.

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[25] Davis claims that the Farmer saw two printings (Travels, p. 186).

[26] An allusion to one of "Citizen's" complaints about the Farmer, to which A.G. had replied, ". . . 'Citizen' appears to be one of those readers who value a work not for its quality but quantity; who count scientifically the number of its pages . . . . The citizen has been so long accustomed to the ponderous volumes of Coke upon Littleton, the Duty of Executors, etc., etc. that his indignation is excited at the sight of a book that was originally intended for the pocket" (Commercial Advertiser, 10 January 1801).

[27] 26 February 1801.

The problems of producing a novel in 1801 are further revealed by another appeal which was extended to the readers of the Port Folio[28] on April 25:

> Sir:
>
> I beg permission, through the medium of your respectable miscellany to inform the printers and book-sellers of the city of Philadelphia, that I have, ready for the press, a quarto ms. of about 300 pages, entitled, "The Wanderings of William," to which a little tale, called "The Farmer of New-Jersey," was designed as a introduction: that the hero of the piece is a sailor and an American, and that I will cheerfully make over the copy-right of the work to any person who will print it, for the trifling compensation of fifty copies, provided he will undertake to publish it without procrastination. The composition of this work, aggreably employed me during the winter; and, though it may not always inform the understanding, it will, perhaps, awaken the softer emotions.
>
> It is to Philadelphia I look for the publication of this work; the book-sellers of New-York, who ushered my former compositions before the public have fallen victims to the yello-fever; and my book has a wishful eye towards the Sosii of the metropolis.

The appeal was promptly accepted by the publisher of the Port Folio himself, Asbury Dickins, a prominent Philadelphia bookseller, who had entered partnership with Joseph Dennie to handle the circulation and collection affairs of the newly established periodical. On May 4, 1801, the "Literary Intelligence" column of the [New York] Commercial Advertiser carried the following smugly triumphant announcement:

> The Wanderings of William (for the publication of which Mr. D. unsuccessfully issued proposals in this city) are now printing at Philadelphia, for Mr. Asbury Dickins, in a style that would challenge competition with the best executed works of Europe.
>
> It will form a handsome volume, and its publication may be expected in a month or six weeks, when the Adventures of an American Sailor, young, sprightly, and valiant, will probably interest all but the reviewers.

Several puffing paragraphs later, the discussion concluded with a claim

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[28] Port Folio, I, No. 17 (1801), 133.

not only pompous but somewhat suspect:

> It is in vain that the reviewers wield their bulrushes at the author; he can oppose to their blows an adamantine armor; their boz is harmless. He has received applications from the most respectable booksellers of Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore to publish at their own risk the Wanderings of William; and this literary notice is partly given to stop the inundation of letters that distend the sides of the Letter Bag.

Not until late summer was the book so long awaited by the author ready for circulation.

The Wanderings of William;[29] or The Inconstancy of Youth is an account written by William of his adventures from the time he is carried to his ship, prostrate with grief at being separated from his beloved Serena, until his death two years later. William's desolation, which had so unmanned him that for a week he was unable to assume his command, is immediately dispersed when the Raritan captures an Algerine corsair and William falls heir to fifteen-year-old Zorayda, a beautiful Turkish maiden:

> How inconstant and wavering is the breast of youth! My grief for the absence of Serena became every day less violent by the charms of a newer object. I had purposed to regard Zorayda as a female friend, and not to exceed the bounds of platonic affection towards her. . . . But how much were my actions and purposes at variance!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I now gave myself up to the indulgence of a passion that it was my duty to combat. I swam in a torrent of delights. I neglected the duty of the ship, and it was owing to the skill and vigilance of my Gunner [Mr. Match] that we got safe into Cadiz.[30]

On landing at Cadiz, William hires the "most magnificent lodging I

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[29] The title bears a resemblance to The Wanderings of Warwick, a melodramatic novel written in 1794 by Charlotte Smith, one of Davis's most admired authors. In it young Captain Warwick and his Isabella encounter hardships in various locales, particularly Spain and Portugal.

[30] John Davis, The Wanderings of William; or The Inconstancy of Youth, (Philadelphia: R. T. Rawle, 1801), pp. 10, 14-15.

could find in the city," and, with Zorayda posing as his wife, plunges into the social life of the most distinguished families, where he finds opportunity to flirt with other beauteous maidens, especially Caltha, "a lively Spanish girl of seventeen." He has also met in Cadiz an old school friend from Columbia, Jack Holiday, whose ship had gone aground and who is only too happy to join William's crew.

But Zorayda soon proves to be of a jealous and spiteful nature. When she sees William's attentions to Caltha at a "splendid dinner" which he has given on board ship to honor the French consul and the Spanish grandees, "the lovely innocent" angrily informs the shocked guests that she is not the wife of William; that he has debauched her. Despite his perjured protests that they are indeed married by the priest, the ladies shriek, "Monstrous! Oh! Call the boats that we may go on shore. Our reputation will be ruined. Oh! Odious! Oh, help! Murder! Take us down into the cabin. Help! Hawthorne, or we faint!" But the worst is yet to come. Zorayda, "to harrow up his soul," next offers herself for prostitution to any man on deck. Then, as the onlookers stand confounded, she leaps overboard in a passion of fury, followed by half the ship's crew scrambling to save her. Although Holiday brings her to the surface, efforts to revive her are in vain:

> I threw myself on the deck, and gnawed the planks with my teeth. I groaned aloud. At length I fell into a state of insensibility and when I recovered my senses, found myself in bed at the French Consul's house, surrounded by Holiday, Constance, Caltha, and half a dozen domestics, who were watching anxiously my recovery. (William, p. 58)

In a few days William is restored to cheerfulness and, somewhat subdued, determines to return home to Serena. A billet-doux arrives from Caltha, however, declaring her love and offering to go away with him, but

not as his wife. He arranges a meeting with Caltha in order "to decline the honor" she intends him, but his half-hearted resolve is foiled when she interprets "literally my compliment notwithstanding its hyperbolical amplification. The die was now cast, and my gallantry would not suffer to refuse the challenge of my fair antagonist." Meanwhile, Constance, sister of the French consul, has become enamoured of Jack Holiday, and when the Raritan finally exits from Cadiz, pursued by the guns of a Spanish frigate, she carries four lustful paramours rather than just two.

When William's conscience causes him to confess to Jack his true marital status, Jack's sophistry soothes him:

> It is surely detraction to compare her [Serena] with Caltha. The one is your wife, and for a man to be told of his wife is to be put in mind of his misfortunes. Constancy was never yet expected from a sailor when he married. He will always find a mistress in every port, and surely you have cause for rejoicing rather than grief on the acquisition of the finest woman in Spain. . . . She preferred being your mistress. . . . Let not cradle prejudices give your mind any remorse. Youth is the season of enterprize. (pp. 141-142)

During the protracted voyage the activities of the protagonists show less and less concern for conventional morality. William carries on a secret flirtation with Constance; Jack's gambling debts cause him to pawn Constance's jewels and to offer her to his debtor as settlement for his financial obligations; Caltha attempts suicide but later dies in childbirth; William's grief is forgotten in the charms of fifteen-year-old Justine who, with her husband, has taken passage on the Raritan; and William and Jack alternately drink and quarrel.

Eventually the party sets sail for America with plans to settle as farmers in Kentucky or Tennessee. Upon landing in New Jersey, William, cleverly deceiving his companions who disapprove of his intent, sneaks off to visit Serena, finds the family home deserted, is erroneously

informed of Serena's death by the priest, and falls, once more, into an excess of grief.

From this point on the story is narrated by Jack, who has eventually found "the gay and fashionable Brandywine stretched like a second Villiers, on a wretched pallet; but watched over by old Caesar, his wife, and sable family." Carried to New York where he is cared for by Constance and Justine, William is "soon restored to cheerfulness." The journey is resumed, this time for New Orleans, and an "elysium" on the Mississippi. The ship wrecks on the Georgia coast, and William, Justine, and part of the crew are lost when they attempt to make land in a small boat. "Here ends . . . the catastrophe of William, whose wanderings can scarcely fail to reclaim the abandoned, and fortify the virtuous in their principles." Presumably the equally abandoned Jack and Constance continue on to Elysium.

Davis had apprently determined that whatever else the "mohawk reviewers" might say about William, they could not score it as insipid. The American Review, which had so labeled the Farmer, found in its sequel "nothing but what is deserving of ridicule, reprehension, or contempt." An attempted plot outline was broken off at the death of Zorayda:

> But here we must positively stop.
>
> This portion of the Wanderings of William must suffice for a specimen of Mr. D's talents at novel writing. We at first undertook to frame a short abridgment of the whole story, in order to save our readers the trouble and disgust which every person of delicacy must endure in perusing the original: but the nauseousness of the task overcame our benevolence. Those who are still disposed to believe that the genius of Mr. D. is capable of any thing refined, elevated or interesting, may satisfy their expectations by recurring to the book itself.[31]

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[31] American Review and Literary Journal, 1, No. 4 (1801), 429.

Attacking the great number of "unnatural incidents and improbable circumstances" which make up the plot, as well as the universal immorality of the "adulterers, gamblers, and prostitutes" who comprise its heroes and heroines, the reviewer concluded that:

> The Wanderings amount to nothing more than the adventures of a couple of vagabond seamen, who, with a pair of trulls picked up in a Spanish harbour, go roving from port to port, for no other ostensible purpose than to protract the scene of their debaucheries on ship-board, and their bacchanalian revels on shore. Such a narrative will, no doubt, be found suitable to the taste of the tenants of the forecastle, and delightful to the imaginations of the frail sisters of the suburbs; but common sense and decency will revolt at it, and brand the publisher with an epithet harsher than impudence.

Joseph Dennie was also offended, or as Davis wrote, ". . . my former panegyrist now wielded his bull-rush against me; but I fear that, only glancing over the contents, like the student in Gil Blas, he did not dig deep enough to discover the soul of the Licentiate" (Travels, pp. 247-248).

> The author dedicates it [The Wanderings] "to Flavia," in a strain, which seems to foretell the amorous complexion of the work. His words are "Take it, read it, there is nothing to fear, your governess is gone out, and the family are not yet risen. Do you hesitate? Werter [sic] has been under your pillow, and the Monk has lain on your toilet." In his preface too, the author anticipates the objections of the moralist, and defends himself, against the anticipated attack on his voluptuous pages, by the following paragraph. "If some scenes should incur animadversion, as being too highly coloured, let it be remembered that the Clarissa of Richardson falls under the same censure; and the novels of Richardson, have been recommended from the pulpit, by orthodox divines." But in this novel, scenes are introduced, which the example of another, who has himself described licentiously, will hardly justify. It is to be deplored that the levity of Constance, should be minutely recorded in a glow of expression calculated to excite no tranquil emotions, and that an author capable of better things, should mar his pages with many a mariner's exclamation, vile, and trite as can be heard from lungs, ulcerated with blasphemy.[32]

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[32] Joseph Dennie, "Literary Intelligence," Port Folio, 1, No. 38

Obviously a late descendant of the robust, picaresque novel of eighteenth century England and the even more salacious productions of Europe, the book was out of place and out of time, especially in America where the novel had always been suspect of moral corruption, and in a period when the novel had supposedly been cleaned up for virginal boudoirs. Davis's dedication, quoted by Dennie, seemed to emphasize his deliberate attempt to be naughty. His preface professed that "The Wanderings of William may have brought him into scenes which it would be virtue, perhaps to shun. . . . But if I have exhibited vice, it has always been to shew that her paths lead ultimately to sorrow, however alluring may be their entrance. . . . My object has been to render vice odious by painting it." But when an author, like Richardson, deals with experiences which are far from edifying in order to edify, he must either preach a lot between times or be very sure that his plot bears out his point. The problem in this volume was that, except for very brief pangs of guilt, William's indiscretions exhibited, as Davis boasted, "a world of love, a great deal of money, a great deal of beauty, and days and nights as happy as hearts considered. . . . The book is not without a moral, but it is a concealed one."[33] To American reviewers the moral was too well concealed. John Lott has written of the pre-Richardsonian era, "In most early novels the delights of illicit love were more than

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(1801), 303. I have quoted most of Dennie's column, not only for the critical taste which it mirrors, but also because it differs so much from Davis's version in the Travels. Claiming that he is inserting Dennie's remarks from the Port Folio, he follows accurately only through the quotation from his own preface. From that point on he "quotes": "It was our design at first to have abridged the story of the Work; but the inutility of the task overcame our benevolence; for the author sacrifices reflection to mirth; and his page, however it may be read with interest, will not be remembered with advantage."

[33] [N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser, 4 May 1801.

commensurate with any suffering such a passion might entail."[34] And William never really suffers with his weakness; he succumbs all too quickly and willingly.

Even when judged by early eighteenth century standards, the book offers problems. The usual picaresque hero (Tom Jones, Roderick Random, Gil Blas) or heroine (Moll Flanders) was often guilty of transgressions. But he or she sinned nearly always out of unawareness (Tom Jones) or out of necessity (Moll Flanders or Gil Blas). Ignorant, poor, thrust into a hostile world, a victim of its corruption, they usually did what seemed to them the only thing they could do--meet evil with evil or accept goodness with whatever innate virtue they could muster. But William's faults cannot be so justified. His origins and education should have produced a better product. He is not beset by temptations that are not common to all; Mr. Match and Captain Hurricane of the Federalist are evidence that a sea life need not pervert. He is a victimizer of others, but a victim himself only of his own instability and lack of self-control. These weaknesses he shares with other picaros; but whereas they usually learn from experience and philosophically come to terms with whatever fate determined for them, William shows no alteration of character. His needless death, the result of his own impetuosity and irresponsibility in leaving his ship, is one of the few believable, satisfying events in the story.

The neoclassical picaro of Smollet and Fielding lived in a chaotic world of fragmented episodes where arbitrary fortune ruled men's lives. The hero strove with his only weapon, reason, to bring order out of

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[34] The Betrayed Woman, p. 50.

chaos. In a significant shift, Davis has portrayed a stable, reasonable world and placed the chaos within his hero. Mercurial, often at war with himself, William's destiny is determined, not by blind fate, but by his uncontrollable emotions. Episode succeeds episode as a result of his own fragmentation. A romantic "man of feeling," he bears much resemblance to Ferdinand, who also acted, not according to reason, but according to his own irrational individualism. Though the author has grafted on him certain favorable characteristics--physical courage, intelligence, a cheerful, lively personality--William remains so morally corrupt--unfaithful to wife, false to best friend[35]--that the book loses much of the charm of the usual picaresque. Even the traditional first person point of view does not facilitate the reader's identification with a hero so grossly unacceptable.

In view of these major faults, Davis's presumptuous preface to the book exposed him to much ridicule in New York and Philadelphia literary circles. After pointing out certain inadequacies in the works of Smollet, Fielding, Rousseau, and Cumberland, he explained how his book was an improvement over them all. Next, he took on the New York reviewers again, quoting a sentence (with incorrect documentation) as illustration of their syntactical imperfections. Yet, to quote Davis's own metaphor, with the motes of others' works looming so large in his eyes, he failed to see the beam in his own work. Once again an aesthetic flaw had grown out of a moral obtuseness.

As an exhibit of Davis's development as a novelist, William represents an ambitious undertaking in length, scope, and number of characters.

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[35] One of the episodes not included in the above plot outline was Jack's marriage to Constance and William's subsequent dalliance with her.

For the first time he uses dialogue extensively, often advancing the plot entirely by this means. Since William, as narrator, is primarily a man of action, neither judgmental nor introspective, other characters must reveal themselves by their own words and deeds. Farmer is composed almost wholly of descriptive narration; William contains very little. The most detailed pictures are those of the various voluptuous ladies whose charms are drawn with warm prurience, but without any originality. In marked contrast, the active battle scenes on board ship are fought in direct, authoritative prose obviously flowing with a voluntary naturalness from the experience of the writer. In these few, brief individual passages there is power, and William and his "brave Yankee boys" become momentarily believable and even admirable. Stylistically less inflated than Original Letters and less simple than Farmer, William shows a growing competence in narration which will continue to improve in Davis's works.

William also rounds out Davis's experimentation with three of the four principal types of eighteenth century novel. Just as Original Letters was patterned on the novel of sensibility and Farmer on the sentimental novel of domestic manners, so William was patterned on the older picaresque. Only the fourth major type, the Gothic novel, was left untried. Though Davis was well read in the mode, admired Mrs. Radcliffe particularly and had "probably"[36] translated Brown's Wieland and Ormond into French for Caritat, the bright sun and brisk air of the main top had provided no seeding ground for the "haunted forests or enchanted

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[36] Charles Evans, American Bibliography, XII (Chicago: Columbia Press, 1931), 35246, 35247.

castles" which he had warned his reader not to look for in Farmer of New-Jersey.

William is more than a mere copy, however, of an old style which Davis had absorbed in his youthful reading. Its realistic aspects derive not only from the picaresque tradition but also, as the writer began to draw directly from his own nautical experience, from that same brisk air of the main top. Moreover, there was a new trend in reading taste. The public had glutted itself on sentimentalism and exaggerated emotionalism. Though William still contained more than enough of the latter, it also contained brief glimpses of contemporary real life which were a harbinger of things to come, in Davis's works and in literary styles as well. Even some of its more exotic elements--the disguises, piracy, Turkish amours --which seem stereotypes from the old French romances, Spanish adventures, and oriental tales, were timely to Americans whose seamen were still fighting the Barbary pirates. Vermont's Royal Tyler had written on the subject in his novel, The Algerine Captive (1797). William was also forward looking in its locale, an American sailing ship, at a time when the extensive fleets of American merchantmen were just beginning their world-wide peregrinations. And though William is hardly a prototype hero as captain, he does have maritime skill when he chooses to use it; and when all his sordid escapades are pushed aside, one finds he commands a sturdy ship and dependable crew without which he would much sooner have met his end.

In characterization also, the three books show a gradual transition from the sentimental vogue to a new realism. Granted that the crudely defined portraits abound in inconsistencies (characterization would

never be one of Davis's fortes), most of the women--Elisabeth, Caltha, Justine, and Constance--show a streak of independence not usually found in the more typical sentimental heroine such as the lovelorn Serena, object of pity, a burden to her family who could not even care for her babies. It might be argued that these are all "fallen" women, "trulls," whose licentious conduct is euphemistically glossed over as independence of spirit; but Davis's future heronies, more conventional in deportment, are also sprightly and spirited.

Male characters do not show the same degree of change. Both Ferdinand and William as well as Jack, are the same restless, impetuous, proud stereotypes found in countless other novels of the era. In contrast to Ferdinand's idle dilettantism, however, William and Jack do participate in a practical, active world, evoking realism on dock and deck, if not always in cabin and boudoir. The Byronic hero of early Romanticism held a fascination for Davis. Perhaps he sensed in the character a reflection of his own personality. The similarity is mirrored in many of his poems, and some of the same personality traits appear in all of his later heroes. But the character does not fare well in these early books. Capitulating to impulse, he may enjoy a temporary concupiscence, but he ends disastrously, carrying others with him to premature and unnatural death. As a result all of these books are tragedies. Only as this same type of hero is tempered by reason and prudence can the story end happily as it does in Davis's later works.

To look for real social import or a critical view of life in these books is to look in vain. They were undeniably written hastily to supply popular fiction which would satisfy the fancy of readers at large. Even

their unfashionable brevity, compared to the usual two-volume bulk, testifies to haste and superficiality of development. George (or Davis), commenting on the short length of Farmer, wrote facetiously but in probable truth, "What does this argue, but that the author was tired of his understanding (sic), and wanted to bring it to a conclusion."[37] Not much time and not much thought went into any of them.

But they did find a place. They apparently sold well enough that Davis could write enthusiastically, looking forward to the early publishing of William, "I journeyed delightfully from New-York to Philadelphia. My finances were good, and I was going to a place where I had only to extend my arms and catch the golden shower" (Travels, p. 203). They are listed in the 1804 catalog of Caritat's circulating library,[38] along with the works of English and European giants. They found their way into other libraries as well. However unpalatable they might seem today, it is likely that the reader who sobbed over Charlotte Temple or Werther and the imitations which followed, did not find these so distasteful.

Today their value is primarily historic. At a time when so few novels were being written by Americans, or even in America--Wright listed only twenty-five between 1800 and 1809[39]--each title becomes a significant contribution, and Davis's enterprise becomes even more remarkable.

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[37] [N.Y.] Commercial Advertiser, 7 January 1801.

[38] George Gates Raddin, Jr., An Early New York Library of Fiction (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1940). Evans's Bibliography also lists a French edition of The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth (33608).

[39] Lyle H. Wright, "A Statistical Survey of American Fiction, 1774-1850," Huntington Library Quarterly, II (1938-39), 309-318.

CHAPTER III

THE TRAVELS

During the period roughly from 1790 to 1830, the great American experiment afforded an intriguing exploration ground for visitors representing all nationalities, classes, professions, educations, and points of view. The motives for travel in the United States were as varied as the travelers. Some came with an idea to future emigration; others came to escape if only temporarily the multiple problems of Europe--war, political anarchy, burdensome taxes, displacement by the Industrial Revolution, and other troubles. Some came purely for pleasure--either intellectual gratification of curiosity about the "United States of which we hear so much, and know so little,"[1] or for the physical adventure offered by a country considered still primitive by British and European standards. A by-product of these visitations was the publishing of an exceptionally large number of books about travel in America.

As varied as the motives for traveling were also the motives for writing of one's travels. Davis himself observed, "Emolument, and an avidity of reputation, are two powerful incentives to literary industry;"[2] and these motives cannot be discounted. Surely for every discontented or adventurous author who made the grand tour of the United States, there

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[1] Henry Wansey, The Journal of an Excursion to the United States of North America, in the Summer of 1794 (Salisbury: J. Easton, 1796), p. vii.

[2] John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America; During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802 (Bristol: R. Edwards, 1803), p. 21.

were hundreds at home who would have liked to go but couldn't. Most of these accounts, however, were not composed merely to entertain, either in matter or in manner.[3] Many expounded the author's particular interests--botanical, agricultural, political, social, or commercial; most included guide-book type information on the costs of transportation, inns, and food, the distances between points, and the multitudinous inconveniences to be endured en route; and all revealed the firmly-held bias or slant which colored the writer's attitude toward his American hosts. Indeed, sometimes the trip seems to have been undertaken for the sole purpose of reinforcing a prejudice cherished long before disembarking on American shores. Some were kindly disposed, but a growing number of the visitors in the eighteenth century were fault-finding and critical. Perhaps expecting too much from the "New Eden" and discovering it wanting, they became bitter in their deprecations. The volleys from the travel writers, especially when augmented and intensified by the missiles of the eager reviewers, swelled to become some of the heaviest artillery of the Anglo-American literary war. An "era of good feelings" it was not.[4]

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[3] Commenting on them, Davis wrote, "In toiling through volumes of diffusive mediocrity, the reader commonly terminates his career by falling asleep with the writer" (Travels, "Preface," p. [1]).

[4] Thomas Ashe (Travels in America, performed in 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of their Banks and Vicinity [London: R. Phillips, 1809]), who avowed an interest in exploration and archaeology, found total degeneracy in the new republic and predicted its "decline and fall within ten years" while Isaac Weld (Travels Through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Lower Canada, during the Years 1795, 1796, 1797 [London: J. Stockdale, 1799]), fearing that some final doom would yet preclude his safe escape, wrote, "My thoughts are solely bent upon returning to my native land, now dearer to me than ever; and, provided that the ice which threatens at present to block up the harbour does not cut off our communication with the Atlantic, I shall speedily take my departure from this continent, well pleased at having seen as much of it as I have done,

Never one to ignore a popular literary vogue, John Davis published in 1803 Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America, the book which was to ensure his most enduring fame. Its title seemed to designate it as another round in the continuing battle. In summary it resembled many other travel accounts. An Englishman had spent a period of time, more extensive than most, in the United States. After a lengthy sea voyage, he had followed approximately the standard tour, landing in New York, sooner or later journeying the main roads south through New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore, the federal District, into Virginia, and thence to Charleston. He had traveled overland on horseback, in carriage, or on foot, and through water by sloop, ferry, or ford. If he had by-passed Niagara Falls and Mt. Vernon, two very popular attractions, he had still taken in the Capitol in Washington, Logan's library in Philadelphia, and the Natural Bridge in Virginia. He had met some prominent Americans (Burr, Gallatin, the Draytons, and others), could cite some bad inns as well as some good ones, and could describe such natural phenomena as the dogwood and redbud, the mockingbird and whip-poor-will. All of this was part of what had already become the comfortably familiar, accepted formula for travel books about America.

But contemporary reviewers, attempting to measure Davis's book by the pattern of other travel books, found it a poor fit. First of all, it lacked the conscious intention of the expository stereotype, to inform through fact and judgment. "This work was not intended to . . . yield

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but I shall leave it without a sign, and without entertaining the slightest wish to revisit it." The European Magazine, acknowledging the disparate attitudes towards the United States, complimented Weld on having "steered a middle course."

the reader much instruction," grumbled the Monthly Anthology.[5] "With the exception of some observations on the climate and state of society in Carolina, and a topographical account of the city of Washington, this book contains nothing of a descriptive nature. . . . We are indeed occasionally amused with a peep, as it were, at the manners of the people among whom he travelled; but of the state of agriculture, commerce, and the arts, we learn nothing."[6] Compared to the others, the Travels did indeed show a paucity of hard facts. Even odder, one put the book down without being really certain whether the author was pro- or anti-American. Nearly every previous traveler to America had exercised his privilege to commitment. In the context of the times a book without a firmly defended prejudice did seem to be lacking in something.[7]

This marks the basic difference between Davis's book and the others. The Travels is not really about America or about travel in America; it is about John Davis and his experience during four years in what happened to be America. "The book is entirely occupied with the story of his own exploits and adventures, and ought rather to be called Memoirs of his Life, during his stay in America, than an account or description of the

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[5] Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, 1 (January 1804), 135-136.

[6] The Edinburgh Review, 2 (July 1803), 443-444. This reviewer has listed in order of importance the subjects most travelers considered worthy of their pages, omitting only the very popular topic of American politics.

[7] The reviewer for the Monthly Review (44 [August 1804], 387) was determined that some such bias must exist. Attempting to put two and two together, he wrote, "Had not this author informed us that he was a zealous and steady admirer of the British constitution, we should have concluded from the little ceremony with which he addresses the President of the United States, that he had been a republican both in manners and in principles."

country."[8] Just so. He did not intend a source book, but rather an autobiography. Davis considered such subjectivity a virtue:

> That this Volume will regale curiosity while man continues to be influenced by his senses and affections, I have very little doubt. It will be recurred to with equal interest on the banks of the Thames, and those of the Ohio. There is no man who is not pleased in being told by another what he thought of the world, and what the world thought of him. This kind of biography, when characterized by simplicity and truth, has more charms for the multitude than a pompous history of the intrigues of courts, the negotiations of statesmen, and the devastation of armies. (Travels, "Preface," p. 2)[9]

More specifically, Davis went on to say that he much rather enjoyed the memoirs of Franklin, the printer, than the history of Sir Robert Walpole's administration, yet even Franklin "studied his ease in withholding his Memoirs from the world till he was beyond the reach of its censure." He anticipated his critics well, for most of their adverse remarks about the Travels were directed to the personality of the writer, particularly his egotism. Again, Davis anticipated:

> Should the critic detect the vanity that not infrequently swells my periods, let him be assured that he cannot be more sensible of it than I. When a man becomes the historiographer of his own actions, he can scarcely avoid this error without degenerating into the opposite one of affected diffidence. I have often caught myself making my own panegyric; the fact is indisputable; yet it is still better to be vain than dull. (Travels, "Preface," p. 4)

Apparently recognizing that his original title was misleading, he altered the title of his condensed edition to Personal Adventures and Travels of Four Years . . . Being Travels in Search of Independence and Settlement (London, 1817).

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[8] The Edinburgh Review, p. 443.

[9] A theory of biography undoubtedly reinforced by his close reading of Dr. Samuel Johnson and previously explored by Davis in his "Essay on Biography and Egotism in Writing," published in The European Magazine, January 1798.

Along with being different in intent, Davis's book is also different in basic pattern. The travel books currently in vogue superimposed the expository mode upon the chronological pattern of the journey which enabled the writer to observe and judge. This combination was not always happily compatible. Henry Wansey, recognizing the dangers, explained that he made notes for his book each day as he traveled: "This has, however, in some measure, by stating facts just as they occurred at the time occasioned irregularity, and some differences in sentiment. In these cases, the last statement is, probably, the truest, as it must be the result of more experience."[10] Davis seems to have followed a similar journalistic habit as he traveled, according to his letter to President Jefferson; but because his book is autobiographical in genre, it falls naturally into a narrative pattern within which chronology is intrinsic, and therefore gradually changing, developing attitudes are expected and accepted.

A significant example is the growth of Davis's respect and affection for the American people and their government--a growth all the more significant because he seems to be either unconscious of its evolvement or not quite ready to yield openly to its wooing. Therefore, its manifestations are expressed elusively through moods and attitudes rather than through deliberately conceived, generalized pronouncements.[11]

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[10] Wansey, pp. [v]-vi.

[11] Critics reading only the more ponderable occasional aspersions on the American scene, and missing the gossamer inflection of the rest of the book, have interpreted them as representing Davis's anti-American bias. Mr. Raddin states, "Toward Americans, Davis was insufferably condescending unless seeking favors. . . . Like many Englishmen of the time, he showed his disdain for colonials, . . . he never learned to understand Americans or how to get along with them." (George Gates Raddin, Jr., Hocquet Caritat and the Early New York Literary Scene [New Jersey: Dover Advanced Press, 1953], p. 63.) Analysis of the Travels and examination of Davis's later works and life do not substantiate such an evaluation.

As if eager to make clear where he intended his basic allegiance to lie, he hastened to explain, "And though I dedicate my book to a republican [President Jefferson], it is not the magistrate but the man, whom I address. I'm no republican! No federalist! I have learned to estimate rightly the value of the British Constitution; and I think no system of government so perfect as that of King, Lords, and Commons."[12]

Gradually, however, expressed admiration for Washington and Jefferson becomes inextricably bound together with the explanation of their services to the new republic. That he should choose the following quotation with which to prefix the inaugural chapter suggests a warm feeling of approval:

> In this City may that piety and virtue, that wisdom and magnanimity, that constancy and self-government, which adorned the great character whose name it bears, be for ever held in veneration! Here, and throughout America, may simple manners, pure morals, and true religion, flourish for ever! (Travels, p. 168)

His description of Jefferson's inauguration connotes enthusiastic endorsement:

> Never did the Capitol wear a more animated appearance than on the fourth day of March, 1801. The Senate-Chamber was filled

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[12] Travels, "Preface," p. 4. As an Englishman Davis might have been expected to sympathize with the Federalists and their affinity for the mother country. His friendship with Dennie, Brown, Burr, and his association with the Port Folio and the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, notwithstanding, he seems never to aligned himself politically with them, nor with the Republicans, despite his ardent admiration for Jefferson and the French. Aware that to Americans at the turn of the century, political matters were often affairs of much passion, he learned that neutrality in American politics was not merely a matter of declaration. His first publishing venture in New York, the translation of Buonaparte's Campaign in Italy, was received "amidst the acclamations of the Federalists. This was to me extraordinary, for I had professed my self of neither party, but declared my intention never to meddle with the politics of a country, in which I had neither a fixed dwelling, nor an acre of land" (Travels, p. 21).

> with citizens from the remotest places of the Union. The planter, the farmer, the mechanic and merchant, all seemed to catch one common transport of enthusiasm, and welcome the approach of the Man to the chair of Sovereign Authority, who had before served his country in various offices of dignity; who had sat in the famous Congress that produced the Revolution, acted as Governor to his native State, and been Minister Plenipotentiary to a foreign nation. (Travels, pp. 177-178)

President Jefferson's inaugural address follows in its entirety.

Many months later during a visit to Washington, he wrote, "Congress was assembled at Washington, and I was constant in my attendance on the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate Chamber is by far the most superb room in the Capitol, but the House of Representatives is a detached and temporary building. Yet I loved best to visit the House of Representatives; there seemed to be so much energy and freedom of debate. . . . Mr. Burr was presiding in the Chair, and no man knew better the routine of the House, or how to acquit himself with more dignity than he" (Travels, p. 335).

The most significant sign of the change which had come over the young Tory during his four and a half years in the United States is best exemplified, as usual, dramatically and subjectively. His voyage over from England was taken in an American snow which was undependably late in leaving port and which once underway he declared to be a "miserably sailing tub. . . . She seemed to be fitted out by the parish; there was not a rope on board strong enough to hang a cat with. She had only one suit of sails." The American captain, though competent, "was passionately fond of visiting every vessel that he saw on the passage. . . . He had contracted these habits during the American war, when he commanded a small privateer; and he could not in his old age reclaim the foibles of his youth" (Travels, pp. 13-14).

The new arrival's first few days in this country are less than promising: "I cannot say that I was received with the urbanity I had anticipated." Mr. Caritat soon deflates him: "A man of letters, when he undertakes the tuition of a family in America, may exclaim he has lost his independence."[13] His first American friends are young Dr. Debow, whose professional pretenses provide a subject for satire, and his landlord Major Howe, who, "after carrying arms through the revolutionary war, instead of reposing upon the laurels he had acquired, was compelled to open a boarding-house in New-York, for the maintenance of his wife and children. He was a member of the Cincinnati, and not a little proud of his Eagle. But I thought the motto to his badge of Omnia reliquit servare Rempublicam, was not very appropriate; for it is notorious that few Americans had much to leave when they accepted commissions in the army. Victor ad aratrum redit would have been better" (Travels, p. 22). Also, the Major had been a constant attendant of the Established Church until, while serving as commanding officer of West Point, he accidently read Gibbon, became a skeptic, and was later seduced by the Deists. In fact and tone, first impressions of America do not mark it as a particularly auspicious place.

The return voyage is also taken aboard an American vessel, "the good ship Olive": "I never stepped between the stem and stern of a better seaboat. It is true she was not a flier. . . . But she was tight as a nut, and stiff as a church. . . . a ship good in every respect; for she has

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[13] Travels, p. 19. He was to write several months later: "My long residence in a country where honour and shame from no condition rise, has placed me above the ridiculous pride of disowning the situation of a Tutor" (Travels, p. 75).

good masts, good rigging, good sails, and good fellows on board of her" (Travels, p. 410). The captain and officers, all American, are delineated as capable and companionable fellows with whom he enjoys passing the time when he is not thinking wistfully of the pastoral scenes he has recently left in Virginia. The English passengers, a physician and his family, are indifferent figures; the steward, only English member of the crew, is the comic buffoon. A poignancy marks the farewells:

> I had now done with the good ship Olive. I again put on my glorious apparel, and made ready to depart. I bowed to Doctor _____, his wife, and his children. But when I came to shake Captain Norman by the hand, and bid farewell to my jolly watchmates Adams and Llewellyn, I wished them health and wealth, tight-ships, good wages, and mistresses constant while they were possessed.
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> Had I been an Embassador or a Consul, I could not have left the good ship Olive with more éclat. The two mates manned the side for me, and the ship's company, lying out upon the yards, gave me three hearty cheers.
>
> "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" (Travels, p. 453)

Despite failures and disappointments which had colored some of his American experiences, he had acquired gradually and imperceptibly an empathetic rapport with America which provided the germ of genuine affection, drawing him back two years later, and bearing fruit in later works based on American themes, most notably in The American Mariners, an explicit celebration of the American spirit of freedom and independence.

The preceding differences marking the Travels from ordinary travel accounts--differences of intent and pattern--lead to a third difference, the importance of the writer's persona. The authors of most American travel accounts present themselves as rather flat, dull, pedantic reporters who collect facts, observe conditions, absorb atmosphere, and then produce for the reader predigested opinions on miscellaneous facets of American life. Reliability, rationality, and disinterested objectivity in point of

view were professed, though rarely achieved. The matter of the book was the field of inquiry; in the Travels it is, instead, the man. Because he had come in search of personal independence, a seeking of his own destiny, his book poses an entirely different question. The chief concern is not, "The American way--can it survive?" but rather a particular version of a more universal, human quandary, "Can a lonely and friendless wanderer find happiness and success in a strange land?"

Natural endowment admirably suited Davis for his role as chief character. To youth, energy, and ambition, he joined the qualities of good humor and open-mindedness.[14] His years of experience as a seaman gave him a sophistication of adaptation rare among the visitors to this country. Other qualities cannot be discounted--above all, his interest in people. A reader of today is sometimes annoyed by the book's lack of focus. While intriguing details of the hero's progress are left shrouded in mystery, Davis describes with fascinated absorption some other pilgrim, perhaps an anonymous diner on the passage boat to Baltimore, "a pretty, modest, blushing maiden of fifteen, whose manners were not inelegant; but it is somewhat curious that whenever she wanted the salt or mustard, she begged some one to shove it to her" (Travels, p. 328). Gradually he realizes that in this seeming lack of organization lies a certain unity; the enormous amount of minutiae is mostly about people:

> The object of my speculations has been Human Nature; speculations that will lead the reader to the contemplation of his own manners, and enable him to compare his condition

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[14] The latter comes as a surprise to the reader acquainted with the irascible and crabbed Davis of the Charleston and New York newspaper battles, of which he wisely makes no mention. That the Davis of the Travels is slightly saccharined is very probable, but more likely the real man than is the Davis of the columns, a role he assumed for various reasons.

> with that of other men.
>
> In my uncertain peregrinations, I have entered with equal interest the mud-hut of the negro, and the log-house of the planter; I have alike communed with the slave who wields the hoe, and the task-master who imposes his labour. (Travels, p. vii)

Such an interest, when joined to a novelist's flair for the dramatic scene and his obvious relish in its literary representation, promises an uncommon autobiography.

The use of the word "peregrinations" in the quotation above and the many frequent allusions, not only in the Travels but throughout his writings, to Le Sage's picaresque novel Gil Blas give the clue to the most distinctive characteristic of the persona. The narrator of the Travels is a picaro of the classic sort. Of ambiguous origin, he sets out to seek his fortune armed only with natural intelligence and ingenuity, and some anticipation of friendly assistance in the form of a letter of introduction. The latter proving of non-avail, he is immediately cast adrift in a cold, heartless world: "I was now to become the architect of my own fortune. . . . The letter had failed me that was to decide my fortune at one blow, and I found my self solitary and sad among the crowds of a gay city" (Travels, p. 17). From that point on the hero's fortunes rise and fall in alternating patterns of anticipation and disappointment punctuated by brief intervals of contentment.

Like all picaros he is driven by a fateful and compulsive wanderlust: "My occupations at New-York, however agreeable, did not repress my desire to explore the continent before me; and I thought it best to travel while I had some crowns left in my purse." Dr. DeBow declares his intention to go also: "But whither, replied I, do you propose to go; and what, I beseech you, is the object of your travelling? To see the world, assuredly,

said he; to eat, drink and laugh away care on the road" (Travels, p. 31).

Despite failures and lean times, hero John is endowed with an optimism that anticipates imminent rewards: "But the time was approaching, when I had every reason to flatter my expectation with exchanging the Muses' bower for the garden of the Hesperides. Colonel Burr had been elected to the place of Vice-President of the United States, and Colonel Burr was my friend. He had just returned from the city of Washington, and with the most condescending urbanity, did me the honour to call on me at Mr. Ludlow's" (Travels, p. 188). Colonel Burr suggests that Mr. Gallatin, secretary of the Treasury, is interested in Mr. Davis as a secretary:

> There is something in the professions of a great man which never fails to impart delight; our hopes become multiplied; the phantoms of imagination arise in succession, and either point to paths of pleasure, or bowers of repose. I heard "the glorious sounds," with no small exertions of joy, and looked forward with anxiety to the hour that was to exalt me from the obscurity of a pedagogue to the magnificence of a Secretary's office. It happened that when the Vice-President proposed to me a place at Washington, the term of my engagement with Mr. Ludlow had just expired; and I was compelled to be decisive in the plan of my future operations; I was under the necessity either of resigning the situation, or no longer indulge the visions my fancy had created, from the magnificent promises held out by the Vice-President; hope triumphed over prudence, and I abandoned a salary of a hundred guineas paid me quarterly in advance, for an exaltation that was remote, and at the same time uncertain. (Travels, p. 189)

> I journeyed delightfully from New York to Philadelphia. My finances were good, and I was going to a place where I had only to extend my arms and catch the golden shower. Let the gloomy moralist insist on the position, that life is rather to be endured than enjoyed; but hope itself is happiness, and he who has the knack of practising it, cannot be long a victim to melancholy, though he find himself cheated daily by new disappointments. (Travels, p. 203)

A new disappointment, the embarrassment of which he describes with mocking humor and equanimity, does await him in his interview with Secretary Gallatin. He reacts with the resiliency of the true picaro: "Instead

of resigning my mind to gloom and despondency, I immediately built another castle in the air, not less desirable than the one I had missed on firm ground; for I had not yet lost the knack of comparing my possible with my actual condition" (Travels, pp. 221-222).

With good fortune, he is soon profitably established as tutor to the Ellicotts in Occoquan, Virginia. But the same restlessness which activated his remove from the College at Charleston, from the Draytons, and from the Ludlows comes over him: "I had been three months at Occoquan, when I so often caught myself stretching, yawning, and exhibiting other symptoms of Ennui, in my chair, that I began to be of opinion it was time to change my residence. . . . I was surrounded by a throng of oafs, who read their lessons with the same tone that Punch makes when he squeaks through a comb" (Travels, p. 308).

The reader is occasionally reminded that the picaro is subject to the softer sentiments and that his peregrinations entail a certain risk: "It was not without emotion that I quitted the Banks of the Occoquan; those Banks on which I had passed so many tranquil hours in study and meditation. I was about to exchange the quiet of solitude for the tumult of the world; and was posting I knew not whither, without any object to my journeying" (Travels, pp. 309-310). Sight of a London-bound packet emphasizes the pathos of the homeless wanderer: "How my heart danced at the sound of that name! How my fancy conjured up the Thames, and the spires of the city to my view! How delectably did I behold myself seated in the bosom of my friends, and how appalled was I when these illusions vanished, and I perceived before me the shores of Pennsylvania and New-Jersey! Oh! if these are prejudices, let me hug them to my breast, and far away be the philosophy

that would deprive me of my feelings" (Travels, p. 327).

After a period of insolvency from which he is relieved by the gallantry of Burr, a maturing mellowness comes to the hero: "My mind was somewhat altered. Experience had cured me of my illusions. I was no longer elated with the hope of being lifted above the crowd; but my ambition was contented with the harmless drudgery of teaching children their rudiments" (Travels, p. 333). He is still not ready, however, for the confinement of domesticity. Although always attracted to a pretty form and face, his closest call comes as he says good-by to Mary, a farmer's alluring daughter, who has so charmed him that, with the prodigal generosity of all picaros, he has given her and her sister each a pair of five dollar earrings, bought with some of Colonel Burr's money: "We both stood some minutes in silence. If per-adventure, now, thought I, I should give a pressure to that lip, what effects might ensue. There may be a subtile poison lurking in its moisture. I might doom me to pass the remainder of my days in a house roofed with shingles" (Travels, pp. 354-355). Instead of a kiss, he gives her, more prudently, advice: "Confide not for ornament in the rings that hang in thy ears, but in the virtue that dwells in thy bosom."

Following the pattern of Le Sage, Davis ends his adventures with a mood of successful achievement and philosophical fulfillment.

> I had left England like a son of indigence in a miserable steerage; but I now returned like a gentleman, enjoying the accommodations of an elegant cabin. It was by the merest fortune that I now returned to England; and that I did not travel four years and a half more in the United States of America. But Captain Norman politely accepted a draft for passage across the Atlantic; or more properly speaking, took my word for the payment of twenty guineas.
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> . . . . . .
>
> I was now upon the wide ocean again; than whose unstable

> waters, there cannot be a more perfect emblem of the unsettled condition of human life. Trouble follows trouble, like wave rolling after wave. My spirit was not, however, much troubled during the voyage.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And thus I landed again in England after an absence of four years, eight months, and seven days; having travelled on foot because I could not afford a horse, through the States . . . under whose shifting skies I escaped the pestilence and famine; for which, and all thy other mercies, make me truly thankful, O Lord, my God! (Travels, pp. 394, 401, 454)

A book so strongly centered in the persona of its narrator results in great subjectivity. Discarded is the pretense of disinterested observation. A sea voyage is not merely a recital of fares, diet, weather, and navigation, but an exhiliration of spirits. Philadelphia in plague time is not a monthly list of mounting death statistics, but a sitting on the porch of a deserted house, viewing a deserted street, feeding an abandoned cat, and mulling over the arbitrary twists of fortune. The American wilderness is not only vast, as numerous travel writers, supported by endless figures and measurements, had testified, but to a European unaccustomed to its magnitude, it is depressing, gloomy, and dreary, until its solitude is relieved by the sound of a woodman's axe or, better yet, by the companionship of a dog and the company of a pipe, which provide "an accession of cheerfulness" (Travels, p. 341).

In order to survive and prosper, a picaro needed to be acutely responsive to his society and his role in it, adopting his personality to the rapidly changing scenes in which fate thrusts him. A great deal of the fun for the reader is the way Davis subtly suggests his reactions to a situation or his relation to another character by stylistic diversity. The dominant voice is that of Davis the traveler--fluent, amiable, candid, conservative, close to the eighteenth century ideal of nonchalant gentility,

a man of moderation and good sense. The effect is an informal, conversational style of friend talking randomly to friend, interested in telling the story well but not overly preoccupied about it. Like Pope, he aimed for the effortless effect. George's compliment was the highest form of praise: "Never did you write with more grace, and less appearance of study" (Travels, p. 190). It is a style which Davis accommodates well, a style which tells more about the mind of the man, and which gives a vastly different picture of him, than do the novels, the poetry, and the many letters to editors.

The second most frequently used voice, evident in quotations already cited, is the mock-heroic of the picaro. The influence of Smollett, Fielding, and particularly of Le Sage in Davis's writing and even in his view of life can hardly be over-emphasized. He inclined to them by a natural affinity which was reinforced by his early reading. Recalling his service on an Indiaman, he reports always having put Le Sage in his pocket before walking up the main rigging to the top (The First Settlers, p. 278). Similarities between Gil Blas and the Travels abound: negative attitudes toward the church, the clergy, the wealthy, and the restraints of being in the service of others are just a few. The conversation between M. Caritat and Davis about the disadvantages of a tutor's station recalls Fabricio's advice to Gil Blas. The latter also indulge in a debate concerning elegancy vs. simplicity of diction in literary style which bears marked resemblance to some of the discussions between George and Davis. Davis's alienation from Salisbury, expressed in the last chapter of the Travels, echoes Gil Blas's indifferent reception from his home town. In the lives and personalities of picaro heroes he seems to have seen some

parallel to his own, which is reflected not only in the Travels but also in The Post-Captain, Walter Kennedy, and Jack Ariel. With justification, Lucas George had tabbed him "Wandering John."

The persona also expresses himself in Augustan rhetoric of considerable variety, serving to emphasize the different roles in which the narrator sees himself. The Boswell-Johnson type of dialogues between Davis and Caritat, or between Davis and George, features one speaker as the baiting questioner and the other speaker as the imperious, sententious Johnson. Critical comments on the literary scene resound with the ruthlessly authoritarian Grub Street asseverations of Dryden and Pope. Swiftian irony emphasizes the Widow Rachel's condition, the black slave left with eleven children: "But her numerous offspring were all provided for. Mr. Carter, to whom the whole family belonged, had taken upon him this benevolent office; for he had sold one to Mr. A, another to Mr. B, a third to Mr. C, a fourth to Mr. D, and so on, nearly half round the alphabet" (Travels, p. 236). Elegantly refined parallelism matches the formality of his call upon Mr. Burr, who "received me with that urbanity which, while it precludes familiarity, banishes restraint," and his daughter Theodosia, "elegant without ostentation, and learned without pedantry" (Travels, p. 25).[18]

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[18] Davis rested much confidence in the efficacy of a close study of the Augustan models: "Though my mode of life has not been favourable to the cultivation of an elegant style, yet in what relates to the structure of my sentences, I shall not fear competition with those who have reposed from their youth under the shade of Academic bowers. He who can have recourse to the critical prefaces of Dryden, the voluble periods of Addison, the nervous sentences of Johnson, and the felicitous antitheses of Goldsmith, may spare himself the trouble of seeking that purity and decoration of language in a College, which may be found in his closet" (Travels, "Preface," p. 3). Imitations of Addison and Goldsmith in their philosophical or meditative moods were not his forte, usually sounding artificial, uncomfortable, and trite.

Occasionally the melodramatic rhetoric of sensibility which characterized The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth--the snobbish pose of the bored intellectual, the melancholy, superior soul doomed to be unappreciated and misunderstood by the common crowd--effectively emphasizes the intoxication of titillating one's miseries. The mood is most often detected when the influence of Lucas George has been strong. It is never sustained. In rare moments the chameleon-like adaptability of the traveler catapults the reader back to the earthy realism of the early eighteenth century novel. Under the influence of an encounter with a person from the lower classes (or with seamen, e.g. the concluding chapter), the hero's bawdy and coarse repartee reflects a regression to the quarter-deck.

The narrator further varies his roles by assuming fluctuating degrees of involvement in the action--dominating the scene, playing a minor role, or stepping completely outside of the action to become an unseen observer, merely reporting what he observes and hears. An example is the episode of the waggoners whom he meets late one evening while walking from Charleston to Savannah (Travels, pp. 129-135). This scene also illustrates the characteristically impartial handling of many of his experiences. Scenes are dramatized; the reader is shown, not merely told. He must come to his own opinions. In this case, his judgment of the waggoners' kindness, hospitality, and good will is changed when, the next day, their energy finds outlet in a cruel and dangerous joke upon the elderly Quaker ladies. Davis refrains from comment or didacticism. Out of a book which is basically very subjective arises the paradox of its relative objectivity.

An additional source of charm in the book is its humor. When manufactured from the crude slapstick antics of a frontiersman or a sailor, it

fails abysmally. When cropping out casually as part of a natural reaction to a passing incident, its effect is spontaneous, dry, and typically low-key British in tone. Randolph's Congressional speech causes Davis to wonder "that the member from Virginia should stand up for the repeal of the tax upon that liquor, "which now it is become cheaper, will throw so many of his countrymen off their feet" (Travels, p. 337). Days of walking past rural log-cabins calls forth the observation that "the inhabitants of these woods are remarkably prolific; they obey at least one of the divine injunctions,--they increase and multiply their species" (Travels, p. 342). Often he utilizes the connotative values of a figure of speech: "Our dinner was a miserable one; but the landlord seasoned his dishes with flattery, and the Doctor found it very palatable" (Travels, p. 34). Word play is slyly tucked in here and there: solemn old Mr. Drone, president of Charleston College, was "not less voluminous than learned; for no book under a folio ever stood on his shelf" (Travels, p. 55). Sometimes the reader and Davis share a small amusement which he wisely lets stand on its own merits" "The board placed above Mr. Macdonald's sylvan Academy, diverted me not a little. 'Anthony Macdonald teaches boys and girls their grammar tongue; also Geography terrestial and celestial. Old hats made as good as new'" (Travels, p. 333). Or sometimes the humor is more sustained, built up of details chosen to create a comic quality: young Dr. De Bow's house, tucked away in a New York alley impervious to the sun, is adorned by a huge gilt lettered sign; yet he has "little or no practise in his profession, notwithstanding he dressed in black, maintained a profound gravity, and wore green spectacles on his nose" (Travels, pp. 20-21).[20] Dr. De Bow

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[20] Critics who question the veracity of much of the Travels have

passes his idle hours with Don Quixote.

For the reader who still insists on classifying the book as a travel account, the Travels provides rewards of a less literary nature. Though not factually explicit enough for contemporaries, its suggestive evaluations of people and places are significant to the modern reader, reinforcing judgments formed through time and the observations of others. Despite the sniping attacks which have assailed its reliability, verifiable items and impressionistic responses are almost uniformly corroborated by available evidence.[21]

Its appraisal of society in America during the period emerges not in a single, deliberate judgment, but rather in bits and pieces. Davis could

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suggested that Dr. De Bow might be a fictional creation, but in every confirmable detail Davis seems to have taken his friend straight from life. Dr. De Bow's lack of lucrative practice was less amusingly reported in the columns of the [New York] New Argus Daily Advertiser (12 February 1798) where his declaration of insolvency was announced. Davis suggests that he is somewhat loosely rooted in the ease with which he abandons New York for the trip to Philadelphia. Longworth's American Almanack, New York Register and City Directory records that he had undertaken three removes in three years. This does not include the Ferry Street address of 1798 which Davis mentions. The 1797 Directory designates his profession as merely "physician"; the succeeding ones promote him to surgeon. One remembers the huge gilt sign.

The Travels treats De Bow with the finger of light satire whenever he appears. Davis consistently uses medical practitioners as objects of satire, a habit picked up from Smollett and Le Sage perhaps, and even from the American Royall Tyler, who indulges in the same sport in The Algerine Captive (1797).

[21] A few glaring exceptions must be conceded. Dennie's criticism of The Wanderings of William has been altered. The poems of John Rolfe are certainly spurious. The republican picture of president-elect Jefferson arriving at his inauguration, "without a single guard, or even servant in his train," has been disproved by later reports which indicate that he was suitably escorted. One editor questions whether Davis was even present at the inauguration and reminds the reader that he was, after all, a novelist. A more charitable explanation for the inaccuracy is that, as Davis himself explains, he had been seated in the Capitol for an hour before Mr. Jefferson entered the House. He must therefore have depended on another for his facts.

delineate quite sharply the sectional differences which were already evident along the eastern seaboard and which would, years later, become stereotypes of the regional American--the Carolinian, self-indulgent, extravagant; the Virginian, hard-drinking, horse-loving, yet the most mannerly and hospitable; the New Jerseyite, ambitious, on the rise, a recognizable version of the acquisitive Yankee. The one reality of American society which he spared no castigation was the institution of slavery to which he recurs again and again in horror. Rare was the European traveler who did not find slavery a repulsive anachronism in America. Most travelers discussed it in greater ramification--political, economic, and social. Davis, as usual more personal in his response, confined himself to its degenerating human aspects, as it affected black and white alike.

His peculiar interests bridge gaps left in other contemporary accounts. He offers a rare glimpse of the educational institution known as the field school. Semantics and grammar fascinate him in the Americanizations which he detects and, with neoclassic conservatism, resists. Publishing activities led him several times to New York, where he looked in on Charles Brockden Brown and to Philadelphia, the cultural center of the nation, where he mingled with the coterie of "that Mammoth of literature, Joseph Dennie, . . . seated in all the splendour of absolute dominion among his literary vassals," (Travels, p. 311). Critical views on the accomplishments of several prominent American writers are expounded in the Travels, but Davis attributes them to Lucas George, leaving the reader only suspecting that they are also Davis's views. Not particularly complimentary, they are nonetheless astute and bear the test of time. American letters were not ablaze with genius during the Federalist era.

His comments on Charles Brockden Brown are significant because they illustrate how astute Davis could be in brief characterizations and because little has been documented about this writer, the major figure in American fiction at this period.

> The author of Arthur Mervyn, living at New-York, I sought acquaintance with a man who had acquired so much intellectual renown. I found Mr. Brown quite in the costume of an author* embodying virtue in a new novel, and making his pen fly before him.
>
> Mr. Brown occupied a dismal room in a dismal street. I asked him whether a view of nature would not be more propitious to composition; or whether he should not write with more facility were his window to command the prospect of the Lake of Geneva.--Sir, said he, good pens, thick paper, and ink well diluted, would facilitate my composition more than the prospect of the broadest expanse of water, or mountains rising above the clouds.
>
> *By the costume of an author I imply a great coat and shoes down at heel. (Travels, pp. 149-150)

In June 1801 Davis again had opportunity to observe Brown in the Philadelphia literary circle. Brown "said little, but seemed lost in meditation; his creative fancy was perhaps, conjuring up scenes to spin out the thread of his new novel" (Travels, p. 204).[22]

For all readers, whatever specialized tid-bits they might seek, the stable commodity of the Travels soon becomes apparent in the multitude of

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[22] In Memoirs of Charles Brockden Brown (London, 1822), p. 45, William Dunlap, his good friend, describes Brown as "without system in everything. . . . negligent of personal appearance, even to slovenliness." He also quotes a letter from Brown (p. 63): "This jaunt to Rockaway has left few agreeable traces behind it. . . . I should have reflected on the journey with no little satisfaction. As it was, I set my foot in the city with no other sentiment, but that of regret, for not having employed these two days in a very different manner." Dunlap (p. 45) corroborates that "in mixed company he was often silent and absent . . . fitful and irregular." Harry Redcay Warfel's more recent study (Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, [Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949]) also portrays Brown's difficult personality, his tendency to be mysterious and uncommunicative even with his best friends. Soon after this date Brown "withdrew from society and from his career in fiction" (p. 202).

different people who populate its pages. They are a refreshingly motley group--neither saints nor sinners, and never just specimens. It is a strange contradiction that a writer whose fictional characters are often totally unbelievable and whose fictional dialogue was often so preposterous that a reader wonders if he had any ear at all for colloquial speech could recreate such a diversity of living people with such skill and economy. He captures people best in the short scene, the isolated incident. A typical vignette which also dramatizes, at Davis's expense, a fundamental difference in the Englishman and the American, is the introduction to Mr. Ball:

> The first impression made by Mr. Ball decided that he was a Gentleman; and I was not a little delighted with the suavity of his manners, and the elegance of his conversation.
>
> When the children withdrew, I entered on the terms of my proposed engagement, and presented to him a letter which I had been honoured with from Mr. Jefferson. I knew my host to be a Virginian who favoured the Administration, and thought a letter from the President would operate on him like witchcraft. But I was unacquainted with my man. Mr. Ball was not to be biassed by the whistling of a name; he read my letter more from complaisance than any motive of curiosity; observed, that a man's conduct could alone decide his character; congratulated himself upon the acquisition of a man of letters in his family; and offered to engage me for a twelvemonth, at a salary of a hundred guineas. (Travels, pp. 361-362)

The average American comes off rather well in Davis's hands--generous, friendly, hospitable, intelligent, if sometimes loquacious and lacking in polish. Of American rural manners in general he wrote with a certain wistfulness: "Pure and simple innocence! To dread no eye, and to suspect no tongue, is the prerogative of the family to whom these manners belong" (Travels, p. 347). More specifically of the Draytons: "I conclude my description of this elegant family, with an observation that will apply to every other that I have been domesticated in, on the Western Continent;

--that cheerfulness and quiet always predominated, and that I never saw a brow clouded, or a lip opened in anger" (Travels, p. 85).

In the last analysis, the unique charm of the Travels lies in a combination of elements--the responsive personality of the writer, the sprightly entertainment of his style, and the timelessly fascinating plot of a young man making his way by his wits, and, conversely, the fragile transience of the time and the place--the early beginnings of the new nation.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETRY

Like many of the ancient classicists and his neoclassical contemporaries John Davis regarded poetic expression as elevated far above that of prose, indeed as a special gift of the gods, the attainment of which was among the highest of man's reaches. His "sacrificing to the Muse" was, therefore, a lifelong avocation, extending from the epigram written in his grandmother's prayer book when he was seven to the full length poetic narrative, St. Cross, published in 1836 when he was sixty-two. It is probable that he continued to compose verse in the eighteen years of activity remaining to him. That he had a genuine love for poetry cannot be doubted.

When he arrived in the United States in March 1798, bringing with him a library of nearly three hundred volumes, he brought also a mind deeply marked by what he had read and a malleable aesthetic open to new influences. An examination of his poetry covering the unusually long span of its composition reveals a potpourri of varied modes and themes illustrating most of the established Augustan forms and an experimentation with the subjects and techniques coming into fashion through the early Romantics.

A. FUGITIVE VERSE

While at home in Salisbury, he had been submitting prose pieces regularly to The European Magazine from September through December 1797, but he had not ventured any verse except a poem supposedly composed

by his grandfather "some forty to fifty years ago." That he had, nevertheless, been writing poetry is indicated by one of the earliest pieces which he submitted to the [Charleston] Evening Vesper Courier, "Ode Written in June, 1797." It appeared on October 19, 1798, and is notable only as the earliest known of his poetic works at the present time and as an expression of the traditionally accepted concept of the eighteenth century ideal--the rational pursuit of the golden mean in a rural retirement setting of a cultivated landscape.

Ode Written in June, 1797

On Lyndurst green my cottage stands,
A rural seat of pleasant view,
Cheer'd with the sight of rising lands,
And flowry meads of purple hue.

No gilded arch beneath my roof,
No costly ornament is seen,
Of pomp my dwelling gives no proof,
I only court the golden mean.

But books are mine, sweet mental flow,
Great Homer's works my cottage grace,
Which oft my heart have touch'd with woe,
In pity for sad Priam's race.

A city life I do not mourn,
But safe remov'd from noise and news,
What should I sooner now adorn,
Than my best work--*The Summer's Cruise.

If health around my dwelling smile,
And sweet contentment bless my lot,
I shall not want the larger pile.
But own, with pride, my rustic cot.

*A Work preparing for the Press. [This was later entitled Two Voyages. It failed of publication in Charleston.]

A poem very similar in style and theme, "Irregular Ode to My Cottage, by Un Anglais," had been published in the [New York] Time-Piece for April 6, 1798, just three weeks after Davis had arrived in this country. Prefaced

by two lines of Horatian Latin, larded with allusions to Horace, Virgil, and the various muses, it eschews city joys for the tranquil pleasures of the country and the company of "a kind and lovely cher amie". It is almost certainly from the same pen.[1]

Davis's first appearance in the American press, however, was even earlier than this and of a more ambitious nature. On March 30, 1798, twelve days after his ship had passed Sandy Hook, "Plague at Philadelphia" appeared in the Time-Piece as part of a proposal for the publication of A Tribute to the United States from which it had been extracted. The entire work was printed a few weeks later in an eight-page pamphlet and reprinted in part and in whole in various periodicals at least six times more. A poetic commendation was an expedient vehicle with which to launch a literary career in a nation young enough to need its virtues extolled. It had ample precedent in the plethora of patriotic and nationalistic eulogies which Americans had been turning out in the early national period. Better adapted to rhetoric than to poetry, these eulogies usually combined historical incident with prophecies of future glories, while contrasting the bright sun of American happiness with the dark clouds of European oppression. Davis's opening lines declare:

> Long have I sought, beset with grievous toil,
> To gain AMERICA'S applauded soil,
> To fly a Land oppress'd with bleeding woes
> That savage war and tumult only knows;[2]

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[1] Both poems bear a strong resemblance in theme and detail to "The Wish," by Abraham Cowley, one of six English poets whom Davis recommended in his essay on self-education. The other five were Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and Pope.

[2] A Tribute to the United States. A Poem (New York: Library Printing Office, 1798, p. [3].

Admidst homages to Franklin, Washington, and Montgomery, the present peaceful and properous condition of the country is compared to its former condition, "once in Nature's rudest state" and later "fir'd with England's vile abuse of pow'r." A flowery description of Philadelphia is followed by a lengthy account of the horrors of the plague in that city. From such "scenes of woe and grief" the poet turns to stilted descriptions of spring and summer in the eighteenth century pastoral convention. In another sudden shift of topic, the Bay of Chesapeake is examined with a geographical catalogue of its many Indian-named tributaries. Once more the supremacy of a commonwealth government is expounded; Washington is contrasted to Caesar but likened to Cincinnatus; then the two-hundred line collage of heroic couplets comes to an end in the pamphlet version, although at least one of the newspaper printings has several more lines appended in celebration of Eleanor, Davis's young English friend.

The work's weaknesses far outweigh its merits. It lacks any sense of unity: the overall theme may be the blessings of society in a democracy--or commonwealth, the term Davis preferred--but much extraneous material blurs the focus. Organization is non-existent as one topic is abruptly abandoned for another in random hop-scotch fashion. Its diction could be used as an example of the ultimate in decadent Augustan convention, the overdone alliteration and tired, worn-out epithets as rigidly formulated as those of an Anglo-Saxon bard. Its images are totally incongruous to the American landscape, presenting the settlers as "rustic nymphs and swains" who "solace their labour with the woodland song" during the day, and rewarded "with the flowing bowl . . . lead up

the dance and lightly beat the ground" most of the night. Only the "yellow corn fields" strike a distinctive pictorial image, and of the American character, only two lines are memorable: "Of men made warriors in their country's cause,/ Zealous to frame, and then obey its laws." The overall faults of the work, as evidenced by the separate elements previously mentioned, are its lack of sincerity and authenticity. The bombastic rhetoric may be excused as a fashion of the times, further induced by the author's first flush of romantic enthusiasm for the freedom of the individual which America represented to him, but its strong anti-British bias was not a true picture of England's condition nor the genuine sentiments of Davis's heart, and was probably inserted in the calculation that this was what Americans would like to read only twenty years after the Revolution. Its authenticity suffered, of course, from the author's lack of experience in America. The sections on spring and summer were probably written as poetic exercises in England with no thought of American application. The more regional sections about Philadelphia, the plague, and Chesapeake Bay contain no insights not readily available in geographies, newspapers, and the numerous books of American travels. These parts too could well have been written in England or perhaps on the long voyage over, during which he "never ceased to woo" the Muses, who "blessed [him] , not infrequently, with their nightly visitations" (Travels, p. 11).

With customary energy he had done his homework preparatory to his arrival here and was thus able to describe in A Tribute and in Original Letters American places and events which he had not experienced. His familiarity with Wansey's An Excursion to the United States of America (Salisbury, 1796) is particularly easy to document. Henry Wansey (1752-

1827), a wealthy Salisbury clothier, had retired early in life to devote himself to travel. It was he who had given Davis, his young townsman, letters of recommendation in the hopes of opening doors for him in New York.[3] Mr. Wansey, like most foreign travelers, had been struck with the awesome annual visitation of the plague to American cities and to supplement his own remarks had quoted in his book a long account of the plague taken from Paulson's [Philadelphia] Almanac for 1795. Nearly every detail in Davis's poem is found in Paulson's account.[4] Wansey's work was apparently also a source of a lengthy passage in The Original Letters, which Davis wrote a few weeks later. In the book Ferdinand takes a walking trip from New York to Philadelphia. Since Davis had not yet made such a trip, one is at first puzzled that he could include so many descriptive details; but a comparison of Ferdinand's trip with Wansey's reveals an identical itinerary. It is to be expected that the description of some places should be similar, but the verbatim expressions are so frequent that there can be little doubt that Wansey's trip was the pattern for Ferdinand's. An interesting sidelight is that Wansey was often critical about roads, food, and accommodations, as was Ferdinand. When Davis came to write of his own American excursion, he complained less than Wansey on the whole, yet was more derogatory between New York and Philadelphia, perhaps an unconscious echo to Wansey's reactions which he had assimilated so well.

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[3] Travels, Morrison edition, p. 17.

[4] Plague material was voluminous. Davis might also have already read Charles Brockden Brown's Arthur Mervyn and Ormond.

The one other long poetic work which Davis composed during his first New York residence was an elegy attached to The Original Letters of Ferdinand and Elisabeth. A slyly enigmatic note introduced it: "For the following Elegy the public is indebted to a gentleman whom I had the pleasure to know in Europe, and whose safe passage hither I prayed for with . . . true classical enthusiasm" (Original Letters, p. 150). The "Elegy" has a strong kinship to Blair's "The Grave" and to others of its kind written in the most extravagant fashion of the graveyard school. The first few lines illustrate the ghoulishness of the rest of the poem, which Davis claimed he wrote to "excite the softer emotions."

> WHERE wand'ring ghosts their vigils keep at night
> And dance terrific by the moon's pale light;
> Where gloomy yews their sable branches wave,
> And cast their shadow o'er the rising grave,
> Together rest in death's profound repose
> These hapless victims to love's tender woes.

In successive images the "clay-cold and mould'ring ground," "grim spectres," "hoarse raven," and "melancholy owl" are evoked in "the despairing vale." More occasional than most elegies, it reviews the cruelty of Elisabeth's guardian, who "caus'd this pair to shed their blood," and predicts that his death will "call reproaches from this gen'rous land/ . . . Where the muse smiles, when Barlow strikes the lyre,/ In Bold sublimity of epic fire." American "swains and nymphs" are admonished to tread lightly "o'er the lovers' grave," an image Davis fondly repeated in later elegaic peoms he found occasion to write.

In spite of the excessively doleful sentiment, no spiritual comfort alleviates the despair. Unlike Blair's "The Grave" or Young's "Night Thoughts," there is no catharsis, no consolation, no Christian hope--only tears. Its lush emotionalism, like that of its companion, The

Original Letters, found little response in the American reader, and it does not seem to have met with any further reprintings except in the Travels, where an "errata" note advises: "Dele the Elegy, because neither gods, nor men, nor the stall of the bookseller, can tolerate mediocrity in poetry." If he had not wanted the poem included, it probably need not have been so. Perhaps the errata is another of the little camouflages he like to play upon readers.

From the relatively sparse samplings of his poetry written to this date, one may judge that he shared characteristics common to young poets of all ages--an uncurbed enthusiasm not yet brought under the rod of artistic discipline and an imitative style reflecting the poetic fashions of his time. Despite their bombastic rhetoric, the poems lack any spark of genuine emotion and consequently strike little fire in the reader.

When Davis left New York in the summer of 1798 to explore the United States, new poetic horizons were before him as well. A few weeks later in Charleston, South Carolina, he was to meet Lucas George, a young Irishman and fellow tutor, whose tastes and talent, both personal and aesthetic, were to complement Davis's in a rare felicity. Under George's friendly encouragement, Davis's poetic efforts increased in number and in variety, and under the scrutiny of George's early neo-classical criticism, re-inforced by his studies in Greek and Roman literature, they became more disciplined and controlled.

This is not to say that George was immune to sentimentalism. In the week preceding Davis's arrival in Charleston, he had been publishing in the local papers short works such as "To a Widow," "Werter's Farewell

to Charlotte," and "Sonnet to Henrietta," the latter expressing a favorite theme of George's, that of the lonely exile "doom'd thru some foreign clime, fore'er to roam." Perhaps the exile theme to which he could liken his own situation, coupled with a desire to try a poem in the English sonnet form, caught Davis's fancy, for three days later on October 12, 1798, the Evening Vesper Courier carried over the initials "J.D." a poem similar to George's bearing the unusual title "A Modern Fabricated Sonnet." A few days later George volleyed back with "Sonnet to a Leaf," the closing couplet of which utilized the identical lines previously used by Davis.

During the rest of Davis's American sojourn and especially during the immediately following months, he produced a considerable body of verse which appeared in many newspapers and periodicals. His usual modus operandi was to submit the poem first to a newspaper where it was often "buried in the rubbish of advertisements," as he complained. Then he would send it to three or four monthly periodicals. Thus a poem saw several printings in prominent places and might be picked up by lesser publications for reprinting numerous times more. He also inserted them into his books wherever remotely appropriate. Judging from the copies still extant in various periodicals, his name must have been well known to poetry readers up and down the east coast; and from his habit of publishing in newspapers which carried few other poems, his name was probably also better known to non-poetry readers than the names of many poets whose fame has endured longer. Because some of his work was printed under pseudonyms, either by personal whim or by pressure after he had alienated the local literati, the canon of his work, both poetry

and prose, is less than if "probable" attributions could be proved to be positive ones. Whenever he is contributing regularly to a periodical, there are usually pseudonymous or anonymous pieces which are most probably his and which disappear when his name does.

Granted that he was an exceptionally persistent merchandiser of his wares, ambitious and eager for fame, his accomplishments should not be measured in quantity alone. During the high tide of the popularity of the Port Folio, "the only literary magazine having a national circulation and patronage,"[5] whose list of authors "probably contain the names of a majority of the writers of any prominence in the country,"[6] Davis was a frequent contributor whose poems received from editor Joseph Dennie "the praise and dispraise which they deserved."[7] His work was also accepted by Charles Brockden Brown, whose Monthly Magazine and American Review in 1800 published a total of sixty poems; twenty-nine of these were by Davis and nine others were either about him or submitted by him on behalf of Eleanor or "Ennius" [Lucas George]. In London, The European Magazine printed many of his poems along with several essays on American topics. Collections of his verse appeared twice: the first, a twelve page pamphlet entitled Poems, Written at Coosahatchie in South Carolina, appeared in Charleston in 1799;[8] the second, an expanded version of thirty-six pages, was published in New York by Caritat in 1801 and was entitled

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[5] Harold Milton Ellis, Joseph Dennie and His Circle: A Study in American Literature from 1792 to 1812, Bulletin of the University of Texas, No. 40 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1915), p. 220.

[6] Ellis, p. 164.

[7] Ellis, p. 168.

[8] Printed by T.C. Cox.

Poems, Written Chiefly in South Carolina. Davis implies that the latter saw two editions.

What kind of verse was it? It was varied, both in subject matter and in genre, the latter being more confined in range. He utilized, for the most part, the favorite rhythms of the Augustans--the iambic pentameter and even more frequently, the iambic tetrameter, in couplets or quatrains, venturing rarely into experimentation with a six-line stanza in an a a b a a b or a a b c c b rhyming scheme. To a lesser degree he used the trochaic tetrameter. The tetrameter line is predominant in the occasional poems, but iambic pentameter couplets prevail in The American Mariners and St. Cross. His few sonnets are always of the English type: his numerous "odes," homostrophic and often quatrains, bear little resemblance to the Greek Pindaric or the Cowleyan; he seems to have used the term in a sense synonymous with lyric.

Of the several subjects which recur, the poems about love are the least significant, both in number and in honesty of expression. They consist primarily of translations and imitations of Horatian odes or of paraphrases from the Greek. These include the three Pocahontas poems which Davis ascribed to Rolfe in the Travels. One he had previously published in at least four other places as his own, before changing the name of the classical "Flavia" to that of the Indian princess, and another he had published as one of the odes written by Eleanor, altering only the first line from "Within sweet Stratford's calm retreat" to "With Powhatan's calm retreat." The depth of Davis's feelings for the young lady of Stratford is questionable in consideration of the facility with which he altered for some other purpose poems supposedly dedicated

to her celebration. It may or may not be indicative that the poems written to Pocahontas and to Eleanor share a common theme of longing and deep melancholy, whereas the classical imitations are generally ardent descriptions of the lady fair or warnings of false love.

The poems about friendship are in a happy contrast. Sometimes entitled "odes," they share the characteristics of traditional odes only in their dignified language and lofty thoughts. In the form of an apostrophe, they sing the virtues of the friend--Dr. De Bow, Lucas George, Judge Grimké, and others--with strong associative imagery of the seasons and of pastoral scenes. The majority of these light, convivial works were products of the early months in South Carolina. "To Lucas George,"[9] less formal than the other odes and revealing a warm, humorous side of Davis's personality not often seen by modern critics, illustrates the mood of those months as the two young poetasters worked at polishing their craft.

To Lucas George

In sight of Georgetown's loathsome jail,
Where stripes the passing ear assail,
Say! cans't thou touch the warbling string,
And to thy friend so sweetly sing,
Of frogs & toads, a motley throng,
That nightly croak the woods among
In concert with thy lofty song?
Fit habitation for a bard!
Between a jail & lone church-yard:
The one reminds thee of the fate
Which poets oft lament too late;
The other, tells thee of the doom
We all shall find beneath the tomb!

Why surely now thou may'st daily chuse
Choice subjects for thy lyric Muse;

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9 [Charleston] City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 9 August 1799.

Whether the bell with doleful round,
Summons the funeral to the ground.
Or frogs their nightly clamours raise,
Responsive to thy tuneful lays,
Of "give us rain," and "bacon fry,"*
Beneath the Evening's azure sky.

Be such thy theme; while I employ
My lyre to sing the placid joy,
That from my blithesome crickets come,
Who chirp beneath my humble dome,
And soothe me in the silent night,
When writing by my taper's light,
With ev'ry sprightly grace of song,
That can to harmony belong;
Whose gentle lays as much surpass
Thy croacking frogs, with lungs of brass,
As lofty Maro's reed
My verse in melody exceed.

J. Davis

S.I. Aug. 5 [1799]

*The cry of the frogs has been fancifully assimilated [sic] to give rain, and fry bacon.

It was a time of imitative experimentation, from the pithy hedonistic verses of Anacreon to the earthy, urban subjects and clear, simple style of Swift. The influence of the latter, a healthy antidote to the florid froth of Davis's early style, is most noticeable in two poems of a nautical nature, "The Passage Boat. Swift Imitated" and "A Jeu D'Esprit," a title by which he denoted certain light verses. Although "A Jeu" did not have his name signed to it (and considering its language, one can understand his reticence), it was preceded in the column of the [Charleston] Evening Vesper Courier by a selection from A Tribute to the United States and followed by a quotation from Davis's Buonaparte's Campaign.[10] Utilizing constructions and phrases common to his work and his experience as a seaman, it recalls his essay "A Voyage from Bristol

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[10] Conversely, ascription of name or initials does not guarantee that a poem is by Davis either. The "Ode to Virginia, Looking Over a Map" in the 1803 Travels, supposedly inspired by his happy hours as a

to New York" and looks forward to The Wanderings of William, The Post-Captain, and The American Mariners.

A Jeu D'Esprit

As late a son of Neptune bravely stood,
Escaped the dangers of the stormy flood,
Full of the rosy god--at Bacchus shrine,
Where hung an emblem of the juice divine;
As near the place some nymphs pursue'd their way,
In dress and air superlatively gay.
Return'd from church, rejoicing at the pain
Inflicted on each silly, sighing swain--
The Tar's bold look their little hearts abash'd,
And to avoid his, thro' the dirt they dash'd,
Rous'd at the sight, says Jack, "G-d d--n my eyes,
A sail!-- I've bak'd their top-sails by surprise!--
A-hoi! the ship, a-hoi--dispel your fear--
What do you take me for a privateer?
Damme, haul aft the sheet--your helm a-lee--
Luff round, sweet girls, and into port with me!--"
He said. But swifter than the western wind
They fled--and, flying, left the tar behind.
Safe to their lofty dome, at length, restor'd,
They breathe from [illegible] fears around the festive board,
Rejoicing to've thus secur'd by flight,
Their ruby lips, now quiv'ring with the fright;
Then bolt firmly the door, and soon display
Loquacious wit at those who ran away.

Charleston, Oct 24th, 1798

As one might expect, he wrote several sea poems, particularly during those summer months of 1799 at Sullivan's Island. The sea as an important image also occurs in many other poems not specifically concerned with it. Viewed from the bluffs above Savannah, "where not

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schoolmaster in Virginia and addressed in 1802 to his young pupil named Virginia, had appeared first in Charleston in 1799 signed "A" and addressed to Matilda. It was probably written by George, alias "A" and "Agricola," as one of a series of Matilda poems which he authored. In 1802 Davis published it in The European Magazine as the work of George; yet in 1800 he had used it in The Farmer of New-Jersey addressed to Serena. Obligingly Matilda, Serena, and Virginia all scan alike, as do Virginia and New Jersey.

a wave disturbs the tranquil main,"[11] it can serve as a soothing force; but man, always cognizant of its omnipotence and caprice, can at best hope, "May ev'ry breeze auspicious blow,/ And nought provoke the wat'ry god."[12] More often the wat'ry god is provoked. Closely associated with the sea imagery is the man on shore awestruck by its storm-swept power, but secure as long as he remains in his own element. If he is fortunate, he escapes to a sheltering cottage:

> While the waves around us roar,
> Foaming high, without control,
> Safely from the tranquil shore,
> Fearless, hear the tempest howl.[13]

The attraction which the poet felt for the sea is most explicitly expressed in his "Sonnet to the Ocean. Written on the Beach at Sullivan's Island":[14]

> I love to know thy loudly raging wave,
> Break, with rough fury, on the level shore;
> And view the skiff the watery perils brow,
> While round her prow the huge white billows roar:
>
> Behold yon bark the sable flood divide,
> Forcing its way impetuous thro' the surge;
> And sportive still the angry waves deride,
> With swelling sails that serve its course to urge.
>
> In vain the water of the ocean raves,
> Not Jove himself can impious man confine,
> Lash'd to a slender plank each toil he braves,
> Though soon he on the sea-beat rock repine!

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[11] "Sonnet to Charlotte Smith," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 9 May 1799. Also in The European Magazine, October 1799, The Monthly Magazine and American Review, April 1800, and in the Travels.

[12] "Ode to a Medical Friend," Poems [1799] and The Monthly Magazine and American Review, March 1800.

[13] "Ode to a Cricket," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 16 July 1799.

[14] City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 22 July 1799.

So, urg'd by passion, all perceive too late
Their restless folly, and lament their fate.
J. Davis
July 12, 1799

The poem shows a growing skill in poetics: the sudden twist of meaning in the couplet, the concrete diction, the vivid detail of the description, the skillful use of single-syllable words to speed the lines of the three quatrains contrasted with the slower pace of the couplet, and the deliberate breaking of the iambic feet in the second lines of the first two stanzas to reinforce the meaning. Even the didacticism of the couplet, though usually an objectionable factor, is a welcome addition, elevating this poem above the many others in which he merely paints a vague picture, leaving only the descriptive exercise with no meaningful significance. It is a step towards having his poetry say something.

In the poems of man challenging the sea, he is the loser, the victim of ocean and storm.[15] In view of the successful voyages Davis himself had enjoyed and of those he portrayed in later works, this morbidity can be explained only by the excessive sentimentality of the age which had earlier attached itself to the young writer and which lingered especially in the moods associated with visits from the Muse, for not just the sea poems dealt with the subjects of death and the grave. Death came to man not only through the sea and suicide and the plague at Philadelphia, but through war as well, a subject he explores in "To a Fort."[16]

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[15] E.g. "To a Wreck Upon a Beach," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 23 August 1799; "The Shipwreck," The Monthly Magazine and American Review, May 1800; and "The Ocean Pilgrim. A Moral Poem," Port Folio, January 1814.

[16] See "To a Fort," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 18 July 1799.

More prevalent even than the image of death is that of the grave. After his impetuous friend John Daly Burk had been killed in a duel in Petersburg, Virginia, in April 1808, and buried at Cedar Grove, the residence of General Joseph Jones, "in a spot which Rousseau would have coveted for the place of his interment beyond the sepulchre of kings," it was next to nature for Davis to turn out a graveyard poem.

Burk's Garden Grave

I climbed the high hills of the dark Appomattox,
The stream pour'd its waters, the wild woods among:
All was still, save the dash of the surge from the white-rocks,
Where the sea-fowl indulg'd in his tremulous song.

On my right, where the poplars, with fair branches gleaming,
Half embosom the proud-vaulted villa of Jones;
On the tomb-stone of Daly the liquid sun streaming,
Mark'd the spot where the bard had found rest for his bones.

Oh! rare is the spot hung with clustering roses,
Where Virginia's sweet Minstrel is gone to his rest;
For the sun's parting ray, on his grave oft reposes,
And the red-breast delights there to build her soft nest.

And oft shall the damsels, with bosoms high swelling,
Whose ruby lips sweetly his soft stanzas sing,
Dejected repair to the Bard's narrow dwelling
And deck the raised turf, with the garlands of spring.[17]

It is disappointing that by 1809, in this poem at least, Davis had not consolidated more definitively his developing poetic skills. Perhaps the rawness of the tragedy had not allowed emotion to be adequately "recollected in tranquillity." The vague generality in diction and the cloying, cliché-ridden imagery, whose final insult is the voluptuously invented damsels, illustrate sentimental elegists at their worst. Little in the poem evokes the memory of Burk save the speed and

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[17] Richmond Enquirer, 6 June 1809.

tumult of the unexpected anapests, which he has used with considerable technical success. It is strange that Davis, so wedded to the conservative iamb, should have chosen this rhythm for an elegy. His temerity is even more impressive in view of the ten years which would elapse before an American poet, Bryant, criticizing the wearisome regularity of the Augustan meters, would formally defend the trisyllabic foot. The sound quality of the poem is also effective. The use of the long vowels in strategically important words give emphasis to the meaning and a stateliness to the lines, while the repetition of continuous consonant sounds coupled with the anapests produces an incantatory effect curiously like that of another Richmond poet, Edgar Allan Poe.

As Miss Kellogg has pointed out, a later version of the poem illustrates Davis's habits of revision. Rarely did these constitute extensive changes from the original, showing instead small alterations of refinement. In this instance the poem has been improved in several ways. The description is more concrete and the alliteration has been better matched: lines two and three have become "The stream roll'd in silence the wild woods among;/ All was still, save the dash of the wave from the white-rocks." The syntax has been made more natural: line seven has become "The sun's liquid rays upon Daly's tomb streaming." The expletive "Oh!" has been wisely eliminated and the line further improved to read, "Yet sweet is the spot . . . ." And the sexuality of the damsels has been at least moderately abated, line fourteen now reading, "Whose voices in concert, his soothing lays sing." More important, additional stanzas have been inserted after the second stanza, helping to alleviate the surfeiting sweetness and adding a certain

masculine and classical dimension lacking before:

> Accurs'd be the hand with resentment prevailing,
> That pointed the weapon compelling thy fall;
> That brought from their bowers the Muses bewailing.
> Thy body convuls'd with the murderous ball.
>
> On the river's stain'd margin, there Clio was seen,
> With Terpsichore mourning thy fine spirit fled;
> Thalia no longer retain'd her gay mien,
> But hid in Melpomene's bosom her head.[18]

Admittedly, the additions break the unity of the subject and are of a nature soon to be out of date even in 1809, yet for their time they are an improvement. Despite its faults, the poem achieves a feeling of freshness and demonstrates a sense of sound and music which testify to innate talents, which though often crudely developed, were recognized by such critics as Dennie and Brown.

The traditional expression of orthodox hope for a life beyond is conspicuously absent in the poems about death. Suspicion that the deistic sympathies evident in The Original Letters had indeed permeated his philosophy more than he cared to admit later on is reinforced by the stoic classicism often expressed in his numerous allusions to the poet and his fate. The highest aspiration a poet could look to was a reputation of "deathless fame,/ Th'applause of distant worlds to claim,/ And live through endless song."[19] Meanwhile in this life, he is destined to be a lonely wanderer, somewhat martyr to his Muse, who in turn is somewhat his comforter. Davis's most extended treatment of the subject is found in "In Me-Ipsum":

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[18] Port Folio, March 1814.

[19] From "Horace, Book II, Ode 20. Imitated," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 20 August 1799. Also in The Monthly Magazine and American Review, April 1800.

In Me-Ipsum

Should some lone trav'ller, that delights in song,
Ask on what spot my lays I did recite,
From those who live these gloomy woods among,
Where neither hill nor dale rejoice the sight;

Haply the genius of the place may say--
"'Twas here he sought in poesy relief,
And oft in mournful mood sigh'd out the day,
Or touch'd the lyre to simplest sounds of grief.

"But yet his pipe of rudest minstrelsy,
No heart to tender sympathy could move,
For here no breast e'er felt the extasy [sic]
Which those partake, who Phoebus' favours prove.

"Along the road, near yon deserted grove,
Where scarce a footstep e'er imprints the green,
Musing, at early dawn, he lov'd to rove,
And ponder o'er the solitary scene.

"One morn I miss'd him in his custom'd walk,
His lyre, neglected, lay beneath a tree;
No more in secret did I hear him talk,
Nor at the grove, nor on the road was he.

"May each sweet muse collect her scatter'd flow'rs,
To weave a vernal garland for his head,
With nightly visitations cheer his hours,
And smooth the rugged path he's doom'd to tread."[20]

The similarity in plan between this work and the concluding stanzas to Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is so marked that one marvels at Davis's affrontery in submitting it for publication in at least three different places and marvel even more that it was accepted.[21]

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[20] City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 24 May 1799. Also in Poems [1799] and in The Monthly Magazine and American Review, March 1800.

[21] Gray's stanza corresponding to the stanza second from the last above reads:

One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath, and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

There is of course a major difference in the endings of the two poems: Gray's poem ends with the strongly affirmative epitaph including the famous lines, "He gave to Misery (all he had), a tear;/ He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend," and concludes, benediction-like, with all merits and frailties resting in "the bosom of his Father and his God." Davis's ending is enigmatic and sterile, the concluding image a pale variation of the usual nymphs and damsels who tread lightly o'er his many graves, singing softly and dropping garlands.

The self-pitying concept projected is nevertheless the prototype of the one which both he and George often shared and in which they commiserated with each other. Even Homer had had his exiled wanderer, but George's poem "The Wanderer," dedicated to Davis, reads like a burlesque of sentimental self-pity; Davis received it as a sincere tribute. It was perhaps understandable for two young men struggling alike with poverty, artistic hopes, and ambition for fame, far from their homelands and placed in what they sometimes experienced as an alien society, to feel as "a lonely wanderer, doom'd by fate to roam,/ My wealth the Muse the world at large my home."[22] It was even more understandable for two young men, well-indoctrinated in the cult of gloom and solitude by Rousseau, Goethe, and Ossian, to strike occasionally what would soon be known as the Byronic stance. Evidence indicates that George had recently suffered a disappointment of the heart; even so, the mood appears to have

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[22] "Epistle to Lucas George," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 1 July 1799. Davis's quotation from Caritat that "this is not the land of literature" has been construed as snobbish English prejudice; but even Freneau, leading native poet of the time, complained of having been "on these bleak shores by fortune thrown,/ Where rigid reason reigns alone." And Dennie admitted privately that he wished he had been born in England, where his talents might have been better appreciated.

been more germane to his Celtic nature than to Davis's more practical Saxon one. The exile is only one of several masques he would temporarily affect during the months of his first American sojourn, between the times when the more robust, interesting, and cheerful role of professional traveler would reassert itself. The romantic view of man as victim of environment and society was never more than temporary with Davis. Characteristically he held to the classical view that man was master of his fate.

A variation on the lonely wanderer theme is the "Tributary Verse" which served to introduce the original version of "Coosahatchie."

Tributary Verse

Now Southern climes my wand'ring verse inspire,
To Carolina's praise I sweep the lyre.
Behold gay Charleston's distant turrets gleam,
Washed by the waves of Ashley's winding stream:

Her shores, her hospitality renoun'd,
With science, fashion, wit & beauty crown'd
Invite the stranger bounding on the main,
His sight enchant, his ling'ring steps detain.
Here once a melancholy wand'rer cast,
Of care the prey, expos'd to fortune's blast,
Pensive and wan, unknowing where to roam,
A Brisbane[23] asked me to his friendly dome:
So the sad seaman, long by tempests tost,
Of winds the sport, by ills successive crost,
Within some haven finds at last repose,
That soothes to calm forgetfulness his woes.
. . . . . .
Deep in the bosom of a lofty wood,
Near Coosohatchie's slow revolving flood,
*Where the lone owl, with melancholy sound,
*Reveals his woes, that from the groves rebound;
Where the grim wolf, at silent close of day,
With hunger bold, comes near the house for prey;
Where the soft faun, and not less tim'rous hind,
Beset by dogs, outstrip in speed the wind;

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[23] Mr. Brisbane was a wealthy planter of Charleston and the Ashley River area.

*Where the lost trav'ller crosses in his way
*The serpent, glistn'ning in the summer's ray,
*Or, at the covert of some shaky brake,
*With terror hears his fatal rattles shake;
Where the blithe mocking bird repeats the lay,
Of all the tribe that warble from the spray;
*Where not a hill diversifies the land,
*Which to the eye presents a waste of sand;
Along the road, near yonder fields of corn,
Where the soft dove resorts at early morn,
*There, on the borders of a grass-grown pool,
*Remote from noise, I kept my little school:
There would my breast with love of nature glow,
And oft my thoughts in tuneful numbers flow;
While friendly GEORGE, by ev'ry muse belove'd,
Smil'd his assent, and all my lays approv'd.[24]

This work illustrates two themes already discussed, those of friendship and the lonely wanderer, and introduces the theme of nature, which is by far the dominant subject of a major portion of Davis's occasional poems. In this group are probably his most charming and enduring poems, especially significant to Americans as among the earliest of those dealing with specifically American subjects.

Both Miss Kellogg and Professor Law make note that the early nature poems were written only a few months after the publication of the Lyrical Ballads, and Kellogg goes on to add: "Davis seems to have sincerely loved nature and it was not strange that he should express his feelings in verse whose form differed as greatly from the early eighteenth century models as did the subject matter."[25]

Some of his verses do differ from the fashions which were dominant

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[24] The full text of this poem appeared first in the City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 4 April 1799. The section beginning "Deep in the bosom of a lofty wood" was included in Poems [1799] and reprinted in The Monthly Magazine and American Review, January 1800, and in The European Magazine, February 1800. A shorter version deleting the lines marked by asterisks appeared in the Travels.

[25] Kellogg, p. 45.

in the early eighteenth century, but to suggest that they abandoned the neoclassic traditions to embrace the new fashions of the nineteenth century is to imply too much, to see that which is not really there, and to misinterpret perhaps what actually is there. Written in a transitional period, his work, like that of most of his contemporaries, is a blend of both eras. Analysis of technique, tone, and subject matter particularly of the nature poems proves this to be so, and to identify accurately that this quality is neoclassic and that quality is romantic is not always easy.

In poetic technique, the poem quoted above, for instance, is an Augustan production with its frequent utilization of the stock diction of natural description, the numerous epithets, the many closed couplets, the frequent caesuras, the repetitive devices, and parallel constructions. Although Davis declares that his "heart with love of nature glowed," and a reader might believe him on the basis of his declaration and the faintly connotative suggestion of a few lines, a neoclassical objectivity dominates its tone. But the poems of Anne Finch (1661-1720) or of James Thomson (1700-1748) show more enthusiasm for nature than does this poem. Here is no Wordsworthian self-abandonment in the arms of nature. Most of the natural details which he lists are not those to inspire a romantic love of nature. A reader with some validity might conclude that his declaration is mere poetic convention. Nature here is hostile to man. These wild aspects of nature might be hailed as a glimpse of the dawning romanticism, but should also be recognized in the legitimate and powerful eighteenth century tradition of the "sublime"--an aesthetic tradition which was

later absorbed by the romantic love of nature, but which by then had undergone much change in subject detail and tone.

Interest in the "sublime," as old as Longinus, had been renewed in the latter eighteenth century by Edmund Burke's "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful" [1756]. Davis, who often quoted the writings of his old naval acquaintance and who was equally knowledgeable with Addison's aesthetic essays, recognized those elements which were considered properly sublime and was acutely aware once he had left New York City that America was "a country distinguished for features peculiarly beautiful, grand, and sublime,"[26] features which, he felt, should inspire her native writers. Though acknowledging the many talents of Charles Brockden Brown and Joseph Dennie, he found them "lamentably defective" in one common department:

> Neither the mind of Mr. Dennie or Mr. Brown displays any enthusiasm of rural nature, in the groupe in which she disposes of her own creations. . . . Good God! did Mr. Brown possess an eye to observe, and a heart to feel nature, what paintings should we not have had in his numerous works. . . . Then would the Potomack have rolled with more majesty, and the cataract of Niagara acquired more terror. . . .
>
> They [Brown and Dennie] both look on life, but shut their eyes against Nature. They find more satisfaction in pacing the streets of Philadelphia, than in hearing the storm rave among the forests, or to ascend some eminence during the agitations of nature, to stride along its summit while the lightnings flash around, and amidst the howlings of the tempest apostrophize its spirit.[27]

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[26] The Philadelphia Pursuits of Literature, II (Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, 1805), 11.

[27] Ibid. Yet Nature was not to be pre-eminent: "A study [of the productions of nature] I have ever considered subordinate, where compared to that of life" (Travels, p. 89). Within the context of this philosophical hierarchy, he also wrote: "It was not art but Nature that called me" (Travels, p. 339). Life, nature, and art thus ranked in that descending order.

Such manifestations of power and strength, together with the sea, are those which appeared most sublime to him. He was also awed, like many another traveler, by the immensity of America and the vastness of its forests: "An European who has confined his travels to his own country, can have but a very imperfect idea of the forest scenery of America. His imagination familiar only with open and clear grounds, will scarce form an adequate conception of the endless and almost impenetrable woods in the Western continent" (Travels, p. 372). Even the naturalist, Alexander Wilson, who like Davis traveled many miles on foot, wrote with deference of the "awful silence of th'unpeopled waste;" while an American, neoclassicist Timothy Dwight, less receptive to the new aesthetic and confronted with the forests of New Hampshire which were relatively more vast than those of Connecticut, had declared with unfeigned disapproval: "In so vast an expansion the eye perceives a prevalence of forest, which it regrets; and instinctively demands a wider extent of smiling scenes, and more general establishment of the cheerful haunts of man." Davis could offer no better proof of his adaptability and enjoyment of nature than that he journeyed alone on foot through these "gloomy" woods "with an accession of cheerfulness," a cheerfulness aided, of course, by the company of pipe and dog.[28]

His description in the Travels (pp. 338-339) of the Great Falls of Potomac is typical of the time. In writing prose descriptions of the

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[28] Mountains however were another matter. One could travel in imagination with Rousseau and write: "Had I lived near the Alps I should certainly have adopted the plan of Saint Preux, and striven to dissipate my melancholy by climbing to their summit" (Travels, p. 376). But the reality of the "dreary" Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, "with neither the wildness of nature, nor the uniformity of art," imparting no pleasurable awe, "would inspire an Englishman with thoughts of suicide" (Travels, p. 366).

sublime, he could fall back on the voluminous work of many predecessors. Poetic handling of sublime elements, excepting that of the graveyard school, had been less common, and the poetic handling of such distinctly American phenomena as the gloomy forests, infinite stretches of "wasteland," and proximity of wild and strange beasts had been attempted even less. Davis's stock of poetic images, like those of his contemporaries, had been formed by the common English scenes: a landscape cultivated and controlled, tamed to a tidy neatness, reduced to a pictorially manageable size, and arranged with a pleasing diversity --the landscape of "Ode Written in June, 1797"; or that of the "delightful land" replete with fertile fields of golden harvests, snowy flocks, mazy rivers, and balmy breezes, and inhabited by the swains and nymphs of A Tribute to the United States; a landscape adapted to "pursuing the noiseless tenor of our way in the peaceful bosom of love and retirement," as Davis, alias Ferdinand, had written while still in New York City. Alas, the "prospects" of Denham, Pope, and Dyer offered no precedent for the delineation of the American wilderness. The attempt to harmonize the terror of the sublimely wild landscape of the South Carolina pine barrens with the standardized eighteenth century convention of rural contentment resulted in an example of what has been described as an "incongruity between convention and experience,"[29] an incongruity which plagued many an early American poet.

"Coosahatchie" suffers from a conflict between theory and reality. Theoretically, the sublimely terrible images were to arouse pleasure and lofty thoughts. The terror is aroused, but in reality life in

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[29] Eugene L. Huddleston, "Topographical Poetry in the Early National Period," American Literature, 38 (1966-67), 303.

Coosahatchie is made pleasurable only by the presence of another smiling human and the social and prosaic duties of keeping a little school. Artistically then, the images of the dangerous wilderness do not logically lead to the final scene of neoclassical rural contentment which the poet has conventionally tacked on despite the obvious non sequitur. The theory didn't work in Davis's immediate personal experience either. A few months later, the loneliness, the strangeness, the various fears (plague, etc.) had driven the still Augustan, still English, tutor back to a more urban climate. It is interesting, however, that in his abridged version of "Coosahatchie" which appeared in the 1803 Travels the lines deleted [See asterisks pp. 153-154] were those picturing the more fearsome aspects so that the portion of the poem which remains and its conclusion are better harmonized. Perhaps in retrospect, the woods of South Carolina did not seem so frightful to him as when he had first arrived; or perhaps he had come to realize the artistic incongruity between convention and experience. The former proving stronger for art's sake, he had denied the experience and had fallen back into the familiar eighteenth century poetic convention.

Davis's most obvious and conscious effort to deal with a sublime subject was his poem, "The Natural Bridge," honoring the awe-inspiring spectacle in Virginia, universally acclaimed as "the most sublime of Nature's works." Many travellers agreed with the Rev. Archibald Alexander who wrote in 1798 that it had excited in him "an emotion entirely new . . . a genuine emotion of the sublime."[30] This was an object to

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[30] Quoted by Mary E. Woolley in "The Development of the Love of Romantic Scenery in America," American Historical Review, 3 (1897-1898), 62.

inspire all three divisions of the sublime as analyzed by Kant: the terrible, the noble, and the splendid. Apparently having attempted a poem to match the grandeur of its subject, Davis designated this 1808 work as "the only verses of mine that aspire to much poetical merit." He had it published at least four times in Virginia newspapers and twice in the Port Folio. In a comment of rare felicity, Dennie called it a "favorable specimen of the author's powers" and "a very meritorious production." In 1822 Davis still thought enough of it to include it in The American Mariners, the text followed below.

The Natural Bridge

When Fancy left her native skies
To visit earth, before unseen,
She bade the swelling fabric rise
In this sequester'd, sylvan scene.

Each comely Grace, with spritely air,
Appear'd beneath the hanging wood,
Forming the arch with nicest care,
To span the laughing valley flood.

Then Fancy, from the pile above,
Would muse transported, bending o'er,
And rapt behold the current rove,
While jocund Echo mock'd its roar.

And, here, perhaps, the Indian stood,
With hands upheld, and eye amaz'd
As sudden, from the devious wood,
He first upon the fabric gaz'd!

See Tadmor's domes, and halls of state,
In undistinguish'd ruin lie;
See Rome's proud columns yield to fate
And claim the pensive pilgrim's sigh.

But while consuming Time impairs
The monuments of human art,
This pile unfading grandeur wears,
Eternal in its every part.

The first version of the poem had contained five additional stanzas of extraneous material about the poet's melancholy musing, some

lovers in a canoe, and birds building nests. Wisely he struck them out and tightened the basic metaphor with small but significant dictional changes, evidence that when he cared deeply enough about a subject and was willing to spend the effort, he could judiciously edit his work to its improvement.

For Davis the poem represents an advance in poetic concept over the earlier loco-descriptive verses which little more than catalogued whatever hit the poet's eye. He has utilized a unifying metaphor--albeit a stale one--an developed it in some detail. In addition, the poem makes a point, reiterating the Addisonian theory embraced by the early Romantics that nature is superior to art.

Jefferson and other viewers most often had stressed the terror which the bridge aroused in the beholder.[31] Davis seems to have wished to stress the splendor and nobility of the object. A sentence found within Jefferson's description of the arch might have sparked the mataphor upon which Davis built his poem: "It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime to be felt beyond what they are here; so beautiful an arch, so elevated, so light, and springing as it were up

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[31] The following quotation ends a long descriptive footnote which Dennie attached to the poem and which closely follows Jefferson's concluding remarks. Readers must have wondered if the poem and paragraph were really concerned with the same bridge:

> Few persons have the courage to approach the side of this bridge. Those who do are instantly seized with horror. They involuntarily fall to the ground, cling to a stone, or tree, look down on the frightful abyss below, and gaze with astonishment at the mass [sic] walls, the deep winding valley, the rushing stream, and the distant hills. To persons below, a prospect not less awful and grand is presented. Men view the towering arch, its strong foundations, and the distant sky; and adore that God who spake, and it was done; who commanded, and it stands fast. (Port Folio, January 1809)

to heaven! the rapture of the spectator is really indescribable!"[32] But a fanciful metaphor with coquettish personification which had adequately served a more prettified age falls short of arousing the emotions correspondent with the sublimity of the object, just as the ending of "Coosahatchie" had. Once again, the worn-out eighteenth century vocabularly and poetic conventions were inadequate to the more sublime, rough, and sombre aspects of the Western continent.

For the most part, Davis confined himself to views of nature which were more generally familiar, such as the scene pictorialized in "Evening in Occoquan. An Ode":

Slow the solemn sun descends,
Ev'ning's eye comes rolling on; 1
Glad the weary stranger bends
To the Banks of Occoquon!

Now the cricket on the hearth,
1 Chirping, tells his merry tale; 4
Now the owlet ventures forth
Moping to the sighing gale.

Still the busy mill goes round,
While the miller plies his care; 6
And the rocks send back the sound,
Wafted by the midnight air.

Lo! the moon with lustre bright,
2 In the stream beholds her face; 2
Shedding glory o'er the night,
As she runs her lofty race.

See! the bark along the shore,
3 Larger to the prospect grow; 3
While the sea-boy bending o'er
Chides the talking waves below.

Now the mocking-songster's strain
5 Fills the pauses of her brood;
And her plaints the ear detain,
Echoing from the distant wood.

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[32] Notes on the State of Virginia (1785; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 21.

Hanging o'er the mountain's brow
4 Lo! the cattle herbage find; 5
While in slumber sweet below,
Peaceful rests the village hind.

Now the student seeks his cell,
6 Nor regrets the day is gone;
But with silence loves to dwell,
On the Banks of Occoquon.

Here no negro tills the ground,
Trembling, weeping, woeful--wan; 7
Liberty is ever found,
On the banks of Occoquan!
(Travels, p. 234-235)[33]

Neither sublime nor beautiful, but blending a little of both with a liberal amount of the plain and the ordinary, the poem creates a varied "prospect" of the "general" and "universal" so beloved by the eighteenth century artist. More simple in style and more realistic in detail than the early neoclassical pastorals, yet not as responsive to the natural objects nor as empathetic with the characters portrayed as the rural poems of Burns, Crabbe, or Wordsworth, "Occoquan" fits most comfortably with the loco-descriptive poems made popular by Thomson in "The Seasons" and Collins in "Ode to Evening."

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[33] The stanzas above are in the order of the 1803 Travels. Davis's various rearrangements are indicated in the margins: the numbers on the left of the stanzas are as they appeared in the Port Folio for 7 November 1801; the numbers on the right represent the stanza order in the Port Folio for April 1809 and presumably his last shuffling. The most significant improvement over the earlier version is the stanza placed in number one position, which established the tone for an evening poem much better than the cricket stanza had. The stanza marked seven is new for the 1809 version, having been transplanted from a companion piece, "Morning at Occoquan." In his 1801 letter to Dennie, Davis states: "The following effusions of my muse were refused admittance in the Alexandria papers, as not possessing sufficient merit to entitle them to that honorable distinction: they were afterwards published in the Baltimore Gazette. As these bagatelles recall three months that I passed in the solitude of Occoquan, I am desirous to preserve them; and, for this purpose, entreat you to give them a place in your elegant miscellany."

The varied spellings of "Occoquan" are as Davis used them. Dennie

The poem is neoclassic in subject matter, in tone, and in technique. The view of nature is that of nature methodized, kind and plenteous because tamed by man, whose arts and husbandry are subtly diffused throughout the harmonious scene, a scene which, given a few years, might be Pope's "Rich industry sits smiling on the plains." The poet has studied the scene with some care but with restraint and objectivity. The rural people who populate the scene--miller, sea-boy, the Negro--are neither idealized nor patronized. The collective images may evoke a mood, but if, as Lascelles Abercrombie suggests, the hallmark of romanticism always constitutes "some reliance on, or some prejudice favoring, the life of inner experience" emphasized at the expense of the other,[34] than this is no romantic poem.

The heavy reliance upon the catalogue of external objects, many of which had long since passed to the domain of common cliché, in order to create the desired associations, suggests that the poem also owes something to the "picturesque" vogue of the late 1700's, a popular English fashion for poetry "capable of being illustrated by painting."[35] "Occoquan" could well be a landscape by Constable. Employing the same pictorial technique, Davis's contrasting prose picture of Occoquan is

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rebuked him for "assuming the liberty, shall we say licence? to change the orthography of a leading word in order to suit his rhyming convenience," pointing out that "he, who egregiously fails in the grosser and mere mechanical portion of his work, will scarcely rise above mediocrity in the more refined and spiritual." (Port Folio, April 1809)

[34] Lascelles Abercrombie, "Romanticism," in Romanticism: Points of View, ed. Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 70.

[35] Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (1935; rpt. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 157.

worthy the brush of a Brueghel or a Hogarth. That he was consciously striving to image a picture capable of being visually illustrated is suggested by the specific reference to painting:

> Occoquan, within a few years, has become familiar to the traveller, from the circumstance of its having been made the stage route from Philadelphia to Richmond. Let the reader paint to his image a small river pursuing a serpentine course along mountains that rise abruptly from its bank; vessels taking on board flour under the foam of two large mills, and others deeply laden expanding their white sails to the breeze; let him group with these a tavern, and a dozen other houses erected upon rocks, with I know not how many waggons, and waggoners, a foot-traveller and his wife, emigrating back from Kentucky to Philadelphia, a Virginia gentleman on horse-back, followed by his African groom, half a dozen noisy children, just let loose from an old field-school, and the schoolmaster taking the direct path that leads to the tavern, together with the passengers getting out of the stage, and the whole hamlet gaping at them, while the blacksmith's iron cools on the anvil; let the reader picture this scene in his mind's eye, and he will behold DAY AT OCCOQUAN. (Port Folio, March 1809).

Of the picturesque vogue, which grew out of the earlier loco-descriptive verse, Samuel Monk has written: "The picturesque interregnum between classic and romantic art was necessary in order to enable the imagination to form the habit of feeling through the eyes."[36] In "Occoquan" the poet's eye has been realistically at work; he is no longer imagining the world of nymphs and swains. It is only the eye, however, which has been at work. The poet has abandoned the intellectual philosophical moralizing of the earlier loco-descriptive poets, but he has not embraced the warmth or emotional involvement of the later Romantic poets. Like other "picturesque" poets who depended solely on the associative values of their catalogues, he has not enriched his scene with any metaphoric extension. The result is that the poem lacks depth of dimension, a deficiency shared by most of Davis's nature poems. Unlike

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[36] Monk, p. 204.

the great nature poets of the early nineteenth century, he was rarely able to break "the tyranny of the bodily eye" in order to "see into the heart of things," the difference between sight and insight, between the picturesque approach to nature and the romantic.[37]

One instance in which he attempted to parallel the external object with the inner experience is found in the poem, "Ode to the Mockingbird":

I

Sweet bird, whose imitative strain,
Of all thy tribe can personate the note,[38]
And with a burthen'd heart complain,
Or to the song of joy attune thy throat,
To thee I touch the string,
While at my casement, from the neighb'ring tree,
Thou hail'st the coming spring,
And plaintive pour'st thy voice, or mock'st with merry glee.

. . . . . .

V

Pour out thy lengthen'd strain,
With woe and grief complain,
And blend thy sorrows in a mournful lay;
Thy moving tale reveal,
Make me soft pity feel,
I love in silent woe to pass the day.[39]

Perhaps the freshness of considering a side of nature for which conventional precedents were not so numerous--the narrow examination of a lower form of nature--enabled him to break the routine patterns and to discover personal lyric expression, much as the same experience had vitalized the poetry of Freneau and Bryant. The poem is more subjective

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[37] Monk, p. 204.

[38] Charles Brockden Brown objected: "'Personate the note' is an expression not allowable even with the license of the poet."

[39] The text here is that of Poems [1799]. The poem was also printed with slight alternations in the Charleston Gazette, 9 March 1799; in The European Magazine, October 1799; in The Monthly Magazine and American Review, March 1800; in The Farmer of New-Jersey, 1800; in the Baltimore Weekly Magazine, 21 January 1801; and in the Travels, 1803.

than "Occoquan," closer to the life of inner experience and possibly an expression of Davis's personal grief over the death of Eleanor. Yet the seeming romanticism of the appeal to the imagination must be qualified in part. The true romanticist egocentrically sees in nature a mirror of his heart, a reflection of his feelings. But the mockingbird is not acted upon: the bird here is the instrument which creates the emotion; he evokes feelings and makes the listener feel pity. An emotion thus contrived is more neoclassic in origin than romantic. In effect, as theorized by the associational psychology of the Scottish rhetoricians, a state of mind has been awakened by an object.

Nevertheless, an identity of human mood with a supposed mood of nature has taken place and resulted in a rare use of analogy, as a result of which the personal application is less sentimentalized and effusive. The poem is significant on that account and also for the experimentation away from couplet and quatrain. The stanza variations may represent an attempt to match the diversified songs of the bird.

One final poem from the nature group should be examined to complete a discussion of Davis's work in this mode. "Ode to the River Raritan" is probably his finest effort of this sort and shows, in its reworkings, that as his poetic skills improved over the years, his work was capable of growing in complexity and maturity.

Ode to the River Raritan

O sacred stream! a stranger I
Would stay to see thee passing by;
And mark thee wandering thus alone,
In varied turns, so like my own.
Wild as a pilgrim led astray,
Thou seem'st to wind in woods away;
And, hasting through the tress to glide,
As if thy gentle face to hide,

As if thy gentle face to hide,
While oft in vain thou would'st return
To visit here thy native urn.
But like an exile, doom'd no more
To see the scenes he lov'd before,
You wander on, and wind in vain,
Dispers'd amidst the boundless main.
Here often on thy borders green
Perhaps thy native sons were seen;
Ere slaves were made, or gold was known,
Or children from another zone,
Inglorious, did with axes rude,
Into thy noble groves intrude.
When winter wrapt thy frozen form
And blew, with every breath, a storm,
"Twas then I first survey'd thy shore,
Thy rocks and forests towering o'er,
Thy scenes that gave a wild surprise,
And joys unknown to vulgar eyes.
"Twas then I wish'd thy praise to scan,
O ever kind to wandering man,
Thou, queen of rivers, Raritan!
(Port Folio, 26 January 1805)[40]

This early version of the poem promises more than it delivers. The first fourteen lines establish a parallel between the river's wanderings and those of the poet. The last fifteen lines, seemingly forgetful of what has gone before, fragment into a mélange of isolated descriptive-meditative thought which end with a gushy apostrophe not consistent with the lines immediately preceding it. Once again he had fallen back into the shallow patterns of cliché.

In December 1805, the Port Folio published an amplified version which though still not sustaining the parallelism of poet and river

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[40] Miss Kellogg hesitates to attribute this verse positively to Davis on the basis of his ambiguous denial of authorship in The Philadelphia Pursuits (Kellogg, p. 88). The latter work, a spoof owing its existence to a controversy over the "Ode," is not to be taken literally where the author's claims or denials of authorship are concerned. Elsewhere, in at least two places, Davis seriously claims the work. Internal evidence is that the work is his and that it was probably written when he visited Lucas George at Raritan upon arriving back in the United States in January 1805, a fact he verifies in a letter to the editor of The European Magazine for May 1806.

throughout the entire poem, yet achieves a better thematic unity by eliminating description which is not integral to the main theme and by uniting both poet and Indian in a mutual experience with the river. An introduction, the first line of which reflects his continuing consciousness of the sublime, has been added to help establish the mood:

> Lost in a pleasing, wild surprize,
> I mark thy fountains round me rise;
> And in an artless current flow,
> Through dark and lofty woods, below,
> That from the world the soul confine,
> And rise the thought to things divine;

When the poem appeared in The European Magazine for May 1806, he had further improved it. In all, the poem shows a more thoroughly developed idea, a more artfully sustained tone, and a finer balance of intellect and feeling than most of his work. His failure to show similar consistent growth of proficiency is disappointing.

In the decade from 1799 through 1809, between sixty and seventy poems were published over Davis's name; a number of others were undoubtedly published anonymously or pseudonymously. He considered them a serious expression, an activity divinely commissioned by "the Muse." The success which he achieved in circulating his works is readily understandable, for they compare well with the average verses with which they competed in the newspapers and periodicals of the time. Yet he never achieved a lasting fame, never seemed able to reach beyond a certain limiting enclosure.

The reasons are twofold: first, his limitations both of imagination and philosophical profundity. Coleridge asserted that "no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher" (Biographia Literaria, II). Davis may have had the eye of a

painter, but he lacked the vision of the poet. Second, he was born in an age which was fast passing away, and the new age had not yet defined itself. He was in many respects a romantic in temperament, concerned more with heart than with head, but with imbibed neoclassical reservations which produced inhibitions of emotion and of ways to express that emotion, particularly within the discipline of poetry. The idioms which had imprinted themselves indelibly upon him were, unfortunately, already passé. Writers connecting fresh ideas in exciting new ways had not yet made a path wide enough more than to show him only faint glimmerings of where the new road would go. Naturally imitative, he had not the originality to find his own way, even when stimulated by the excitement of the new continent.

The criticism which he received from editors and friends, also neoclassical in their preferences, confirmed him in his habits. Brown praised him for harmony of numbers and vivacity of expression, for good taste and pretty description.[41] Dennie's note in the Port Folio of January 25, 1805, is typical:

> The "Ode to the River Raritan" by Mr. J. Davis, is a new proof of his talent for description, and taste for the beauties of nature, and the melodies of the Muse. An invocation to the Genius Loci is always perused with pleasurable emotions, because it is so creative of the ideas of association. The little poem of Mr. D. is remarkably tender, sweet, and picturesque. . . . This sprightly writer has, in many instances, caught the spirit of Goldsmith.

Their complaints were directed against individual dictional flaws and

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[41] Review of Poems, Written Chiefly in South Carolina [1801], The American Review and Literary Journal, I, No. 1 (1801), 84-85.

an occasional "roughness of meter."[42] Nonetheless, because of their mutual neoclassical bent, Davis probably fared better in America, where the Augustan taste survived longest in such editors as Dennie, than he would have in England during this same period.

Today the poems still exude a certain charm: most of all, the charm of obsolescence. But there are lines where the sharp eye and the musical ear startle in their unexpected strength and when the intensity of the experience prevails in spite of the inoperative expression. American readers may enjoy the added charm of discovering what distinctly American phenomena were singled out by a visiting poet as he surveyed the new republic.

Davis's occasional excursions into poetic satire have not yet been mentioned and need not be dwelt upon, having received considerable attention from both Kellogg and Law. Actually he didn't compose as much satire as one has been led to expect, nor was he ever the instigator of the various satirical exchanges in the literary wars. That which he did write was produced in collaboration with George and bears much more the

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[42] Additional comments are characteristic of their personalities. Dennie, from whom probably no other original poet received as lengthy and as encouraging comment as did Davis, felt that "his genius is naturally inclined to the joy and sportive" (Port Folio, January 1809). Brown, picking up a phrase Davis had used with some pride to describe his poems, wrote with some disapproval: "Those who are sometimes disposed to amuse their idle moments with 'trifles light as air,' may find some entertainment in this little volume of poems. . . . The author appears to possess the capacity for poetical composition, and we should be pleased to see his ready talents exerted on topics more dignified or interesting" (Brown, Ibid.). Considering that many of the poems had been published by Brown, his patronizing air seems inconsistent and ungrateful. When he stopped printing Davis's poems, the poetry department of his journal went down hill with long boring translations of Ovid and other classical poets. To Davis's credit he had not written a "Sonnet on a Pepper Pot" or "Address to the Cockroaches," actual titles the like of which were frequent in the journals of the day.

stamp of George's incisive wit than of Davis's milder humor or clumsy rage. The 1799 episode in Charleston was primarily between George and his adversary "Alienus," who, already at odds with George and irritated by the Della Cruscan epistles which Davis and George were exchanging, attacked them both. Davis's first reaction was not in the satiric vein; his poetic responses express bewilderment at such unexpected animosity:

> "This strange, that those, who down the stream of life
> Would tranquil float, remote from empty strife,
> Should meet reproaches from the bick'ring throng,
> Charg'd with no other crime, but love of song![43]

A month later in pious tones he advocates a mutual charity:

> . . . . Sojourners here below,
> Let us do good, bid soft compassion flow
> For all alike; obedient to the call
> Of Universal God, the righteous Lord of all![44]

Finally, finding Dunciad imitations flying about him thick and fast, he erupted with a lengthy "Epistle to Alienus," in which the Georgian identity is explicit: "What Dennis was to Pope, some years ago,/ That Alienus is to Davis now."[45] A certain amount of personal malice there was, but to an equal degree, a zestful role-acting.

On February 16, 1805, only a month after Dennie had published and praised "Ode to the River Raritan," the Port Folio printed an irreverent burlesque, "Ode to a Market Street Gutter."[46] Stung by the insolence of the satirist and the seeming treachery of the editor, Davis published

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[43] "Epistle to Lucas George," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 1 July 1799.

[44] "To the Citizen of the World, and a Calm Observer," Ibid., 12 August 1799.

[45] Ibid., 20 September 1799.

[46] For a brief discussion of this and other burlesques of Davis's poetry, see Appendix B.

early in March a pamphlet entitled The Philadelphia Pursuits of Literature.[47] In his publisher's advertisement, Davis claims that the author of both "Raritan" and Pursuits is "a Scholar, a Poet, and a Gentleman, known only to a few friends and the Muses, on the banks of the Raritan"; and that he, Davis, is only the instrument of giving both to the public, "notwithstanding one of the [critical thunderbolts], hissing hot, falls on the shelves of my own store." Undoubtedly the joint effort of both George and Davis, The Philadelphia Pursuits attacked in verse the works of many Port Folio contributors in the Dennie circle. Such wholesale slaughter hardly justified by provocation of only two offenders, the work is obviously a product of multiple motivations: Davis's easily aroused ire at the well-entrenched and clannish Philadelphia literary group, the same perverted sense of fun which he and Goerge had shown in Charleston and New York;[48] and the commercial purpose of getting his name before the literary-minded public. He had arrived back in the United States only weeks before, was just setting up in the bookstore business, and soliciting subscribers to Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, an advertisement for which was prominently placed in The Philadelphia Pursuits.

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[47] The Philadelphia Pursuits of Literature. A Satirical Poem. Book the First, by Juvenal Junius, of New Jersey, with notes, by Robert Heron, Junior (Philadelphia: 1805).

[48] "Democritus" a combatant in the Charleston newspaper war, had written:

> But as to Davis--he's so lost
> To shame; and has so long been toast, [sic]
> On land and sea in coach and ship
> That he with laughter gnaws his lip,
> When other bards would sob and weep,
> And wish themselves beneath the deep. . . .
> ("Epistle Admonitory," [S.C.] State Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 25 September 1799)

The title and format of the pamphlet was inspired by The Pursuits of Literature, a Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues, with Notes, published anonymously in England between 1794-1797.[49] Dunciad-like it had abused with authoritative, neoclassical critical tenets almost every writer of the time who had the smallest claim to fame. Between 1803-1805 Thomas Green Fessenden, cohort of Dennie, had borrowed the format to attack medicine, petty science, politics, and assorted other topics. American satire had enjoyed considerable vigor ever since John Trumbull had produced McFingal (1784), and Pope's Dunciad, had been the model for numerous imitations generally political in content. Less passionate about letters than about politics, Americans had not made literary criticism the subject of such vigorous activity. It was therefore a timely and appropriate vehicle for Davis and George.

The Philadelphia Pursuits caused much fun in the literary circles of the time and whereever the Port Folio was read. Davis sold it at his bookstore and saw that it was included in the "Catalog of New Publications" of such periodicals as the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review (March 1805). He also sent a copy to President Jefferson:

> I take the liberty to enclose a Satirical Poem which I have just published. To increase its sale I have written under a feigned name, but I make no scruple viva voce to avow myself its author. I know not, Sir, whether you ever before heard of Mr. Dennie, but he is looked upon in this city, by some strange agency, a writer of transcendent merit. I purpose to continue the pamphlet and drive, if I can, from the usurped seats of Literature the Dennies, the Jacksons, etc. etc.[50]

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[49] The reputed author was Thomas James Mathias.

[50] Davis to Jefferson, 1 March 1805, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. Davis's penmanship is frequently a reflection of his state of mind. Probably mirroring the agitation of the circumstances of the pamphlet, this letter is not as carefully penned and spaced

Davis could not have seriously wondered whether Jefferson had "ever before heard of Mr. Dennie," a fanatical Federalist who took every opportunity to slander the President and who had been tried for seditious libel in 1803. He was probably hoping that his denunciation of Dennie and defense of Jefferson and Randolph in The Philadelphia Pursuits would further ingratiate him with the President. Jefferson replied with only a short acknowledgment of receipt.[51]

Like its predecessor, The Philadelphia Pursuits is in verse form with copious prose notes and assumes the form of a dialogue in its opening lines:

> What knock is that assails my rustic door!
> Haply some beggar would my alms implore;
> Some wretched outcast; go, John, give him bread,
> Let want go smiling from my humble shed.
> "Sir, 'tis a packet," honest John replies,
> "From Philadelphia, of a mighty size:"--
> "A packet! bless me! full of good intents!"
> "Yes, Sir, you have to pay a hundred cents."
> "A hundred cents! it gives me quite a trance,"
> "For the Port Folio and the last romance!"
> "Then Muses aid me! and I'll fain review,
> "The Philadelphia lounging scribbling crew." (p. 3)

Various of "the Philadelphia lounging scribbling crew" are singled

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as his other letters to Jefferson. The hand deteriorates so rapidly in the brief note that the closing and signature are difficult to decipher and the customary flourish underlining the name is absent entirely.

[51] Davis seems not to have blushed at his own hypocricies that at the very time he was denouncing Dennie's treatment of Jefferson and writing indignant lines in defense of the administration, his own book, Walter Kennedy, was in the press in England. In this book, with little excuse he had inserted as genuine, "Quashee's Seditious Ode," a satiric poem from the Port Folio, which made salacious fun of Jefferson's argument for better treatment of the Negro. Notwithstanding that the poem was not sincere, that it was written by Asmodeo, his erstwhile enemy and author of "Ode to a Market Street Gutter," that it was damaging to Jefferson and alien to his own heartfelt philosophy, he was giving the poem further exposure and credence by reprinting it.

out for scorn in couplets which are sometimes a verbatim echo of those used against Davis and George in Charleston. Dennie is scolded for his involvement in politics, for his procrastination, for plagiarisms, and of course for his double dealing: "Who one week panegyricks will provide,/ And ere the next with parodies deride" (p. 9). The hissing thunderbolt referred to by Davis in his advertisement derides his own poetry and suggests the indignity of the newly established "Juvenile Bookstore":

> See Davis next deal out his petty ware,
> And all his life write trifles light as air;
> See him, when all his other projects fail,
> Turn store-keeper, and write an Indian Tale:
> Explore his shelves! what folios catch the sight!
> The House that Jack Built! and the Child's Delight! (pp. 5-6)

Even more amusing is the prose footnote:

> Davis, an itinerant bard, who has been all his life travelling from Dan to Beersheba, and scribbling on the road. After having gone, the Lord knows how many times to the East-Indies, he shaped his course for South-Carolina, and imposed himself upon a rich cotton planter as an elegant and accomplished scholar. The planter receives him into his family to educate his children, when Mr. Davis, instead of acquitting himself in the duties of a preceptor, emulates the glory of a poet, and writes odes and sonnets to the Mocking-Bird, the Whip-poor-Will, &c. This was a grand aera of his life, for he has ever since fancied himself a poet. But the fact is, that the genuine requisites of poetry are not only out of his reach, but beyond his comprehension. (p. 12)

"Aristander" and "Beaumont" are charged with catering to prurience with their inordinate poetic interests in "snowy bosoms," a charge sometimes laid at Davis's own prose works, particularly The Wanderings of William and The Post-Captain. "Asmodeo," author of the "Ode to a Market Street Gutter," is accused of being "to sense and judgment a mortal foe." The prose note, though ostensibly protesting such harsh treatment, is more devastating:

> I consider this stricture on the poetry of Asmodeo both harsh and unmerited. In his "Ode to a Gutter," he discovers a taste for the sublime and beautiful in nature. This little poem of A.O. is remarkably simple, voluble and sweet. It is an address to the Genius Loci of his birth, and awakens the most agreeable associations. Ralph's Ode to Cynthia is not more easy, nor the News paper Carrier to his Patrons more charming. Notwithstanding the prepossessions of some, and the cavils of others, it is indubitable than this son of Bathos is a perfect adept in the art of sinking. (p. 14)

The full richness of the parody is evident when it is compared to Dennie's compliments to "Raritan":

> An invocation to the Genius Loci is always perused with pleasurable emotions, because it is so creative of the ideas of association. The little poem of Mr. D. is remarkably tender, sweet, and picturesque. Smollett's "Ode to Levon Water" is not more easy nor Mallet's "Birks of Endermay" more charming. Notwithstanding the prejudices of some, and the cavils of others, it is certain that this sprightly writer has, in many instances, caught the spirit of Goldsmith. (Port Folio, 26 January 1805)

A few days later Book Two of The Philadelphia Pursuits came out, a sorry and repetitive sequel made up of miscellaneous lines which could well have been first draft rejects from Book One. In contrast to the eight pages of verse and five pages of prose in Book One, it contains only three pages of verse plus seven pages of an equally repetitive and unconnected prose essay by Davis. As in the 1801 dispute in the New York Commercial Advertiser (See Appendix A) he still did not know when to quit while ahead and, deprived of George's wit, degenerated into nasty dullness. The only significant feature of Book Two is the brief discussion of Dennie which seems intended to ameliorate somewhat the criticism of Book One, admitting in a backhanded way that Dennie has

great acuteness of mind and exuberance of wit, and that the general structure and selection of his language discovers skill and taste. In both books, amidst all the fault-finding, brief praise is allowed for several contemporary Philadelphia writers, such as Rush, Barton, Fessenden, Green, Linn, and Dufief. Singled out for particular praise are William Clifton, a sentimental Philadelphia poet who had died in 1799 at the age of twenty-seven, and Charles Brockden Brown. Surprising in view of the antagonisms of 1800, Brown is acclaimed as diligent and fertile in imagination, of calm domestic life, and of acute moral discrimination. Davis probably considered Brown's Literary Magazine a rival of Dennie's Port Folio; at least in part, the virtues credited to Brown parallel in contrast poor Dennie's supposed deficiencies. Dennie was generous enough not to take umbrage and continued to print contributions from both George and Davis.

The amusement and revenge derived from The Philadelphia Pursuits seem to have served Davis as purgative of hostile feelings and to have settled him down at the beginning of his second American sojourn with a somewhat less patronizing manner toward American writers. He was maturing, and perhaps also American writers were finally content to live and let live without further baiting him, having been shown that a couple of young Britishers, though outnumbered, were bold enough to challenge Jonathan on his home ground with a few telling shots. Many of their attacks upon Davis's work had been induced more by the grating abrasiveness of his egotistical personality than by any gross insufficiences of his verse as compared to other popularly printed poems. Unfortunately, that same conceit and the anger aroused by the carping

attacks of baiters had often blinded him to real truths contained in the praise or blame of such serious editors as Brown and Dennie. It may be significant that in the relatively peaceful truce of the next few years, as he sought to depict early Virginia history in his poems and in the series of "Indian Tales," Davis would achieve a closer self-identification with America.

A ten-year span is too short a period in which to evaluate positive progressions in the work of a man so mercurial. But certain trends do seem to have asserted themselves with growing frequency: in style, the use of simpler syntax and plainer diction, giving the verse a more modern and honest sound; in subject matter, a putting aside of the old, rhetorical, generalized declamations for more specific objects or events of which he had personal knowledge; in tone, more optimism, less melancholy, a complete breaking away from the isolation of the "lonely wanderer"; an inclination toward narrative, with particular interest in historical subjects; a more frequent use of simile; and even, hesitantly and very occasionally, an experimentation in metaphor and symbol.

B. THE AMERICAN MARINERS

Unfortunately, a long void exists from the printing of his last known fugitive verse (1814, but the poems may well have been composed between 1807-1809), to the publication in 1822 of The American Mariners.[52] Nothing which he had written before had given suggestion that he would at some future time apply himself to an epic-like opus of 4,442 lines,

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[52] The American Mariners; or, The Atlantic Voyage. A Moral Poem (Salisbury: Brodie and Downing, [1822]).

yet the trends listed above have now declared themselves with positive strength. Published when he was forty-eight years old, The American Mariners may be considered as representative of the mature mind and skill of the poet.

The immediate motivation of the work was his distress at the anti-American prejudice exhibited by much of the British press, in particular by The Quarterly Review which was using literary criticism and general discussion to cloak Tory propaganda. He chose three avenues for a counter-attack: an open letter to Robert Southey, one of the leading figures in The Quarterly Review, a summary of various "naval annals" taken from the War of 1812, and the poetic work; a combination of argument, fact, and personal experience mutated through an art form.

The letter is entitled "A Vindication of the American Character from Aspersions of the Quarterly Reviewers." He makes his major point clear in the opening argument:

> I am not the panegyrist of the inhabitants of the new world, though I feel a catholic and conciliating spirit towards them; and I trust that I am not singular in my predilection for a nation identified with our own by a common extraction, a common language, a common literature, and similar political institutions. (Mariners, p. iv)

Pointing out that physically and morally a native of the North American Union is "more an Englishman that either a Welchman, an Irishman, or a Scot," he denounces the divisive vilifications of the reviewers in roundly rolling Johnsonian prose. The letter reveals a facet of his character glimpsed only briefly before in the literary wars when he was defending his own self-esteem. Now, having transcended self with a subject more worthy of his prowess, he sloughs off the picayune railings of the egocentric to sharpen his argument with all the tools of per-

suasion: formal logic, quotations from authoritative sources, examples, anecdotes, allusions, figures of speech, sarcasm, and humor. He takes, as an example of many, one specific review of a book of North American travels and refutes its "supercilious wrath of summary condemnation." The American people are not anti-religious as charged, merely because they show universal toleration and allow all denominations to live together in perfect harmony. To imagine that Kentuckians cut their razor strops out of the backs of living Indians is "truly diabolical"; indeed, "the race of Indians is extinct in Kentucky." And the mention of fleas and bugs is in very bad taste, for they

> . . . are not indigenous, but imported with the emigrants frae the North. The mosquitoes have vanished--stings and all: and snakes are nearly as scarce in the United States, from the cultivation of the soil, as they are said to be in Ireland through the interference of a Saint. North America is not a land of terror; and the dread of being devoured in it could enter only the chimerical brain of a closeted Reviewer.
>
> (Mariners, pp. viii-ix)

Some of his facts may have been a little inaccurate, but there is no mistaking the intention. In the ardor of his argument, the author had been metamorphasized from the sublime terror of the early "Coosahatchie" back almost to the unrealistic pastoralism of Tribute to the United States.

How efficacious Davis's letter and the remainder of The American Mariners were in helping to change the policy of The Quarterly Review cannot now be measured. About that same time other voices were being raised in protest also. But the date of Davis's letter to Southey in 1822 makes the following statement by Walter Graham especially significant: "Southey, as early as 1823, saw the harm that was being done by these defamatory reviews in the Quarterly, and at Murray's request pitched a "new tone" in his review of Dwight's Travels in New England

and New York."[53]

Of the 384 pages in The American Mariners, 147 are composed of "Naval Annals" related to the war of 1812, a chronological arrangement of various events commencing with the American declaration of war on June 18 "to vindicate her lawful claim to a participation of the common ocean." Noting that the American navy opposed 8 frigates and 6 sloops against Great Britain's force of 200 ships of the line, 20 fifteen-gun ships, 22 frigates, and 250 sloops, the first entry concludes, "It is the general expectation that the infant navy of the Republic will be swept from the sea." Accordingly on July 16, "the American sloop of war Nautilus is captured by a British squadron." From that point on, however, the supposedly "impartial summary" consists of engagements in which the Americans, through superior skill, are eminently successful. The sources of the reports are numerous: from the American side, Courts of Inquiry, the Congress, the President; from the British, James's Naval Occurrences, London newspapers, British commanders' reports, letters to the Admiralty, addresses to Parliament, and others. The materials used and the method with which they are handled are so similar to the "Official Narratives" section of the Royal Military Chronicle, which for seven years had also been woven from military and naval dispatches, the London gazettes, etc., and which were concerned with many of these same battles on the American front, that the case for Davis's work with the latter is strengthened. The tone is similar too; while acknowledging the tragedies of war, the Kipling-like narrator describes maneuvers and intricacies of battle strategy with zestful involvement.

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[53] Walter Graham, Tory Criticism in The Quarterly Review, 1809-1853 (1921; rpt. New York: Ams Press, 1970), p. 10.

The basic theme of the "Annals" is the same as that of the letter to Southey--that the American and British nations are endeared to each other by one common origin and that hostile encounters of any kind between them are unnatural and futile. For example, when the British are victorious in the field as was the frigate crew who had attacked a camp of American rangers on the shore of Chesapeake Bay, they experience little satisfaction: "Though returning conquerors from the field, their slow and mournful march presented the appearance of a funereal convoy; and when they had re-embarked in their boats, and reached once more their ship, her deck exhibited a scene of clamorous sorrow, or silent despair" (Mariners, p. 347).

British readers might have been willing to believe that the "formidable activity, vigilance, and efficiency" of the American navy was equal to that of Great Britain because derived from English blood and patterned on English ships, but Davis went further in his argument. The American navy was superior to that of the British: Americans had taken the design of English ships and improved upon them; American seamen were also an improvement over their originals--physically and in "that freedom of carriage and those disengaged manners, which are the inheritance of the children of Columbia" (Mariners, p. 291). The inevitable conclusion was prophetic: "The contest for the empire of the sea will be between England and the North American Union. . . . The confession is extorted from every unprejudiced bosom, that Americans will do more with a given number of vessels, than any other people" (Mariners, pp. 266-323).

The third section of The American Mariners, and most important artistically, is the 232-page poetic narrative of a voyage from America to England. The first-person narrator is identified as an Englishman

returning to his homeland with wife and infant daughter. As Miss Kellogg points out, "How much of this work is fictional and how much is based on fact, no one can tell." Ordinarily when relating details of his travels Davis was factual, but the details of this particular voyage have not been verifiable to date.[54] The factual reality of the poem is not necessary, however, to its appreciation nor to its meaning.

The voyage is divided into six cantos:

Canto I	The Embarkation of the Crew, and the Departure from Port
Canto II	The Storm, and Midnight Encounter of a Ship at Sea
Canto III	The Castaway
Canto IV	The Calm, Morning at Sea--Crew Bathing--Neptune's Visit--Episode of Yarrow--The Shark-Bait
Canto V	The Mariner on the Ice Island
Canto VI	The Arrival in Port

From these relatively common events Davis has patterned a work in the epic tradition, although nowhere does he refer to it as such. With unaccustomed modesty he substituted the conventional inflated epic preface with the letter to Southey and chose as a subtitle only the words, "A Moral Poem." Both actions suggest that he was more concerned with the message of the work than with the glory of its author. The message is basically the same as that of the other two parts of the book--the conviction that the United States is closely tied by blood and culture to Great Britain, is destined to become a powerful nation in its own right, and has in fact already become so. Earlier native writers had found epic material in the explorations of Columbus or in the independence achieved from the Revolution. Davis now found it in the phenomenal growth of American sea power which had resulted from the War of 1812.

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[54] See Chapter I, pp. 57-58.

Like the Aeneid, which he knew so well, The American Mariners bears a strong savour of nationality, recalling in retrospect past victories of the nation and throwing in clarion notes of swelling prophecy--"Freedom's great empire enthron'd in the proud West!" As Virgil had sought to illustrate the development of Roman civilization, so Davis from his observations of the American experience sought to epitomize its national ideology--the fusion of many into one, a people of freedom and spirit emerging out of the new democracy and the new continent.

The most universal epic quality as determined by Abercrombie is that of style--style of writing and style of imaginative conception. The epic takes us "into a region in which nothing happens that is not deeply significant."[55] Accordingly, the characters and events of The American Mariners assume almost allegorical import if one reads the voyage of the Electra as representing that of the American "ship of state."

The crew is composed of men representing different areas of the country: the New Englanders, "sons of the storm . . . to whom the rugged plank yields slumber sweeter than the mossy bank," man the first watch; the Pennsylvanians, "eager to explore . . . climb the shrouds"; the gay Virginians, "wild sons of mirth--with eye as eagle's bright--/ Waking to joy, to laughter, and to light," serve as cannoneers; the Mississippians, "used to gallies' sails, . . . the long loaded raft, and cumbrous barge," man the sails; and the Kentuckians, "new to naval fame . . . from boyhood taught the spiral gun to wield," are the

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[55] Lascelles Abercrombie, The Epic (London: Martin Secher, n.d.), pp. 40-55.

gunners. "Inspired by freedom, one congenial soul/ Pervades the bands, and animates the whole" (ll. 128-129).

Captain Delancey, ship's commander, embodies all the desirable virtues of manliness and leadership. A veteran of the War of 1812, esteemed as a friend by "Warriors and Statesmen of Columbia's land" who have come to see the ship embark, he is so devoted to duty that he has never married; "no vows but those to Fame his pulses own." Before the crew boards the waiting ship, he leads them in a service of prayer, reminding them of God's blessing upon their pilgrim forebears and beseeching His continued mercy:

> The sea-chief stood: in glittering gold array'd--
> On his sword's hilt the morn's effulgence play'd
> Quick was his eye--its attribute controul--
> It aw'd, impress'd, subdued the gazer's soul--
> And when his dark brow knitted o'er its glance.
> Scarce single-handed would his foe advance.
>
> Now as he rais'd his hand, the naval train
> Spontaneous knelt; such stillness held the plain,
> That in his highest flight was heard the cry
> Of the proud eagle soaring to the sky.
> (ll. 44-53)

The ultimate mission of the ship is to fight "the tyrants of the turban'd host," whom the British, fighting alone, had not been able to subdue. But the taloned eagle can also bear an olive branch:

> First to Britannia's coast the rapid breeze
> Shall bear our war-bark tilting o'er the seas,
> Envoy of peace, to give the generous hand,
> And closer draw the ties of friendship's band.
> (ll. 214-217)

The ship weighs anchor and the sails fill:

> High on the deck the gallant sailors stand,
> And look a tender farewell to the land;
> They mark the spot where lingering they delay'd
> Their last embrace, ere yet they anchor weigh'd.
> While curl the waves, our ship with spreading sail
> Smooth as a falcon hangs upon the gale,

> The peopled shore, the beacon fainter shew,
> And all is sky above, and ocean all below.
> (ll. 306-313)

In an apostrophe to America, the narrator expresses what must have been the sincere emotion of Davis's own heart:

> O land receding, land belov'd, rever'd,
> By ev'ry tie that binds the heart endear'd,
> Columbia's shores fast fading on the eye,
> To you I breathe my deep, my farewell sigh.
> Fam'd for true freedom, but for pity more,
> Exiles from ev'ry clime embrace your shore--
> Warsaw's defender, and the gallant host
> From Gaul--where Virtue mourns her empire lost--
> To you the persecuted victims roam,
> Redress their hearths, and find a sylvan home.
>
> And I who sought and found a wild retreat
> Where thy Ontario's sea-like billows beat,
> In all the turbulence of ocean's roar,
> Whelming the bark unconscious of a shore--
> Now leave my bower of peace--on wild waves tost,
> And spread the sail for Albion's distant coast--
> (ll. 314-329)

The voyage commences in a period of calm and favorable winds, not unlike the early national period of the young republic:

> Night now has hush'd our crew in soft repose--
> The moon, full-orb'd, her silver mantle throws
> O'er the blue deep--her splendours quiv'ring play,
> Gild our proud bark, and light her on her way:
> In such an hour who would not slumber break,
> To marvel o'er her meteor-streaming wake.
> In silent pomp the lofty warrior glides--
> Her hull, masts, sails, reflected on the tides--
> Her shadowy counterpart--to our sight,
> Blended in stillness--noiseless as the night.
> A thing intelligent before the gale
> Seems the tall ship--plunging her straining sail--
> Some spirit wandering on the billow hoar,
> That starts and listens to the wat'ry roar.
> (ll. 338-357)

The narrator is reminded of his youth at sea and in a <u>ubi sunt</u> passage asks, "Whither are all my early comrades fled?" A new generation has arisen, "another day is pass'd" of the voyage, the weather has changed,

and like the progress of the rising nation, the journey of the Electra is not free from problems. In the darkness of a stormy night, "a vast three-decker . . . some admiral's ship" intercepts their way "threat'ning to cleave in twain our hull." Like Americans in the early days of British impressment, the captain at first thinks "she comes but to annoy"; but in the next line he sees the ship's course "fix'd in the horrid purpose to destroy . . ./ She hurls destruction on our wretched bark." Although the collision is narrowly averted and the destruction of the ship avoided, generous young Talbot, "whose breast with ardor glows" for his country, is lost overboard in trying to repair the damage of the storm.

The storm passes; despite the universal grief at Talbot's loss, a period of calm and sportive happiness ensues. Like blood brothers, the sea creatures and the mariners swim and play in the gently rolling billows, and the ship is honored with a visit from Neptune, the mythological sea god, for whom a gold and silver canopy is spread over the deck. This episode could be construed as merely the traditional enactment of the ancient ritual observed in oceanic voyages, except for its fantastical aspects which Davis describes on the same literal plane as the realistic events of the voyage. It is the one incident in the poem where the reader must "produce that willing suspension of disbelief" in the interest of poetic faith. Neptune's visit affords occasion for many epic conventions: the visit of one great chief to another, the display of toasts, and presentation of gifts, and the lists of personal combat.

Davis has neatly adapted each tradition to the context of his story and the purpose of his theme. The gifts presented to Neptune on behalf of "our great President" are distinctly American in origin yet

associated in simile with the ancient gods of mythology:

> A bow that scarce Ulysses' skill could bend,
> Form'd a full league the feather'd fate to send.
> An Indian quiver, where now guiltless slept
> Those winged darts that many a matron wept.
> Resplendent mocassins without a flaw,
> Such as fair Venus on her foot might draw--
> Such as the urchin god might stoop to clasp,
> With instep that exceeded not his grasp.
> (ll. 1424-1431)

The toasts and the music glorify the freedom of America's citizens and the might of its power. When a live shark is landed on board, Neptune is prompted to suggest "one combatant, not all the hostile crew,/ Should meet the foe in battle to subdue" (ll. 1544-1545). In succession various members of the crew somewhat humorously armed with the tools of their particular trade challenge the beast, "A horrid monster, of enormous length,/ Of bulk prodigious, and resistless strength,/ Who, like a madd'ning thresher with his flail./ Destruction threatens as he lifts his tail" (ll. 1526-1529). The beast is finally killed by Lieutenant Hampden wielding an axe, a tool truly symbolic of American growth, but not before Yarrow, the Negro cook, has been severely injured in efforts with "his proud knighthood's badge, his javelin, his spear," a triple-pronged meat fork. The interpolative tale of Yarrow, captured as a child by slave traders in Jamaica, sold to a cruel Virginia planter, pursued by dogs and bounty hunters when he finally escapes, and rescued from re-capture by a passing ship, offers Davis the opportunity of contrasting the beauties of the American landscape and the dehumanizing effects of slavery, particularly on the master, although he makes quite clear that slavery is a curse of only one part of the United States.

In addition, the device of Neptune's visit is an explicit introduction of the supernatural machinery common to epics, lest American

prayers and references to the Christian God prove inadequate to epic expectations. Neptune is an Iliad-like anthropomorphic god, uninhibited, brutal, arbitrary, and irresponsible in his use of power. He is also in the beginning strongly partisan to the British, whose dominion over the sea has up to now received his royal blessing. After the monarch has examined crew and ship, the following exchange takes place between Neptune and Captain Delancey. Neptune speaks first:

> Her scantling suits a large ship of the line--
> Before the breeze she looks a thing divine.
> Who taught your Indian shipwrights to excel,
> And from the British builders bear the bell?
> Yet not your ships compose your naval strength,
> Though broad their beam, and terrible their length.
> Your crews confer the spell--by nature brave,
> Rock'd on the cradle of the sky-mix'd wave;
> Boasting their lineage from the naval train
> Who proudly bear my sceptre o'er the main.
>
> You think our seamen staunch?
>
> My realm they grace.
> The genuine offspring of Neptunian race,
> Who hold on sea a younger brother's place.
>
> Your praise is niggard--if our flag you scoff,
> Soon will we shake our base dependence off,
> Another arbiter on ocean seek,
> Nor longer hail you monarch of the deep.
> Wedded to fame, the dow'r of conquest won,
> What seamen equal ours beneath the sun?
> Not slaves, but free-men, for the fight we arm--
> There lies the talisman--the potent charm!
> (ll. 1095-1116)

Gradually and reluctantly Neptune is won over by his observation of American seamen in their natural element, by Delancey's recital of victories by American heroes, by the "fragrant bowl" of "luscious drought," and by the gifts, since "gods too have their price." "To generous ardour mov'd," Neptune at last declares:

> Henceforth thy navy's honour shall be mine;
> Wide as my sceptre waves, thy ships shall ride

With flag triumphant o'er the azure tide.
(ll. 1475-1477)

. . .
The flag he took, and clasp'd it to his breast,
And swore its honours ne'er should be deprest.
(ll. 1494-1495)

Neptune's constancy is not to be depended on, however, especially in the inebriated condition in which he finally boards his own car. In the most humorous scene of the poem, he is dissuaded from ordering the destruction of the ship only by the blunt reasonableness of Triton. At the last, as his car speeds away from the man of war, he turns to throw upon her "his eye's returning love." True to epic tradition, the heroes are favored by Heaven in the end.

The presence of Neptune's person and the development of his personality, although breaking the realistic base of the rest of the poem give to the work the hint of ancient ritual and point up the universal aspect of the particular event. The prophecy of American naval supremacy is sure: superior skill and the righteous cause of freedom, together with a little Yankee craftiness, have caused the gods so to ordain it.

In Canto V the course of the ship crosses that of an iceberg. The "alps of ice burst dazzling on the view" of the sailors who see in "the proud mass" at first only "a glittering isle of light."

While thus they marvel at the bright display,
As fools behold the pageant of a day,
The wary chief his bark to windward steers,
And whispers counsel in unwilling ears:
Friends, you have found the things in life you prize
To distance owe enchantment in your eyes,
That when approach'd their splendours disappear,
And leave behind a moral and a tear.
So these fair isles, alluring to the view,
Have ruin spread o'er many a gallant crew,
(ll. 3234-3243)

As if in illustration of his warning, a fire is seen on the ice-island,

and a ship-wrecked victim is retrieved from the inhospitable and frozen world upon which he has been cast. The mariner's description of his ice-island existence, like the story of Yarrow, provides the reader a pleasant diversion of scene and character from those of the Electra. But whereas the slave story, despite the geographical restrictions which Davis emphasizes, hardly reflects favorably upon the United States or harmonizes with Davis's theme of freedom in America, the mariner's tale dramatizes a recurring motif--America as the refuge for the poor and the unwanted of other lands.

Early in the poem the narrator has explicitly stated, "Exiles from ev'ry clime embrace your shore--/ . . . To you the persecuted victims roam,/ Redress their hearths, and find a sylvan home." Shelty, the blind piper, compares what would be his plight in his native Scotland with his fortune in America:

> That soil in this auld heart no pang awakes--
> Gee me the land o'plenty--na o'cakes.
> Should the Tweed's side my feeble footsteps press,
> Wha would relieve blind Shelty in distress?
> Words from the lip of scorn would fill his ear--
> "Begone, we brook no sightless beggars here."
> (ll. 1326-1331)

Later, as the ship nears England and the passengers view the English shore, an old man among them voices his praise of "the soil that gave him birth, . . . Those cliffs restor'd once more to these moist eyes,/ Bid the pulses flutter, and the wishes rise" (ll. 4281-4282). Captain Delancey, "indignation rising in his mind," forgets his usual charity of spirit and noble aloofness when he responds:

> Infatuated pilgrim! thus to toil
> O'er sea again to die on England's soil,
> And leave Equality's blest shore to find
> And feel thyself a helpless, abject hind.
> What! dreamst thou yet of some remain of ease

Beneath thy own hereditary trees?
Like shadows come, so all thy friends are fled,
Thy hearth will echo only to thy tread--
And poor and needy, none thy worth will scan--
None will respect thee for thyself--a man--
But, leaning on thy staff, I see thee stand,
By all forsaken in thy native land.
Great souls by instinct to Columbia turn,
Court her embrace, and for her friendship burn,
Our blest strand seek at inborn Freedom's call,
The true Castillian, and the genuine Gaul,
And flee a realm of tyranny the sport,
Curst with an inquisition, and a court--
But thou still pantest on in thraldom's train,
Taught to be wise by rolling suns in vain!
(ll. 4285-4304)

The parallelism in the two scenes is unmistakable. The mariner, like the forsaken outcasts of Europe, has been rescued by American humanitarianism. The closing lines of the canto sustain that "region in which nothing happens that is not deeply significant." The kneeling mariner exclaims:

Ye powers supreme,
Can it be real, or does an outcast dream!
He ceas'd, and, leaning on us with a smile,
Seem'd to repose in silent pray'r awhile;
Nor did we unsubdu'd his sorrows hear,
We felt as men, and dropt a human tear.
Then to embark no more we make delay,
For the last circles of departing day
Burnish the deep--and from our ship's high mast
A signal-banner flutters to the blast,
To warn us from the ice-isle, and recall
Our shallop e'er night's veiling shadows fall.
(ll. 3498-3509)

Canto VI, "The Arrival in Port," is primarily the account of the slow progress of the ship as it finds its way along the southern coast of England and eventually docks at Spithead. The pace and tone of this idyllic cruise are of epic deliberation, affording crew and passengers leisure for reflective observation of the passing English coastline. Miss Kellogg says of this portion: "Davis lost sight of his original

purpose so far as the poem itself is concerned. . . . His avowed intention was to delineate the character of the American seaman."[56] If one accepts the premise of the "avowed intention," then Davis has indeed lost sight of his original purpose. But his intention has been much broader than merely a delineation of American character. In all three parts of the book--letter, annals, and poem--he has stressed repeatedly that Americans are the offspring of Englishmen, that American character is primarily English character, that the two peoples are almost indistinguishable, and that the two nations share indissoluble bonds of blood and ideologies. The Electra's guns salute "great Albion's princely standard . . . / From whose bright-blazon'd realm we proudly draw/ Our arms, our sacred liberty, and law" (ll. 4393-4396). Although claiming a superiority on behalf of American men and institutions, his object has been a conciliatory emphasis on similarities, a protest against an unnatural estrangement. The cruise up the Channel represents the parabolic return of the son who has been afar off in a distant country.

All omens for the approach are suspicious. In the midnight darkness, the bright beacon of the Scilly lighthouse, "a hopeful sight," shines its welcome. When "the lingering night is past," and land of England is seen in the rosy glow of the rising sun. The medieval ruins of St. Michael's Mont come into view suggesting that here can be found that sense of the past, of continuity, which many Americans felt lacking on their shores. The sight prompts Captain Delancey to remark to one of his Lieutenants:

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[56] Kellogg, p. 116.

> Good morrow, Randolph, long on billows tost,
> Yon sun beholds our tall bark on the coast
> Where our forefathers dwelt--a glorious gale--
> A nobler breeze ne'er fill'd a frigate's sail.
> (ll. 4063-4066)

The gradual progress of the ship gives opportunity for the interplay of many reactions. Underlying all else runs the current of eager excitement at making land common to any extended sea voyage. Dispersed throughout are the captain's imperative instructions necessary to the safe navigation of the ship in the changing conditions of the Channel. These contribute to the psychological and physical reality of the scene. Of most significance, however, are the emotional responses of various spectators to specific sights along the shore, as "A pensive pleasure steals upon the soul,/ Devout, not frantic, looking to its fate/ Beyond the stars."

Four basic responses are represented. There is the English passenger whose emotional excitement at returning to 'the soil that gave him birth," overpowers all reason, preventing any rational or objective response. There is the naive American in the person of Caustic, ship's doctor and another of Davis's obtuse and comic physicians. Narrowly confined in mind and soul, refusing the wisdom of the rolling sea, he spends the voyage shut up below decks in his "cock-pit" and ventures above only when the ship is safely within the confines of the Channel. He peers at the passing shore near-sightedly through his telescope, picking up in his finder small details, all of which, at this distance, appear charming and desirable. His concept is two dimensional; he never thinks beyond the hard surface of his glass. Lost on the doctor were Delancey's warnings about the icebergs, those "fair isles . . . that when approach'd their splendors disappear."

The doctor is a foil to Delancey, another type of American. For Delancey, the veteran of 1812, this is no sentimental journey. He probes perhaps too much beneath the surface: "Oh! all that in this life the breast employs,/ Is real grief, or visionary joys" (ll. 4265-4266). Where England is concerned, he has imbibed bitter lessons, and his loyally American prejudices give rise to divisive reservations. When Caustic exclaims:

> Was ever sight so fair!
> The crag, the cliff, the promontory steep,
> Trees, groves--all Eden springing from the deep.
> . . . . . .
> It is a spot where one might live and die.
> (ll. 4128-4131, 4136)

Delancey counters:

> These, leech, are shadows of a shaping brain,
> Engendr'd by a ship and irksome main.
> . . . . . .
> And conquer'd reason to the fancy yields
> Peace in the cot, elysium in the fields.
> (ll. 4132-4133, 4139-4140)

When Caustic admires the grandeur of a turreted villa, Delancey contrasts it with American simplicity:

> To me far dearer, leech, a snug-thatch'd home
> Than the vast lumber of that gothic dome,
> Within whose walls one does not rest, but roam.
> How would Democritus the pile deride
> Which folly thus has sacrific'd to pride--
> And yet, no doubt, its painted glass--its gules,
> Have England fill'd with imitating fools.
> Would Washington have made his villa's gate
> An entrance to the pageantry of state?
> (ll. 4177-4185)

When Caustic "with solemn awe" views "the spreading shore,/ By venerable Druids trod of yore," the captain refuses to venerate the past:

> Those bloody priests, an execrable band,
> Would scandal heap upon a Mohawk land.
> Their tragic pomp . . .

. . . . . .
Once reverend held, is now a standing joke.
(ll. 4218-4220, 4223)

Caustic finally suggests, "The land has not your love." Delancey responds, "None there from me is due" (ll. 4231, 4233).

Like a rebellious adolescent in his newly found strength, he scoffs at the familial relationship which he cannot deny. When the Electra passes an American ship, he remarks sardonically:

A yankey outward bound! do but behold
How the new world supplies with freight the old.
Britannia wasted, and a pauper grown,
To young Columbia makes her bitter moan,
Pleads she's her aged mother, and demands
Food from her harvests, succour from her hands.
Old father Thames exalts his hoary head,
With look of wonder, from his oozy bed,
And, as our cargoes make his billows groan,
Scarce knows the hulls that bear them from his own.
(ll. 4078-4087)

It is the lack of an independent identity, as expressed in the last line, that seems to bother him the most. Of the people seen on shore, he asks Caustic; "Think you they heed the land from whence we came?" Caustic replies that perhaps the young ones do. He derives some satisfaction in seeing that the crew of a British ship "greatly . . . marvel at our stars--our prow--/ Our pointed guns." Yet once again the nagging sense of not being recognized and known for what one really is:

Our crew they put down Indians--from the wood--
Guiding a ship the first time o'er the flood--
A feather'd tribe of most uncouth attire,
More skill'd in ambush than the main-deck fire.
With bow and quiver at each warrior's side,
And scalping knife the skull's skin to divide;
Our cargo coral, humming-birds, and shells,
To barter with the whites for toys and bells!
(ll. 4257-4264)

As Caustic is blind to the weaknesses of old England, so England is blind to the strength and independence of its transatlantic off-

spring. The captain's frustration mirrors that of Davis in his conviction that the reviewers know not whereof they speak about America. Inserted as if an object lesson of family devotion is the story of the shipwreck of the Halsewell whose master, refusing the opportunity to save himself, chooses to remain and die with his daughters in the knowledge that life would be "a gloomy blank" without them. If England and America are to prevent such a "gloomy blank," they must become reacquainted, accepting each other realistically.

It is within the view of the narrator, the fourth type, that such a knowledge is found. A native Englishman who has lived in America, he finds an affectionate response in the familiar landmarks of his homeland, with loving care describing them as the ship passes. But he also admires and loves America and its people. He is the bridge upon which understanding can be built, and he brings with him a token of the love which should exist between the nations "whose cheerful crew[s]/ In garb and face present a kindred hue."

It is most fitting that after the ship has arrived in port and the "sad trial of the parting hour" has come, the attention of the last lines is focused on the infant child. Born in America, sired by an English father, it has been carefully protected from harm throughout the voyage, to be set on English soil almost as a sacrificial offering, a precious gift signifying the common heritage of the two countries and the trust and good-will predictive of peace between them:

> --the mother to me bears
> Her hope, the solace of my drooping years,
> To hold her forward, as the fleet boat flies,
> With one last look to glad the sailors' eyes!
> The ringlets from the fondling's face I throw,
> And bare the cheek of smiles, which laughs below--

Modest and mild she waves her little hand--
It sounds--the farewell of the free-born band--
Again, again, again, the shouts they urge
Shake the wide shore, and raise the heaving surge.
(ll. 4433-4442)

Did Davis write better than he knew? The poem is a remarkably original production, all the more coming from a mind previously so limited in metaphoric dimension, so imitative of what others had done. He has managed to avoid the self-conscious pretentiousness which bogs down other epics of the time to conceive a work that is alive and interesting. His way with a story was sure; his passion for the sea and the sailing ship never found more beautiful expression; the cast of characters are human, amusing, likeable. He has blended harmoniously the required grand style with the realistic, colloquial dialogue of the quarter deck. The epic diction which heightens the emotional tone comes across, not as a stale convention, but as the honest and genuine response of the writer to his subject. Captain Delancey of the American warship is indeed a "sea-chief"; the epithet is not an empty decoration. Lacking a central hero taken from history, Davis has created a symbolic, universal figure who most perfectly represented the achievement and expectation of America in the early 1800's, as Whitman was later to create a universal figure to represent his time. If "an age is heroic because of what it is, not because of what it does,"[57] then Davis, better than any American writer, was able to catch a vision of the whole of America for that time, literally in the beginning of the maritime era and symbolically in the reaching out of the new nation for acceptance by the old world. Recalling the glories of America's brief past,

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[57] Abercrombie, The Epic, p. 11.

vividly dramatizing its role in the present, and prophesying with assurance and specific accuracy its future strengths and destiny, the poem meets every major requirement of a true epic and of a work which belongs in the mainstream of American literature.

It is a romantic work in its expression of optimism and progress, the belief that right makes might. No traces remain of Davis's "negative romanticism"[58] of the turn of the century, that sentimental despondency, the "everlasting no," the aristocratic isolation of the lonely wanderer. Here is only positive affirmation.

Especially interesting is the affirmation of democracy. Although always passionately committed to freedom of the individual and the end of all forms of tyranny, his attitudes toward democratic government had been ambivalent. Upon arriving in the United States he had announced, "Joyful I press the ground with FREEDOM blest" (Tribute, p. [3]). As an ardent admirer of Jefferson, he had envisioned the United States an idealized Roman republic with an aristocracy of virtue and talent. How deeply this parallelism was entrenched in his mind is revealed in several connotative allusions to the United States government and in the chapter in the Travels which describes his reactions upon visiting the Capital in Washington:

> The name of Capitol associates the noblest ideas in the mind. It has a Roman sound! In our enthusiasm we behold Virtue and Freedom, which alas! have been so long extinct, again descending from heaven, and fixing their abode in the western world. (Travels, p. 172)

By the time he published the Travels, his democratic idealism had been somewhat tarnished, perhaps by the universal disillusionment over what

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[58] A term used by Morse Peckham in "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," in Romanticism: Points of View, pp. 212-227.

had happened in France, and by the influence of Dennie and the Federalistic press, and by some of his personal experiences. He feared the degeneracy of the system into mob rule, for he had seen that America still had a share of the swinish multitude as opposed to the more sensitive classes, and there seemed to have been in his mind at that time a small but significant intellectual doubt that democracy as a working form of government would be either practical or enduring. Twenty years later all doubts had vanished. The Americans had achieved a purpose, harmony, and a stable order, having emerged from 1812 stronger than ever. He saw in its diversity of peoples, its greatest strength. Liberty, equality, and fraternity in America had not degraded men, but had ennobled them.

The tragedy of The American Mariners is the neglect which has doomed it to oblivion. Published and sold not in London but in the relative obscurity of Salisbury, written by a returned but forgotten expatriate, premised against the policy of the current reviews, it was destined to a still birth. None of the important critics noticed it. Englishmen were more easily wooed by the winsome and gentle chiding of Washington Irving, whose Sketch Book was one of the first favorably received American works, than they were by the unpleasant truths and unwelcome prophecies contained in The American Mariners. When the book reached American shores, it made no waves here either. This is the greater tragedy, for while Americans were seeking to establish a nationalistic literature and loyally trying to appreciate the tedious recitals of Barlow and Dwight, they had, ready-made, an expansively conceived, metaphorically delineated epic which dealt with the much more fundamental essence of the national existence than could ever be found in the

discovery of Columbus or in a parade of Revolutionary war celebrities. In 1836 Davis wrote a sad note which suggests the poem's ignominy:

> I have been informed that you have seen my American Mariners. Of the Impression only a dozen copies (new) were ever sent to London. In Bent's Catalogue the sale price is put at 8/. If it would answer your purpose, I could promptly send you 50 or 100 Copies, in Sheets, at One Shilling & Three Pence a Copy. Probably if the speculation does not come within your view, you will have the goodness to mention my proposal to some of your acquaintance.[59]

C. ST. CROSS

The last known book of poetry which Davis published was issued in 1836 from Winchester, where he was living as a stationer and bookseller. St. Cross,[60] a series of poetical tales, received no more critical attention than had The American Mariners, in spite of its celebration of local events in English history. There was much in ancient Winchester to inspire literary and historical endeavor and to appeal to the romantic fascination with the Middle Ages. Remains of the Celtic camp from which the name "Winchester" derived, still lay extant. Mentioned by Bede in his Ecclesiastical History, once England's capital, here King Alfred was proclaimed king and ruled his court, and here was centered the Arthurian legend. Keats, who had lived here for a time while composing "The Eve of St. Agnes," and "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," had written in his letters about the "interesting old place" of St.

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[59] MS. letter pasted into the Widener Library copy of The American Mariners, Harvard University. Postdated from Winchester, the letter was to a Mr. Rich, London bookseller.

[60] St. Cross, etc. With the Execution of the Earl of Kent, before the Castle-Gate at Winchester. A Poem (Winchester: Printed for the Author, 1836).

Cross, a hospital and church founded in 1136 by Bishop Henry of Blois.[61]

Davis, like Keats, apparently found the atmosphere conducive to medieval subjects. His little book, scarcely two and three quarter by four and a quarter inches, is a collection of narrative poems highlighting ecclesiastical and political events during the medieval flourishing of the town. The poems bear such titles as "The Procession of the Monks to Winchester" (a description of the various orders of nuns, friars, and monks), "Falconry on the Hills," "The Hall of the Hundred Men" (a reference to the charity hospital which provided a daily dinner for one hundred poor men), "Wolvesey Palace; or, The Death Bed of Cardinal Beaufort" (Beaufort [1406-1447] had enlarged and rebuilt St. Cross), and "The Murderer's Tale."

"St. Cross," the title poem, briefly traces the history of "the hallowed soil" through the Celts and Danes to the Norman founding of St. Cross by Henry de Blois, mentioning later prelates who at various times reformed and strengthened it. For Davis to be extolling the "saintly care" and charity of ecclesiastical leaders is a surprising reversal of his earlier consistent denunciations of professional clergy. As late as the 1822 American Mariners, he had praised the officiations of Captain Delancey as superior because those of "an unbought pastor, reverend to view" (l. 3570). Such a return to episcopal orthodoxy, together with increasing evidence of a growing personal dependence on

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[61] Other prominent writers who found inspiration in Winchester were Izaak Walton, Jane Austen, and William Thackeray (Vanity Fair and Esmond). Hiram Hospital in Anthony Trollope's The Warden corresponds to St. Cross. Tess of Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles was executed in Winchester.

God, followed a pattern of religious commitment similar to that of other writers who had been young and rebellious in the early Romantic period. His eventual conformity was certainly to his advantage years later in receiving the appointment to the Charterhouse, whose constitution had specified that recipients "bringe goode testimonye and certificat of their goode behaviore and soundness in Religion."[62]

The longest poem of the group is the eighty-five page "Execution of the Earl of Kent before the Castle Gate, at Winchester." The earl of Kent was Edmund of Woodstock (Plantagenet, 1301-1330), youngest son of Edward I and half brother to Edward II. His short life was filled with conspiracy and counter-conspiracy until he was sentenced to die for treason. When no one could be found courageous enough to behead such an important personage, a condemned criminal, waiting execution, was found willing to do it in exchange for his own freedom. Later, through Edmund's daughter Joan, who married Sir Thomas Holland, the earldom passed into the Holland family. Whether this connection influenced Davis's decision to dedicate St. Cross to the current Lord Holland (Henry Richard Fox, 1773-1840), he doesn't say, referring only to the time when, as a midshipman on the Active frigate, he had been appointed the honor of conducting his Lordship on tour. The connection might have been more coincidental than deliberate, for the executed Earl of Kent has not been kindly judged by history. Davis's evaluation of the later Lord Holland, "for such is the charm of your presence, that you make every one feel at ease and happy in your company" (St. Cross, iv), is born out by others who knew him.

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62 Quoted by Gerald S. Davies in Charterhouse in London: Monastery, Mansion, Hospital, School (London: J. Murray, 1921), p. 201.

The quality of the verse does not reach the poetic level of The American Mariners, reverting instead to that which is merely descriptive and narrative. The predominating iambic pentameter couplets grind out mechanically from automated habit. Phrases worn out in 1800 enfeeble any freshness which might have been expected from the challenge of the new subject matter. The meter is rough and often at variance with the emphasis required by the context.

The only known volume of the book is housed in the British Museum. It contains notations and revisions in Davis's hand and was probably his personal copy. Judging from the scarcity of copies extant, the book did not sell well. Davis had planned a "second series" which he advertised in St. Cross as "ready for the press." Reaching back to a pre-medieval period, he projected such titles as "Colbrand and Guy," "The Achievements of Sir Bevis," and "Arthur and the Round Table Knights." The book seems never to have been published; the public had to wait for Lord Tennyson.

The majority of Davis's poetry was written in a complex period in intellectual and literary history which saw revolutionary upheavals in all lines of thought. Coming at the end of a highly stylized era, it was a difficult time for the poet. Tastes had become increasingly romantic in temper and subject matter, yet forms remained neoclassical. Audiences were weary of the old fashions but so conditioned to them that they were not ready to accept the new. It was a time, as Leon Howard has pointed out, when enthusiastic young writers knew the best of English poetry as it had been written by such men as Pope, Thomson, and Gray, but "did not know enough of their imitators to be bored by their

conventions."[63] So the imitations went on and on. Dennie estimated in 1809 that poetry pieces outnumbered prose ten to one in material submitted to him. But he declared most of it to be "scarcely less offensive than the compost heaps in a farmer's field" (Port Folio, December 1809). Brown also found that though verse was abundant, good poetry was "the most scarce of all literary commodities." Modern readers with historical perspective to their advantage agree. That perceptive contemporary editors accepted so much of Davis's work in preference to that of other writers, however, is testimony of its literary value to its own time. Beyond its intrinsic literary value, his poetry, because locally written on local themes, helped to enliven the American literary scene, a not inconsiderable contribution to the national literary pride. If these poems seem too general for modern tastes and not acutely American enough, comparison with poems by native authors of the same period will prove them adequate for their time.

A more specific comparison of Davis with Philip Freneau, now considered the leading American poet of that era, shows remarkable similarity in taste and literary career. Both men were products of an age in transition. Their poetic talents explored the neoclassical invective of satire and the romantic musing of nature. Both were talented in journalism and propaganda: both believed passionately in freedom and liberty. Pattee[64] credits Freneau with being the first poet to touch

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63 "The Late Eighteenth Century: An Age of Contradictions," in Transitions in American Literary History, ed. Harry Hayden Clark (Durham: Duke University Press, 1953), p. 86.

64 Fred Lewis Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, 1770-1870 (1935; rpt. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966), pp. 28-43.

the Indian, one of the first to picture the horrors of slavery, the pioneer nature poet in America (introducing the whip-poor-will into "The House of Night"), and one of the first to deal with the sea and particularly the glorious victories of American naval history. All of these themes were also Davis's, working independently, although by coincidence the paths of the two men had crossed briefly in New York in 1798 when Freneau was editor of the Time-Piece and Davis had first arrived from England.

If both men were in part victims of an unpoetic age, Davis in England was also the victim of his long-lasting devotion to the exaltation of American themes and also to the flood tide of the new Romanticism. Ironically, in America, he was the victim of his English birth, which, coupled with a sometimes abrasive personality, often blinded his audiences to the merits of his work. But perhaps it was the very fact of his being an Englishman that enabled him so incisively to satirize American letters, to poetize his ambivalent reactions to American landscape, and to catch a vision in epic proportions of what America was destined to become.

CHAPTER V

THE NEGRO CHARACTER AND THE INDIAN TALES

The black man and the red man were frequently the objects of Davis's inquiring mind and his often sentimental heart. His multi-racial humanism was at least partially inherited. While serving in India, his brother James had written an "Account of the Sepoy Forces of the East India Company in India,"[1] which lauded the native troops as brave, dependable, well-disciplined, and comparable to any European soldiers. John's own service in India had inspired several literary works, but they had not been concerned with native peoples. Once in America, however, his imagination was fired with the plight of the Negro in servitude and with the clash of culture as red man had met white.

A. THE NEGRO CHARACTER

Beginning as early as 1800 with Caesar in The Wanderings of William, the crippled old Samaritan who cared for the sick and abandoned William when the family priest disdained to do so, the Negro character appears frequently, though often briefly, in Davis's works. The black man is portrayed as a victim of an institution which is a vicious anachronism in this land of freedom. Notwithstanding the degradation he must endure, he is devoted as a servant, docile in nature, and uncomplaining. When he runs away, like Yarrow of The American Mariners, he does so only after prolonged provocation.

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[1] The European Magazine, August 1895. John claimed the Encyclopaedia Brittannica had utilized the material for an entry on the subject.

The story of Yarrow is Davis's broadest dissertation on slavery. In it he examines all parties to the institution, dramatizing in word and deed the rationale governing the actions of slave, slave holder, poor white, bounty hunter, and law officer and exposing with devastating irony "the tender sympathy beguiling the bondsman's lot." As a foil to Yarrow, who has risked life for dignity and freedom, the story presents Cuffey, "the most degraded of all human kind," who perches on the prow of the search party's skiff, his hands constantly exploring his master's gun, making sure it carries a treble load.

> Bondage with aggravated mischief stains
> The moral part of him who wears her chains;
> And facts establish, that whatever day
> Makes man a slave takes half his worth away.
> The fetter they might bind, the scourge upraise,
> So Cuffey got his salted-fish and maize,
> And though his back beneath the lash oft bled,
> His laughing boast was that his mouth got fed!
> (ll. 1936-1944)

"The Story of Dick the Negro"[2] exhibits still another picture of slave life. Dick, "a much greater philosopher than many of his white brethren who have written volumes on resignation under misfortunes," is a Negro on the Ball plantation and thereby especially favored, Mr. Ball having been an exceptionally humane master. But his early life had mirrored alternating shifts of fortune dependent on the temper of his frequently changed masters. Dick's story not only recounts the vicissitudes of his life, but probes into the lives of the plantation owners and the virtues and vices of other blacks, some of whom, like the wench Dinah, are not above exploiting their own kind. The story is movingly

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[2] Travels, pp. 413-424. Also The European Magazine, January 1804, and a separate edition in pamphlet form published in Philadelphia early 1805 and sold for twelve and a half cents.

told with picturesque Negro metaphor and homespun wisdom hard earned in adversity. Davis says that the old man "never failed to visit my cell in the evening . . . to obtain a dram of whiskey: Dick said it comforted him, and I never withheld my comfort from him." He has recorded the story in such a way that one can imagine the voice of the old man spinning out his tale in the dusky twilight and Davis, surrounded by the vapors of his friendly pipe, listening in silent gravity. The result of their efforts is not only a right good tale, but a message worthy of a latter-day abolitionist.

In a rare dissent from Jefferson, Davis asserts that Negroes are equal in understanding to the white, "not less just or elevated" than their white rulers. Accordingly, he treats them with dignity, not sentimentalizing them unduly, a common failing of the times. They are not all "noble savages;" neither are they all the happy-go-lucky, grinning comics of the minstrel show. Caught in glimpses so brief and incomplete to be often unnamed, they are still realistic and believable. Besides standing as some of the earliest fictional protrayals of the Negro in American fiction, they contain embryonic characteristics of the later stereotypes.[3]

B. WALTER KENNEDY

Though he may have felt more passionately about the black man, Davis wrote more extensively about the red one, making him a major figure in three books and working Indian materials into many other books, stories,

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[3] Richard Beale Davis, "The 'Virginia Novel' Before Swallow Barn," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 71 (1963), 278-293.

and poems. His first allusion to the natives of America appeared in A Tribute to the United States:

> This Country once in Nature's rudest state,
> Where no fine feeling did the breast elate,
> Where Wedlock's laws no human being blest,
> But babes unfather'd hung upon the breast;
> Where War destructive ravag'd ev'ry plain,
> And parent by the child was often slain;
> (pp. 3-4)

The neoclassical disapproval and implied imperialistic bias give little clue to the interest which he subsequently developed. Some months later in South Carolina, listening to Lucas George's Indian stories, and at Occoquan in Virginia, witnessing a tribe of traveling Indians stop to reverence an ancestral grave, his attention to the Indian began to grow from the casual, almost flippant type of reference found in Farmer of New-Jersey to near obsessive concern with one story in particular, that of Captain Smith and Pocahontas. But he worked other Indian stories as well, the first full-length one being Walter Kennedy.[4] Although not published until 1805, it had been ready for publication at least as early as January 1804, when Southey read the manuscript and recommended it to Longman and Rees.

Walter Kennedy, hero of the story, is an Irish lad orphaned at an early age and taken into the magnificent home of a neighboring earl.[5] There he is raised and educated with the lord's own children, Lady Fanny

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[4] Walter Kennedy, an American Tale (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1805).

[5] This early chapter raises the intriguing possibility that some details might be drawn from the personal experiences of Lucas George and Davis himself. There is also a slight similarity to the life of Clithero, the Irish orphan of Edgar Huntly (1799), Charles Brockden Brown's tale of Gothic horror among the Indians, although parallelism between the works should not be unduly stressed.

and Lord William. Over the years he develops a particular fondness for Lady Fanny, and before returning to the university, exchanges with her vows of eternal constancy. To his great dismay he learns shortly afterward that the young lady has been married to an elderly gentleman. Resolutely Walter determines to seek a new life in the new world and embarks for Louisiana. Although he finds New Orleans pleasant, he proceeds with arrangements to travel "to the remotest settlements of the Indians." Properly provisioned and guided by an Indian youth called Quipey, he travels north by river and land, visiting Indian settlements and meeting assorted trappers and hunters along the way. Finally, at the settlement of the Kaskaskia tribe, northwest of the junction of the Ohio and the Mississippi Rivers in modern Illinois, he meets and woos a beautiful princess, Oosnooqua, builds a log cabin, marries the princess, and announces that he has "now done with traveling." The book is a strange mixture of modes fashionable at that time. It may be classed as a fictional version of an eighteenth-century travel account, a subdued picaresque, a sentimental tale of star-crossed love, or an adventure with noble savages in a forest wilderness à la Rousseau.

Its resemblance to a travel book begins as early as page ten when the hero sets foot on the quarter-deck of his Louisiana-bound ship. From that time on, the book progresses in a chain of miscellaneous experiences and observations common in the tradition of the travel book and particularly common for books about America written in the last half of the eighteenth century: "Prior to the War of Independence a typical travel book on America described the country along the larger rivers--the St. Lawrence, Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio--and included information,

both false and true, on the Indian tribes and on plants and animals. . . . During the last two decades of the eighteenth century . . . there were still books which dealt only with geography, Indians, and natural history--notably those by Carver, Bartram, and Imlay."[6] A great deal of Walter Kennedy is just such a book. The reader is informed with geographical data about the Mississippi delta area, with a listing or provisions necessary or desirable for an expedition into the interior, with detailed accounts of fire-hunting and tracking raccoons at night. Flowers, trees, birds, and animals are observed and noted with varying degrees of minute attention in the eighteenth-century tradition of scientific observation. Whole chapters are devoted to "Indian Manners and Customs," still utilizing the objective, flat observation of the eighteenth century, eschewing any emotional involvement, and following very closely the pattern set by Jefferson in Notes on the State of Virginia and subsequent writers. Walter even discovers the bones of a mammoth.

For that peculiar interest inherent in first-hand accounts, Davis could draw from his own experiences as a foot traveler in Carolina and Virginia to make more graphic the sensory pleasures of the trail--the sounds of insect and animal life, the panorama of landscape, the sense of well-being in finding a hospitable shelter at the end of a long day's walk. But to produce a full-length book he needed sources to augment his own observations, and having confined his travels to the Eastern seaboard, he needed sources to particularize the Mississippi valley area. In the tradition of travel writers, he borrowed freely from previous

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[6] Percy G. Adams, ed. and tr., "Introduction," to Crèvecoeur's Eighteenth-Century Travels in Pennsylvania and New York (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), p. xviii.

accounts. One likely source was Berquin-Duvallon's Travels in Louisiana and the Floridas, which had appeared first in 1802 in French and which I. Riley had published in 1806 in an English translation by Davis. Though some similarity is evident in the geographical description of the mouth of the Mississippi and the city of New Orleans, a major difference exists between Duvallon's derogatory interpretation and Davis's favorable one. To such writers as William Bartram and Jonathan Carver his debt was so extensive that Gilbert Chinard has declared that "il a pillé effrontément" from them as well as from Chateaubriand.[7] Of course, Chateaubriand had also pilfered from Bartram, Carver, and Gilbert Imlay, and the latter two had in their turn borrowed from other writers.

As a result of such a chain of dependencies, contradictions and strange discrepancies appear in the geography. Walter's river journey commences west of New Orleans up the Chetimachas north towards the Mississippi, but three days later he is inexplicably "proceeding slowly down the river," still in a northerly direction. At the junction of the Ohio and the Mississippi, he beholds at a vast distance "a pile of venerable mountains lift[ing] their heads and penetrat[ing] the clouds." The Wabash runs into the Mississippi rather than the Ohio, and on August 12 he is still picking strawberries. Notwithstanding, the reader probably gleaned as accurate information from Walter Kennedy as from the average, supposedly non-fiction travel book and was misled no more often.

In addition to the charge of plagiarism quoted above, Chinard also sees Walter Kennedy "comme une imitation directe d'Atala et de René,"

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[7] "Un Frère Cadet de René en Amérique," in Mélanges d'Histoire Littéraire Générale et Comparée Offerts, à Fernand Baldensperger (Paris: Champion, 1930), I, 138.

popular romances by Chateaubriand which had appeared a few years earlier. Citing numerous instances of similarity in characterization, style, tone, and incident, and even one sentence directly translated from the French, Professor Chinard proves beyond any doubt that Walter Kennedy was influenced by Chateaubriand. He also shows that "après avoir été ainsi volé, Chateaubriand n'a peut-être pas négligé de reprendre son bien, et d'incorporer dans les Natchez des épisodes qui semblent empruntés au roman de Davis" (p. 138).

It is the material borrowed from Chateaubriand that places the book in the sentimental-romantic class. The title-page epigraph from Shakespeare also seems chosen to arouse such expectations:

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more
> Than cool reason ever comprehends.
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

The "Preface" reinforces the suggestion that emotion will be a plentiful ingredient in the pages to follow. Before describing in purple prose accompanied by multiple exclamation points the many kinds of people who will be totally engrossed in reading the book, Davis states: "This Narrative can, I think, scarcely fail to impart interest, because the pleasures and pains of him who relates it will be recognized by the reader, and, by a natural act of the imagination, adopted as his own" (p. iii). Certainly the bare plot outline of a young man disappointed in love, who leaves civilization, plunges into the wilderness, and finds happiness with an Indian bride could seem to justify Chinard's claim that "Davis est imprégné de la sentimentalité du XVIII^{e} siècle; il est plein de Rousseau . . . il suit de très près Chateaubriand" (p. 132).

Walter, like René, is an orphan, well-educated, who finding himself involved with a young woman in a relationship which cannot continue, departs Europe for New Orleans and life with the Indians. Like Chactas, the hero of Atala, he spends idyllic days in the wilderness in the company of his beautiful Indian maid, breaking out into poetic rhapsody in close, almost verbatim imitation of Chactas's effusions, both of whom effect a blending of the Biblical "Song of Solomon" and Indian metaphor: "How beautiful are the feet of Oosnooqua with mocassins! O prince's daughter! when thou movest, thy steps are so light, that the mole cannot hear thee!" (p. 178).

When Walter fears that a visiting Indian prince may win Oosnooqua's affections away from him, he employs Quipey to spy on the pair and records feverishly in his journal the moment by moment developments, a technique by which Davis gains the effect of immediacy as Goethe had done in The Sorrows of Werther:

> The prince has been talking to her in private, and she listened with attention. Once she faintly smiled. O God! can it be? Sooner than this had happened, would thou hadst sent me to grapple with the plague, or oppose one of thy loudest bolts. Oh! Oh!
>
> She is still listening to the prince. The words of the savage sink deep in her heart. The spirit of love is kindled in her eyes. If it be true! by the soul of her sleeping mother, my sword shall wed her.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She has returned to the prince adorned! The necklace I gave her encircles her wanton neck! Enough! Hear me, O Heaven! From this moment do I shake off all affection for this woman; and, what there is of vengeance in the breast of man, let her expect that from me!
>
> Oh! that I had a sea within my breast, to quench the fire that burns it! (pp. 172-173)

It was Ferdinand all over again.

The sections of the book most reminiscent of the sentimental school

are the plot outline and a few pages at the end which are totally at variance in tone and mood from the rest of the book. Closer examination discovers little else in Walter Kennedy that is similar to Chateaubriand or to Rousseau. Indicative of the differences is the contrast between René and Walter. René is a young man of pathological, habitual melancholy, plagued without reason by "this horror of life which [he] had felt from childhood."[8] He is either seeking to calm "this raging storm within [his] breast" or wretchedly "dragging his useless days over the earth," decrying "the emptiness of his existence." After spending most of the book's pages vainly seeking all over Europe for peace of mind, he withdraws from the world into the American wilderness as his sister had withdrawn into the seclusion of the monastery.

Though Walter is also disappointed in his early life, his resolve to embark for America is taken in a different spirit:

> I seriously meditated embarking for the shores of the new world. I was not so infatuated as to believe that by crossing the ocean I should fly from my solicitudes and cares; but I wished to bury my vexation and chagrin in another part of the globe. My sorrow was great; and sorrow for the loss of a beloved mistress is best alleviated by withdrawing from those scenes that are associated with ideas of the privation. (pp. 6-7)

Visiting London before his departure, he sees the evils of society, but also recognizes the good: "The streets appeared to me filled with the undoers and the undone. To appropriate the words of the most eloquent of my countrymen, 'London may be called the sink of vice: but her hospitals and charitable buildings, whose turrets pierce the

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[8] François-René de Chateaubriand, Atala & René (1802; rpt. A Signet Classic. New York: The New World Library, 1962), p. 108.

skies, like so many electrical conductors, avert the wrath of Heaven" (p. 10). When he finds that his vessel had already sailed, he is able to philosophize: "This was a disappointment: but disappointments ought to be shaken off by the man of enterprise, like dew-drops from a lion's mane" (p. 9). He is sorry to part from his shipboard friends, but buoyantly remarks: "My grief was, however, of an evanescent nature. 'Out of sight, out of mind,' says the proverb. My imagination was soon occupied by other thoughts" (p. 31). The other thoughts are his delight of travel and his interest in "the face of the country, and its natural productions." Independent, self-confident, strongly practical, much like Davis himself, Walter's optimistic and cheerful observations set the tone for the rest of his peregrinations.

He has as his companion and load bearer a huge dog, Kickapoo, whose good-natured temperament is a happy match to his master's. When bartered away by his original owner for a clasp-knife, Kickapoo shoulders his burdens in perfect indifference and with brisk but stately step ventures into his new future: "Kickapoo wished to improve himself by travelling, and on he went, erecting his crest, and wagging his tail" (p. 49). The most fully developed character in the book aside from Walter, Kickapoo works diligently, eats and sleeps with great zest, growls expressively under momentary annoyances, and would undoubtedly concur with his master in a view of life decidedly anti-Rousseau: "Let Ovid and Rousseau catch the applause of sickly sentiment; the one by whining out his calamities, the other by complaining of persecution. They excite only my contempt. They are for ever conducting their readers into the vale of tears, and always turn aside from the hall of merriement" (pp. 73-74). Together,

dog and master give the book an unmistakably picaresque tone.

The variations in perspective and tone from travel account to sentimental novel to personal adventure mar the book considerably, not only in large, over-all aspects such as the alteration in Walter's character and style after falling in love, but in smaller paragraph-by-paragraph detail. The reader finds a botanical observation of the humming bird ending with the romantic retirement of Oosnooqua and her love. Following immediately is the Gothic description of a terrifying storm, then the journalistic, matter-of-fact reporting that "an Indian who had taken shelter under a tree, was struck dead by the lightning." This calls forth from Walter an anthropological account of the burial customs and from the high priest a rhetorical funeral sermon. Walter, objecting to the theology of the Indian, offends Oosnooqua by the flat statement that "Nickajack is a liar." To prove his point he uses his burning glass in a trick of white magic to "call down fire from the sun," comically terrorizing the poor girl. Such abrupt and inartistic shifts all within four short pages leave a reader as confused as Oosnooqua about what to think.

Of major interest in a book of this subject are the questions of how the author relates to nature and to the Indian. These in the final analysis test the relative Romanticism of the work. When his New Orleans host inquires his motive "for withdrawing from society," Walter's answer implies a Romantic rejection of civilization and a search for Utopia:

> ". . . among the aborigines of this country, among the Indians of the forest, I hope to find that tranquillity with which I have been unacquainted in the bosom of civilized society."
>
> "That," cried Mr. Moffat, "is infatuation." (p. 28)

Walter's stated motive is, of course, a familial variation on similar speeches by René and many romantically sentimental characters of the time: "Europeans constantly in a turmoil are forced to build their own solitudes. The more tumultuous and noisy our hearts, the more calm and silence attract us" (René, p. 98).

If Davis intended to portray Walter communing tranquilly in the purity and innocence of a new Eden, he demonstrates it in strange ways which, as they accumulate, become almost a burlesque of the "lost paradise of Nature" idea. Following his first wearisome day's journey and campfire, Walter looks at the brightly shining moon "with the cheerfulness of content":

> "How delightful this solitude!" cried I. "The night here rolls on without any accident of vexation, or intrusion from melancholy thoughts! Remote from the tumult of fashion, and the temptations of vice, I enjoy composure of mind, and concentration of ideas. I am the tenant of no particular spot, but of the universe. The duty of my creation is not less discharged, in speculating on nature in Louisiana, then mingling with the sons of business in the crowded metropolis of England. And how is my present condition enhanced by the comparison! Here no love of gain will interrupt my slumbers, but, stretched on my buffaloskin, I shall sleep with the same peace as during my nights of careless infancy!"
>
> I was, however, mistaken; for scarcely had I sought repose on my travelling bed, when my boy vociferated Hoo! hoo! and, rising up, I perceived a huge crocodile at the distance of twelve yards, whose eyes were stedfastly fixed on the embers of the fire. I snatched up my gun, and levelling it at the monster, discharged it into his body, crying out at the same time, "Take that, thou disturber of my peace!" But I might as well have sung Harry Croaker to him! The ruffian only turned, and sought again the creek. (pp. 32-33)

Nor is this an isolated incident. The next morning they travel some distance before reaching a beautiful savannah that invites them to land:

> "Under this cypress, Quipey," said I, "we will kindle a fire, and sit down to our breakfast of corn in peace and quietness."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> My heart was full. "Ah! how sweet," cried I, "is this repast! . . . give me the solitude of the woods of Louisiana!"
>
> I had scarce uttered these words, when a rattling noise assailed my ears, which brought upon me fear and trembling. I looked, and lo! an immense rattle-snake appeared before me, vibrating its monstrous body, and flashing fire from its eye-balls. I rose, and snatching my gun, lodged the contents in the monster's body. (pp. 34-35)

Crocodiles and snakes are not the only victims of his shot. The healing breath of forest and field has not yet prevailed upon a hero who "beat [s] out the brains" of "a princely buck" with the butt-end of his gun, or who, after watching some wild turkey-cocks for several hours, reports:

> The innocent amours of these harmless birds would have suspended the arm of a sentimental traveller, and he would have renounced his breakfast rather than have disturbed them. My breast knew none of this tenderness. I scattered my shot among them, and left three in a condition not to be envied by the others, who with much prudence took to flight. (p. 112)

Having reached a village of the Auknoc tribe, bearing a remarkable resemblance to Occoquan, Walter is moved to sublime rhapsody once more:

> I could not contemplate without emotion the scene before me. The moon shed its rays over a pastoral town, raised in a forest of stately pines, and having before it a pleasant river, whose course, obstructed by huge rocks, raved with awful fury, which was echoed with aggravated horror from the neighboring mountains. The fire-fly was on the wing, the mocking-bird was ravishing the ear with his song, and the Whip-poor-Will was yelling his whoops to the moon. (pp. 38-39)

The next paragraph introduces, however, the aged chief surrounded by his nymphlike wives, three lecherous white traders just arrived in camp, and the predatory, bargaining Indian prostitutes who abscond with their goods before dawn. From several experiences the impression is left that

the Indian female is as addicted to flirtation and promiscuity as her male counterpart is to rum. Obviously the savages are no more free from vice than the inhabitants of London.

None of the Indian characters are developed in any depth or in a way consistent with the romantic literary concept of the stalwart savage. Quipey is strong and faithful, like Kickapoo; but unlike the spirited Kickapoo, he is quite subservient, "fawning at Walter's feet like a spaniel." When Walter jokingly threatens to shoot him for getting drunk on stolen rum, he begs for his life "in a kneeling posture" and in a dialect resembling that of a comic negro character:

> I told the fellow to get up. "Rise, sirrah," said I. "I spare your life this time; but you shall not go unpunished. Unload Kickapoo, take the luggage off the dog's back, and carry it yourself."
>
> The fellow was dumb with gratitude and joy. He ran towards me, threw himself on the ground, and lifting up my right foot, placed his head under it, in token of love and humility. (pp. 102-103)

Shawano, the Kaskaskian chief and father of Oosnooqua, supposedly a dignified figure, is made to look foolish as he stands "trembling with amazement and religious awe" after viewing the fire created by the burning glass, a treasure so coveted that he initiates the exchange of his daughter for it. The high priest, Nickajack, is a "knave"; and Ohio Jack, a war captain, notable hunter, urbane host, and eloquent orator, harangues a group of young women until they acquiesce in the proposal of the orator:

> Upon this he spoke to my boy Quipey, who, approaching me, said, "You can have, Sir, that tall young woman. But first, master, you must make her present of one fine string of beads to go round her neck--and give Ohio Jack a dram of rum--so much as he can hold in his mouth at one time. That not very much, master; his mouth not very big. (p. 86)

Davis's Indians are neither saints nor sinners, but a well mixed combination of traits, both good and bad, with vices peculiarly their own in addition to new ones introduced by the white man. They are less indentifiable with the "noble savage" of Eurpoean romanticism than with Captain John Smith's realistic aborigines. Many parallels of detail can be found between Oosnooqua and Pocahontas, and the scene in which Walter first enters the "court" of Shawano is almost identical to Smith's description of Powhatan's court. Like Smith, Davis maintains an impartial objectivity toward the Indian in Walter Kennedy far removed from the more overt romanticism of Freneau or Cooper. Davis's account of the Indian chiefs forced to trick tribesmen into working the fields by crafty exploitation of their superstitions is in sharp contrast to Freneau's picture of the native's paradise, for the latter writes of

> Sweet sylvan scenes of innocence and ease,
> How calm and joyous pass the seasons here!
> No splendid towns or spiry turrets rise,
> No lordly palaces--no tyrant kings
> Enact hard laws to crush fair freedom here;
> No gloomy jails to shut up wretched men;
> All, all are free!--here God and nature reign;
> Their works unsullied by the hands of me.--[9]

To understand the dichotomy between Davis and Cooper, one need only to compare Davis's savages with Cooper's theory as expressed in his "Preface" to a new edition to The Leatherstocking Tales--"when [a] work aspires to the elevation of romances, to present the beau-ideal of [the] characters." Spencer has noted that "reconciling the actual and

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[9] From The Pictures of Columbus, quoted by Albert Keiser in The Indian in American Literature (1933; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 22.

the millennial West was rare."[10] By avoiding the extremes of idealizing Indian and wilderness or demonizing them, and by containing within his work an ambiguous mixture of responses, Davis has sacrificed aesthetic unity, but comes closer to psychological and physical actuality, despite the crudity of the technique.

In the end, what makes the wilderness habitable to Walter is not its solitude nor his adjustment to Indian culture, but his love for Oosnooqua:

> For a couple united in the bonds of marriage, the solitude of the woods of America is preferable to the crowded metropolis of England. . . . Blest with the presence of Oosnooqua, a wilderness would to me be populous enough. . . . My heart with every descending sun confirms the position, that--a happy husband feels no inclination to travel any other path but that which conducts him to the habitation of his wife. (pp. 191-192)

By concluding the book with marriage between white and red, Davis followed the Rolfe-Pocahontas story rather than either of the forms which were to become the archetypal resolutions to the confrontation. The white participant was not metamorphosed into something neither white nor red; nor was the Indian annihilated.[11] Although Walter has gladly abandoned certain qualities of white society and thereby been metamorphosed into something not quite white, he has adulterated the red by bringing white benefits to the red society in his gift of the burning glass and presumably other products of civilization. Oosnooqua, too, will be metamorphosed into something not quite red if she proceeds with her ambition to study Shakespeare and the Bible. Such a blending of

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[10] Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1957), p. 279.

[11] Leslie A. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 24.

hues, symbolized by the marriage, is the one way the races could survive confrontation without annihilation of one or the other, an expediency of colonial life recognized by Jacobeans such as Smith and Rolfe far removed from Rousseau, and later confirmed by cavaliers such as Beverley, Lawson, and Byrd, who regretted, in the light of subsequent wars, that the colonists hadn't embraced the proposal. It is in such idealism that Davis becomes the true romantic and not in his apparent similarity to Chateaubriand.

In truth, a second look at René suggests that Chateaubriand is not as romantic as he seems to be, for René rejected the Indian, refusing to live with his Indian wife, and he also rejected nature, finding no comfort in its solitude. Paradoxically, Chateaubriand has written a book which seemingly breathes on every page the passions of Rousseauque romanticism but concludes unexpectedly in a pronouncement of stern neoclassical stoicism. Upon hearing René's history, Father Souel, the Catholic priest, tells him:

> Nothing in this story merits the pity which is shown to you here. I see a young man intoxicated with his illusions, displeased with everything, withdrawn from the burdens of society, given to idle dreams. One is not, sir, a superior man because he sees the world in shadow. . . . What do you do all alone in the forests, where you waste your days, neglecting all your duties? . . . Solitude is evil for him who does not live with God! . . . Whoever has received talents should use them in the service of his fellow creatures. (René, pp. 124-125)

Chactas, the wise old Indian, agrees, adding, "There is happiness only along common paths." Despite their counsel, René still fails to find happiness and dies a short time afterward.

In Davis's book, on the other hand, a neoclassical approach to life leads to a romantic ending. Yet the fundamental message of both books

is neoclassical rationalism. René fails because he is a man given to idle dreams who allows emotional excesses to destroy his life. Walter succeeds because he is a man of equanimity and sense who refuses to live in the misery of the mind. Of an even and placid temperament, like Kickapoo he uses his intellect to subdue and control his emotions, choosing his destiny and finding contentment therein.

What did Southey see in the book to recommend that "it possesses sufficient interest to be saleable"?[12] Its timeliness was certainly a factor. Following the consummation of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, New Orleans had become the figurative and actual gate to the new frontier. After the mysteries of the territory east of the Appalachians had been explored, curiosity had turned to the vast unknown areas of the Mississippi River valley. Southey's Madoc had been centered in the same general area; he was cognizant that such materials exuded the primitive freshness of the distant and exotic currently appealing to the jaded tastes of readers everywhere. In adjudging of Davis's "very considerable, and indeed extraordinary, talents," Southey was surely thinking of the wealth of realistic detail which lent charm and verisimilitude to this "first-hand" account. It was also a salute to the same sprightly narrative style which Davis had demonstrated with such happy effect in the Travels. On the negative side, the confused focus of the book gave ample evidence that, as Southey guessed, Davis had probably written hastily, and . . . upon the spur of want." More serious, and consistent with a complaint leveled at several of Davis's

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[12] For the complete text of Southey's letter to Longman, see Chapter I, pp. 35-36.

works, was the charge of "an evident libertinism of heart and thought which is everywhere too evident" and which Southey charitably charged to moral feelings injured by adversity. Longman did publish the work, a fact which must have given Davis much satisfaction--financially because the publisher paid adequate prices to its authors and professionally because it was prestigious. Inexplicably, the book was not reviewed in the Annual Review and History of Literature in which Southey was an important force, which was printed for Longman, and which reviewed the Travels and Chatterton.

By August 1805, the book began to appear prominently on the "Just Received from London" lists of American dealers. Despite its American locale, it was not noticed by reviewers on this side of the Atlantic. It might have found a more receptive response had it borne an American imprint. One London publisher, J. F. Hughes, however, acting on evidence of some profit, reissued it from the original plates in 1808 with the subtitle amplified to "An Interesting American Tale." Also in 1808, a poem appeared in the Port Folio (16 January) over the pseudonym "Indianus," supposedly a youth who had spent much of his life on "the romantic banks of the Kaskaskia, near its confluence with the Mississippi." In March, "Indianus" produced several other poems, among them "On the Return of Spring," a favorite Davis theme, raising the possibility that he was the author of the pieces, a possibility enhanced by the fact that Lucas George was also regularly contributing at this same time, and where George was contributing, Davis was likely to be also.

C. "THE STORY OF MR. KEITH'S CAPTIVITY AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIANS"

Among the many Indian passages which Davis inserted into his writings, one of the longest was "The Story of Mr. Keith's Captivity Among the American Indians," an inset found in The Post-Captain.[13] While Mr. Keith, a Virginia planter, accompanied by his wife, infant child, and two negroes, is journeying down the Ohio in a large canoe, lamentable cries draw their attention to a white man kneeling on the river imploring "with every gesture and attitude that wretchedness could dictate" that they take him aboard. Pity overcoming precaution, they draw in to the shore and are immediately overpowered by a dozen Indians who had used the white man as a decoy. Their experiences during the next several days as they are forced to accompany the Indian hunting party on its various removes are similar to the adventures recounted in other captivity narratives--the cold and hunger, the endurance required, the agony of uncertainty about their ultimate disposition, the threats to their lives by hostile Indians in the party, and the unexpected kindnesses from more tenderhearted ones.

Many of the details in the story are repetitive of the Travels and Walter Kennedy. Attention is given to the same features of natural history, often inserted into the narrative as artificially as they had been in the earlier novel. The familiar scene of evening at Occoquan is merely transferred west: "The moon, in solemn majesty, was rising from the woods; the fire-fly was on the wing, and the banks of the Ohio

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[13] The Post-Captain; or the Wooden Walls Well Manned (London: Thomas Tegg, 1806).

echoed with the incessant and melancholy cry of the whip-poor-will." Many of the same Indian customs are described; American types are similarly delineated--the kind and generous Virginian contrasted to the callously shrewd Yankee. The narrator and his rescuers are typically courageous, quick, and resourceful. Most of these factors also look ahead to The First Settlers of Virginia, which is predicted in still additional ways. An Indian maiden whose intervention saves Mr. Keith from death is certainly a close kin to Oosnooqua and Pocahontas; the chief, a relative to Powhatan. Mrs. Keith, in captivity, sings a passage from the Psalm, "By the Rivers of Babylon," a passage sung later by the captive Pocahontas, though less appropriately, considering her still heathen state.

The captivity narrative had long been a popular genre in America, almost five hundred different titles having been collected by the Newberry Library.[14] In the latter part of the 1799's as civilization pushed west, incidents of the river ambush, a specialized sub-genre, were frequently found in newspapers and periodicals of the times. Jefferson's Notes had alluded to several such experiences. M. Liancourt's Travels had contained a lengthy account of the "Remarkable Adventures of Mr. Johnson of Virginia," whose party had also been decoyed while traveling down the Ohio in 1790. This had been serialized in The Monthly Magazine in 1800 when Davis was being published there and reading it avidly. Several parallels exist between Liancourt's story and "Mr. Keith's Captivity," very likely a fictional compilation

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[14] James D. Hart, The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 40-41.

of several such accounts that Davis had run across in America. In this type of story he saw an opportunity to utilize materials fresh and exciting to the English readers of The Post-Captain. Perhaps because it is fictionalized, his version is better artistically than the more factual accounts. It is tighter in incident, involves fewer persons, incorporates fewer irrelevant details, and has greater emotional impact in the hairbreadth excitement of the daring rescue when the family is snatched from the clutches of the enraged enemy by the wily crew of a passing canoe, muskets drawn and firing, paddles frantically working to escape the range of the Indian arrows--a finale worthy of Cooper. There remains in this version only a vestige of what Hart has called "the trial of the Christian spirit," the motif dominant in the earliest captivity narratives. Mr. Keith's attitude toward his experience more closely proximates the pattern of later narratives in which the central figure "no longer views himself as a pious sufferer of God's inscrutable wisdom," but as a victim of fiendish savages.

D. CAPTAIN SMITH AND PRINCESS POCAHONTAS

The Indian story which captivated Davis most, however, was not one of enmity nor of blood and thunder, but rather the tender tale of an Indian girl, the Princess Pocahontas--her compassionate rescue of Captain John Smith, her many services to the Jamestown settlement, and her marriage to John Rolfe. Davis's working interest in the story spanned the years from 1800 to 1822, and his numerous retellings have been dubbed "the most energetic exploitation of the Indian" in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[15]

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[15] Lillie Deming Loshe, The Early American Novel, 1789-1830 (1907; rpt. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1958), p. 74.

Although the Indian maiden is mentioned in other contemporary histories, all the germinal ingredients of her romantic rescue of Captain Smith, and of her role as savior of the colony during its precarious struggle for existence are to be found in the several accounts, true or untrue, written by Smith. Her debut upon the written page occurs in Smith's The True Relation of Virginia (1608), as the daughter of the Emperor Powhatan, a child of ten, "which, not only for features, countenance, and proportion, much exceedeth any of the rest of his people: but for wit and spirit, [is] the only Nonpareil of his country."[16] Following shortly after, three other minor references indicate that Powhatan had taught his daughter to love and respect John Smith, that she had been sent to the colony to plead for the release of several Indians taken captive, and that she had been given "such trifles as contented her."

Part Two of Smith's A Map of Virginia, with a Description of the Country, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion (1612) repeats the account of Pocahontas seeking deliverance for the Indian prisoners and suggests in a passage written by another of the colonists, that by marrying the princess, whose age is now placed at between thirteen and fourteen, Smith might thereby make himself a king, but the idea is dismissed: ". . . nor was it ever suspected he had ever such a thought; or more regarded her, or any of them, than in honest reason and discretion

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[16] Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, ed. Edward Arber. A new edition with biography and introduction by A. G. Bradley (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), p. 38.

he might" (Smith's Works, p. 169). The same passage introduces Pocahontas's role as protector of the colony:

> Very oft she came to our fort, with what she could get for Captaine Smith; that ever loved and used all the Countrie well, but her especially he ever much respected: and she so well requited it, that when her father intended to have surprized him, shee by stealth in the darke night came through the wild woods and told him of it. (Ibid.)

Not until 1622 in New England Trials does Smith finally allude to his rescue by the princess:

> It is true in our greatest extremitie they shot me, slue three of my men, and by the folly of them that fled tooke me prisoner; yet God made Pocahontas the Kings daughter the meanes to deliver me: and thereby taught me to know their treacheries to preserve the rest. (Smith's Works, p. 263.)

This bare bones account is embellished and dramatized in The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles (1624) a compendium of several books written by Smith and various contemporaries:

> That some ten yeeres agoe being in Virginia, and taken prisoner by the power of Powhatan their chiefe King, I received from this great Salvage exceeding great courtesie, especially from his sonne Nantaquaus, the most manliest, comeliest, boldest spirit, I ever saw in a Salvage, and his sister being but a childe of twelve or thirteene yeeres of age, whose compassionate pitifull heart, of my desperate estate, gave me much cause to respect her. . . . After some six weeks fatting amongst those Salvage Courtiers, at the minute of my execution, she hazarded the beating out of her owne braines to save mine; and not onely that, but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to James towne: where I found about eight and thirtie miserable poore and sicke creatures; to keepe possession of all those large territories of Virginia; such was the weaknesse of this poore Commonwealth, as had the Salvages not fed us, we directly had starved. And this reliefe . . . was commonly brought us by this Lady Pocahontas.
>
> Notwithstanding all these passages, when inconstant Fortune turned our peace to warre, this tender Virgin would still not spare to dare to visit us, and by her our iarres have beene oft appeased, and our wants still supplyed; were it the policie of her father thus to imploy her, or the ordinance of God thus to make her his instrument, or her extraordinaire affection to our Nation, I know not: but of

> this I am sure; when her father with the utmost of his policie and power, sought to surprise mee, having but eighteene with me, the darke night could not affright her from comming through the irkesome woods, and with watered eies gave me intelligence, with her best advice to escape his furie; which had hee knowne, he had surely slaine her.
>
> James towne with her wild traine she as freely frequented, as her fathers habitation; during the time of two or three yeeres, she next under God, was still the instrument to preserve this Colonie from death, famine and utter confusion; which if in those times, it had once beene dissolved, Virginia might have line [lain] as it was at our first arrival to this day. (Smith's Works, pp. 530-532)

A number of additional references repeat the stories of Pocahontas's sending much-needed provisions, of her intervention on behalf of Indian prisoners, of her coming "in that darke night . . . through the irkesome woods" to warn Smith of her father's planned attack, and add fresh incidents of a masquerade entertainment which she and her companions stage for Smith and his company and of her intervention on behalf of white prisoners. The reader learns further that some years after Smith's departure for England during a period of renewed distrust, she is taken hostage by Captain Argall. When Powhatan refuses to ransom her, her captivity stretches into several months during which she becomes a Christian, falls in love, and becomes the wife of Master John Rolfe, a happy solution for both Indian and colonists which helps to bring peace at least for a time to the two parties. Later, on a visit to England she is feted by royalty and "diverse other persons of good qualities," renews her friendship with Captain Smith, and dies at Gravesend while awaiting passage back to America.

In the period from 1608 until 1625, the publication date of Samuel Purchas's Hakluytus Posthumus; or, Purchas His Pilgrimes, more was learned first-hand about Pocahontas through the writings of such contemporaries as Wingfield, Strachey, Hamor, Purchas, and others, but

for the remainder of the seventeenth century her story was ignored. In the eighteenth century three or four historians, relying heavily upon Smith's accounts, kept the story alive; judging from the verbatim similarities between their work and his, Davis, in turn, relied very heavily upon them.

Foremost among the ingredients of the story making it appealing to Davis were the personalities of Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas:

> Of the first settlers in Virginia, the most distinguished character was Captain Smith, a man who seemed to inherit every quality of a hero; a man of such bravery and conduct, that his actions would confer dignity on the page of the historian. With the life of this gallant colonist, the reader is admitted to so much knowledge of Indian manners, that this appears a very proper place to take a view of his adventures. But I have a stronger motive. With the history of Captain Smith is interwoven the story of Pocahontas, whose soft simplicity and innocence cannot but hold captive every mind; and this part of my volume, many of my fair readers will, I am persuaded, hug with the tenderest emotion to their bosoms. (Travels, p. 259)

Smith--intrepid explorer, professional traveler, chronicler of his own adventures, a man who triumphed over the controversies which usually surrounded him, a man of action as well as a man of letters--was much as Davis envisioned himself. The blatant romanticism of the Jacobean cavalier struck a responsive chord in the often repressed romanticism of the Augustan. Davis's friend, historian John Burk, in comparing Smith's account with those of his contemporaries, proclaimed it "a sort of epic history or romance, where the author, like Ossian, recounts his atchievements in the spirit with which he fought."[17]

Pocahontas's youth and beauty would have sufficed to draw Davis's attention, but her tender-hearted sympathy and disinterested generos-

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[17] John Daly Burk, The History of Virginia, from Its First Settlement to the Present Day (Petersburg, Va.: Dickson and Pescud, 1804), I, ii.

ity as found in Smith's accounts made her an appropriate successor to Elisabeth and Serena, the sentimental heroines of his earlier work. "Can the wild legends of rude ages, or the sentimental fictions of refinement, supply an heroine whose qualities would not be eclipsed by the Indian Pocahontas?" he asked (Travels, p. 279).

A third ingredient justifying his inclusion of the story as an inset in the Travels was that the story provided "a disquisition of Indian manners [which] cannot but be interesting to a speculative mind" (Travels, p. 257). In a two hundred-year-old tradition, of which Jefferson's Notes had become the best-known example, observers of the American scene had been minutely examining and meticulously recording all kinds of facts and fictions about the new continent. These encompassed the Indian as well. Such disquisitions were an expected part of any description of America, and Davis had accordingly devoted about one-seventh of the Travels to Indian manners and mores, of which the Smith-Pocahontas story comprised two thirds. But he had a motive higher than mere curiosity or fashion. In the Travels he was using the story to support a thesis about the Indian which, in turn, would vindicate a philosophy about the American continent. Like his mentor Jefferson, Davis was refuting the theory proposed by Georges Buffon in Histoire Naturelle (1749-1804) to the effect that the western hemisphere was in an early and immature state of growth, that it was inferior in climate and environment to the rest of the world, that as a consequence the Indian was akin to the beasts and only slightly above them, and worst of all, that the environment of the hemisphere was intellectually and physically degenerating and debilitating to those who came here to live. Jefferson and Davis, along with many other defenders of America propounded instead the environmental theory developed by Robertson

in his History of America (1777). This theory, an outgrowth of the thinking of the Scottish realistic philosophers, stated that the Indian was in a simple and undeveloped state of civilization merely because he had been living in an environment which demanded that he concentrate all his energies on survival, but that in many respects, where this demand had not inhabited his development, his attainments were quite equal to those of the European.[18]

The three most extended discussions of the Indian in the Travels exemplify, whether by accident or design, the Indian's mental, moral, and physical equivalencies to men of any other time and place. Several pages are devoted to the eloquence of Indian oratory, including a speech supposedly heard by Davis himself and a transcription of the celebrated speech of Logan, copied verbatim from Jefferson's version in the Notes. Of the former Davis declares:

> No orator of antiquity every exceeded this savage chief in the force of his emphasis, and the propriety of his gesture. Indeed, the whole scene was highly dignified. The fierceness of his countenance, the flowing robe, elevated tone, naked arm, and erect stature, with a circle of auditors seated on the ground, and in the open air, could not but impress upon the mind a lively idea of the celebrated speakers of ancient Greece and Rome. (Travels, pp. 255-256)

In such moral virtues as generosity, forgiveness, affection, and friendship, he again compares them to the races of antiquity:

> The Indians of America want only an historian which would measure them by the standard of Roman ideas, to equal in bravery and magnanimity the proud masters of the world. The descendants of Romulus were ever engaged in a perpetual succession of barbarous wars. . . . to war they owed their origin, and they pursued it

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[18] For a more complete discussion of the philosophies at work see Roy Harvey Pearce, "Character and Circumstance: The Idea of Savagism," in Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind (1953; rpt. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 76-105.

> as a system. Let us compare with these dignified butchers the depreciated Indians of America; and if a love of peace be the criterion of a great character, how will a Roman shrink at the side of an Indian. The Romans were ever found to sheath the sword with reluctance; the Indians have been always ready to lay down the hatchet. (Travels, pp. 298-299)

Physically they are strong, graceful, dignified in bearing, and as capable of growing beards as any European, in proof of which he offers several "certificates of unquestionable authority" in the fashion of Jefferson, whose "philosophic gravity" over such a question had disarranged Davis's "stoical composure." Tongue in cheek, he concludes: "On a subject of such magnitude; a subject that has called forth every acuteness of disquisistion from a Buffon on one side of the Atlantic, and a Jefferson on the other; whatever positive evidence can be produced, is entitled to serious attention" (Travels, p. 302). To all of these arguments--intellectual, moral, and physical--the Smith-Pocahontas story lends its testimony proving "that in humanity and all the softer emotions the Indians of America will rival the most polished nations of the world" (Travels, p. 299).

Certainly Davis's interest in the story was intensified by his residence in Virginia: "It was in the tall forests of Virginia, before the door of my plantation log-hut, that, contemplating the moon, and listening to the mock-bird, I first conceived the project of writing this story" (Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, p. [v]). In Virginia he had opportunity to traverse the soil where the drama had transpired, to see live Indians--a delicate, attractive maiden and a wise, eloquent old chief, who might have served as models for the princess and her father, and to meet descendants of his protagonists among the first families of Virginia, particularly the Randolphs. Less specific reasons might also be

cited for the appeal which the story had for Davis: his life-long interest in biography and history; his inclination, related to his Augustan heritage and his role as a tutor, to didacticism; and the temper of the times, that growing impulse of new romanticism, a romanticism not just of Elizabethan exploration and enthusiasm, but of attraction to the wilderness, to the "child of nature," and to the possibilities of a tragic love story, an adventure of the heart. Just a few years before, Charles Brockden Brown had caught the value of the Indian as a literary agent of terror in Edgar Huntly: Davis was to see his value in other ways as well.

His first treatment of the theme appears in Farmer of New-Jersey (1800). The passage was scarcely a page in length and considerably garbled in interpretation. The captain is reduced to a trader who "bartered his goods with the Indians"; Pocahontas is called at one time a squaw, although this is amended to "Indian queen"; the mode of the proposed execution is burning at the stake.[19] But the climactic moment has the same emotional life that would become its hallmark:

> But just as the fire was kindled, Pocahuntas [sic], the youngest and darling daughter of the king, threw her arms around the prisoner, and declared, that unless he was pardoned she would be burnt with him. The tears of innocence will prevail when the voice of humanity is unheard. Powhatan could not resist the tears and entreaties of his child. His savage breast relented, and he revoked the sentence of captain Smith.
>
> Bravissimo! cried colonel Brandywine. (Farmer of New-Jersey, p. 11)

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[19] Davis may have confused Smith's adventure with that of Juan Ortiz, a soldier in the army of De Soto, who was captured by the Indians in Florida in 1528, condemned to be burned, and saved by an Indian maiden. So many similarities occurred in the two accounts that some skeptics have suggested Smith's account to be an outgrowth of Ortiz's particularly since the report of Ortiz's experience was published at about the time Smith returned to England.

The story concludes with a toast to the descendants of the tender Pocahontas.

By the time he had amplified the story to its thirty-seven pages in the Travels, it had been corrected and augmented by much more detail. His indebtedness to other writers had become obvious, but his personal treatment of the story as a brief, detached unit, almost as a short story, is interesting to examine.

The narration commences with the arrival of Smith's ship in Chesapeake Bay, a description of the surrounding terrain, and a statement of the problems of the new colony. The character of the captain is promptly made plain when he is "elected Ruler by unanimous consent" and the author states that "by his judgment, courage, and industry, he saved the new establishment." The first adventure of the captain is to lead an exploratory party up the Chickahominy River, an undertaking which Smith, "ever delighting in enterprise, gallantly undertook himself." During the expedition, the party is ambushed by Indians, several colonists are scalped, and Smith, after a gallant struggle, is taken prisoner. Brought to Opechancanough, a minor chief, who in turn conducts him to the village of the emperor Powhatan, Smith is condemned to death but saved at the fateful moment by the dramatic intervention of Pocahontas, who, overcome with joy at the successful mediation, "hung wildly on the neck of the reprieved victim, weeping with a violence that choaked her utterance" (Travels, p. 273). Now accepted into the tribe as a friend, Smith is finally sent back to Jamestown after a seven-week absence. The colony is by this time "in the utmost confusion," but Smith's sagacity soon has order restored and their wants are relieved when Pocahontas arrives with supplies of Indian corn and other grain.

> The Colonists flocked with eager curiosity to behold an Indian girl, who had saved by her interposition the life of their Chief. . . .
>
> The acclamations of the crowd affected to tears the sensibility of Pocahontas; but her native modesty was abashed; and it was with delight that she obeyed the invitation of Captain Smith to wander with him, remote from vulgar curiosity, along the banks of the river. It was then she gave loose to all the tumultuous extasy of love; hanging on his arm, and weeping with an eloquence much more powerful than words. (Travels, pp. 277-278)

The above paragraphs are far from the words and the spirit of Smith's account. They mark the beginning of the major character deviations which Davis develops:

> The breast of Pocahontas cherished the deepest affection for Captain Smith, yet . . . she could not collect resolution to tell him of her love; and the Captain, like a true soldier, unwilling to put his unhoused free condition, into circumscription and confine, though he ventured her endearments, never dropped the slightest hint about marriage. . . . Averse to any solemn engagement with Pocahontas, yet, conscious of her own ardour for such an union, Smith devised an expedient that could not fail to cure her of her passion. He embarked privately for England, and enjoined the Colonists as they valued their safety, to represent that he was dead; for Smith knew the mischief every woman feels an impulse to perpetrate whose passion has been scorned. . . . A Colonist . . . pretended to shew the afflicted girl the grave of Captain Smith, recounting the tender remembrance he expressed for her in his dying moments, and the hope he fondly indulged to meet her in the world of spirits. Love is ever credulous; but Pocahontas listened to this artful tale with catholic faith. She prostrated herself on the pretended grave, beat her bosom, and uttered the most piercing cries. (Travels, pp. 261-282)[20]

John Rolfe now enters the scene. "Young, brave, generous, but of impetuous passions," he has been "driven to the shores of the new world . . . by an affair of honour with a superior officer."

> Possessing a supreme contempt for the vulgar, there were few of the Colonists whose company he could endure. The only companion of his social hour for a long time had been Smith; but when that gallant soldier returned to England, Rolfe constructed for

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20 Davis develops the deception and its motivation from a sentence in Smith's General Historie. The captain quotes Pocahontas as saying to him in London, "They did tell us always you were dead."

himself a log-house in the woods, and, when not upon duty at the fort, was to be found there solitary and sad. (Travels, pp. 282-283)

Seeing the tender sentiments which Pocahontas bears towards Smith, Rolfe's own heart becomes so infected with violent passion that he is presently to be seen wandering "dejected by moon-light along the banks of the river; and he who once was remarked for dressing himself with studied elegance, now walked about with his stockings ungartered." At this point Davis inserts three love poems which he claims were written by Rolfe and which he discusses with ostensible critical objectivity. These sentimental plaints lead to the second climax of the story:

> It was during one of these nights, when Mr. Rolfe was sitting woe-begone under an oak, sighing and groaning, and coupling love with dove, that a foot wandering among the trees disturbed his profound thoughts. It was too light to belong to a man, and his prophetic soul told him it was the step of Pocahontas. He stole to the spot. It was SHE! It was Pocahontas strewing flowers over the imaginary grave of Captain Smith. Overcome with terror and surprize, to be thus discovered by a stranger, the powers of life were suspended, and she sunk into the arms of Rolfe. For what rapturous moments is a lover often indebted to accident! The impassioned youth clasped the Indian Maid to his beating heart, and drank from her lips the poison of delight. The breast of a woman is, perhaps, never more susceptible of a new passion than when it is agitated by the remains of a former one. When Pocahontas recovered from her confusion, a blush burnt on her cheek to find herself in the arms of a man; but when Rolfe threw himself before her on his knees, and clasping his hands to the moon, discovered the emotions that had so long filled his breast, the afflicted girl suffered him to wipe the tear from her eye that overflowed with sorrow, and no longer repulsed the ardour of his caresses. The day was now breaking on the summits of the mountains in the East; the song of the mocking-bird was become faint, and the cry of the Muckawiss was heard only at long intervals. Pocahontas urged to go; but Rolfe still breathed in her ear the music of his vows, as he held her in his arms, or still rioted in the draught of intoxication from her lips. The sun had appeared above the mountains when Pocahontas returned through the woods. (Travels, pp. 286-288)

Additional rendezvous between the pair are implied, despite Smith's statement that Pocahontas had not visited Jamestown from the time of his

departure until her capture.

From such a purple passage, Davis resumes temporarily a tone of archival exposition. By a ruse Pocahontas is captured by the English and held for ransom, a stratagem not displeasing to Rolfe. In due course Nantaquas comes to the fort with provisions to ransom his sister, Rolfe discloses his honorable intentions trowards her, and, all parties consenting, the two are married:

> Rolfe was now happy in the arms of Pocahontas; nor did satiety necessarily follow from fruition. The Indian bride discovered in every question an eagerness of knowledge; and the elegant attainments of her husband, enabled him to cultivate the wild paradise of her mind. Rolfe found in Pocahontas that companion of his solitude for which he had so long sighed; and as she reclined her head on his shoulder before the door, and either made interrogation respecting Europe, or exchanged with him the glance of intelligence and affection, his eyes sparkled with fondness, and he caught her with transport to his breast. (Travels, p. 291)

The final scenes take place in England where Rolfe, his wife, and their infant son are visiting. Once more the princess meets Smith, "at whose unexpected appearance, she expressed the utmost astonishment, which gave way to scorn. But in a private interview, the tender girl hung over Smith with tears, and reproached him in accents that breathed kindness rather than resentment" (Travels, p. 293). The ladies of the court are charmed "with the unaffected sweetness of her manners, . . . and Pocahontas, whose penetration was intuition, soon learned to receive her visitants with appropriate variations of deference."

> But the hour was hasting when Pocahontas was to descend to that place where the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling; that bosom which had so often undergone perturbation for the sufferings of another, was soon to be stilled; that eye, which had so often overflowed with humanity, was soon to be closed; that hand which had been raised in supplication to avert the death of the prisoner, was soon to moulder in the grave. (Travels, p. 293)

With such pathos is the reader prepared for the demise of la belle sauvage, who died at Gravesend while awaiting passage back to America. In view of the liberties which had been taken with her character, with those of her husband and friends, and with many circumstances in their history, the historically informed reader is not a little astonished to find Davis's concluding testimony:

> In the progress of my story I have adhered inviolably to facts; rejecting every circumstance that had not evidence to support it. When I was in Virginia, I spared no pains to collect those materials which I have now digested into a regular and connected series; and, not content with tradition, I obtained recourse to records and original papers. (Travels, p. 296)

Some of the "supporting evidence" Davis had developed, legitimately for a historical novelist, from clues found in his sources - for instance, the deception of Pocahontas based on her statement in London. Supporting evidence for much of the rest of his story came from papers indeed original.

The response of the public was mixed, but usually favorable. Although The Edinburgh Review, which had not approved of any portion of the Travels, grumbled, "We have never met with anything more abdominably stupid than with this story," the Monthly Review found it of "superior interest" and "sufficient to give value to the volume," all other considerations aside. Strangely, the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, the only American journal to review the Travels, did not comment on the Indian materials at all, but the following month (February 1804) published "A Sketch of the Life of Pocahontas," an unsigned account similar and even identical to Davis's in some passages which seem to have been original with him. It is probably his material reworked by either his or some unknown hand, made more acceptable to American readers.

The character of Smith is not as admirable, that of Pocahontas is more so, less attention is given to the British handling of the colony. The ending is unabashedly patriotic and romantic: "When we reflect that so much virtue, heroism, intellect and piety adorned so young a native of our country, we cannot but regard America as the natural clime of greatness, and consider Pocahontas, as exhibiting proof of the powers and capacity of savage nature, rather than as an exception to common degeneracy."

In the years 1803-1804 Davis was utilizing for publication in England much of the material which he had gathered in America. He was also reworking the Smith-Pocahontas story into a length adequate to a bound volume. His letter to Jefferson mentions advice from Dr. Edward Jenner and Mr. [Arthur] Aikin in England, who induced him to "embrace much of the Natural History of the Country." In August of 1804 Dr. Jenner responded to Davis, then in London, expressing his honor at having the Indian tale inscribed to him.[21] On February 16, 1805, shortly after his return to the United States, Davis wrote to Jefferson requesting the President's subscription to his latest effort, now entitled Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, an Indian Tale:[22] "I have already procured in this place a hundred Subscribers; and the suffrage of your name on my list would incite a general spirit of encouragement among the citizens of Philadelphia."[23] The President "subscribed with pleasure."[24] The lengthy

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[21] The First Settlers of Virginia, p. vi.

[22] Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1805.

[23] Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[24] Jefferson to Davis, 8 March 1805, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

subscribers' list included in the volume displays an impressive representation of names active in the literary world: Charles Brockden Brown (two copies), Matthew Carey (three copies), Joseph Dennie (six copies), N. G. Dufief (twelve copies), as well as the Biddles, J. R. Ingersol, and other members of the Philadelphia literary circle, and L. H. Girardin and Edward [sic] Randolph of Williamsburg, and Lucas George of Raritan.

The book came from the press sometime in May and shortly thereafter began to appear prominently in the newspaper advertisements of the book sellers. Following Davis's removal to New York in June, it received particularly good publicity in that city, often appearing on the lists of several bookstores simultaneously and in individual advertisements placed in the upper right corner of the front page, a prime position. The volume was priced at sixty-two and a half cents.

Of the 176 pages, only 103 are taken by the tale itself, the rest of the volume being puffed out fore and aft with miscellanea. Preceding the story, in addition to the dedication and preface, is a collection of "testimonies" gleaned from various reviews of the Travels, all dealing with the Smith-Pocahontas portions but not all accurately quoted, a detail about which Davis was apt to be careless. Prominently displayed in italics is Jefferson's note of subscription. Seven sections dignified by Roman numerals follow the tale. These include memoirs of both Smith and Davis himself, Smith's petition to the queen on behalf of Pocahontas, a vocabulary of Indian words, a passage taken from the Amaenitates Graphicae by L. H. Girardin, and three pages of correspondence relative to the Indian tale (complimentary letters from Girardin and William Godwin). Fifteen pages of subscribers' names and an advertisement for a

sequel to be entitled The Massacre of the Virginia Planters conclude the book. "The reader may expect at best, a variety of entertainment," ventured Charles Brockden Brown.[25]

Davis was encouraged in his work more by his English and French royalist emigré friends than by any native Americans, according to his own evidence. He quotes L. H. Girardin as having written, "You have supplied what I consider to have been long a desideratum in this country." Of N. G. Dufief, a Philadelphia bookseller, language teacher, and author, Davis wrote in his preface: "I acknowledge the lively ardour of Mr. N. G. Dufief (author of that deep, solid, and incomparably ingenious work, entitled "Nature Displayed, in her Mode of Teaching Language to Man, adapted to the French") for the success of my undertaking." Dufief's interest was probably an outgrowth of his studies in language. Girardin had long been absorbed in early Virginia history and in the work referred to above had "described Jamestown, and given a view of that once famous, but now desolate place." Both gentlemen were tinged with a certain amount of French romanticism.

The changes which Davis incorporated into the new version suggest an ambivalence in his purpose. He strengthened the historical emphasis by adding geographical details and other background information and including new incidents based on the historical accounts. As a consequence the dramatic impact is sometimes diluted. For example, in the Travels the captain plunges into his wilderness adventure on the fourth page; such immediacy is much dissipated in Captain Smith by twenty-five pages of preliminaries. Nor is the historical authenticity of the story improved

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[25] The Literary Magazine and American Register, May 1805.

despite the addition of the new "factual" material, for it is more than overbalanced by a great deal of new fictional material--invented incidents, dramatized scenes, and detailed characterizations of Davis's creation. Captain Smith becomes more obviously the central figure. Decisions previously credited to "the colonists" now are credited to him as the dominant force in all movement.

Apparently recognizing the weakness in a story which marries off the heroine to a man making his first appearance only a few pages before the wedding and sensing that Rolfe the domestic planter was a pale shadow beside Smith the daring captain, Davis promoted Rolfe to a captain's rank and introduced him early in the action as "a young engineer," a chief assistant to Smith suggesting corrections to improve fortifications, taking charge in Smith's absences, and at one time saving a party from massacre by his quick thinking and sharp shooting. Some of the actions in which he now stars are invented; some of them are boldly transferred from the actions narrated by Smith about himself. The love affairs--Pocahontas for Smith and Rolfe for Pocahontas--have been prolonged and detailed with sensuous and sensory additions. After their marriage, Rolfe is no longer cultivating "the wild paradise of her mind." Adapting to his purposes the advice of Jenner and Aikin to embrace more of the natural history of the country, Davis altered his description of the bliss of the newly married pair to emphasize the wild paradise of the sublime. It is but one of many such new inclusions:

> Rolfe now held his princess in his arms in the deep bosom of awful forests, and the presence of the Lord of nature;--nuptial pomp worthy of the delicacy and purity of their love. Sacredly private was the first intercourse of their mutual fondness. Superb forests, towering cypresses, venerable oaks, stately pines waving the long moss floating from your

> branches; mountains on whose summits repose the hovering clouds; rivers obstructed by cataracts, and rolling silent majesty your streams; expanded and sublime nature! you alone were conscious of the conjugal endearments of the youthful pair. (Captain Smith, pp. 102-103)

Charles Brockden Brown predicted that readers would "feel some attractions to the present work in the nature of the subject, which is purely American; and which relates to two of the most interesting personages in early American history."[26] Judging from the scarcity of copies extant, the press run was a small one. But the little duodecimo met with enough success to encourage Davis to write a version still further amplified which was published later in the year by I. Riley of New York under the title The First Settlers of Virginia.[27]

E. THE FIRST SETTLERS OF VIRGINIA

The new title reflects the broadened base of the story now expanded to 184 pages. This press run also underestimated the demand. In January 1806, a reprinting was issued identical to the 1805 edition except for slight variations in the title page and verso, and a later date on the dedication inscription. Copies of this printing are fairly common.

Despite the obvious popular appeal of the book it was ignored by both English and American critics, with the exception of a review in The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review (February 1806). In expanding the historical segments Davis had relied more heavily than ever upon such

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[26] The Literary Magazine and American Register, May 1805, p. 340.

[27] The First Settlers of Virginia, an Historical Novel, Exhibiting a View of the Rise and Progress of the Colony at James Town, a Picture of Indian Manners, the Countenance of the Country, and Its Natural Productions. The 2nd ed. considerably enlarged. (New York: I. Riley, 1805).

works as William Robertson's History of America (1800), Jeremy Belknap's American Biography (1794), and to a lesser extent William Stith's History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia (1747). The Monthly Anthology decried "so many unaccountable instances of unacknowledged transcription," and in proof of "how far he is indebted . . . to the labours of others" affixed a table of pages from The First Settlers paralleled with a list of pages from Belknap from "which they are generally copied verbatim." Yet the reviewer confessed to having "perused this novel with pleasure" and to having found "many parts of it, for which we are exclusively indebted to Mr. Davis, highly ingenious."

Ingenious was the word for this unabashed mixture of fiction and fact. Now openly called "an historical novel," the book in its new form, despite reliance on legitimate historians, had become less fictionalized history than fiction interspersed periodically with history, the passages copied from Robertson and Belknap.

Magnifying even more the roles of Smith and Rolfe at the expense of historical validity, First Settlers opens in England where Smith is named head of the expedition by the Virginia Company and "the little squadron is placed under the command of this distinguished captain." Appearing immediately in the action is John Rolfe, whom Smith calls upon for advice even before the ship reaches the New World. For the most part ignoring the complex politics of the colony and the influence of other leaders in its destiny, the story now presents a series of incredible adventures and equally incredible romances of Smith and his followers, a small band comprising young "men of family whose mien, looks, and speech . . . blazoned forth their claim to the title of gentlemen" (p. 20).

At one time Smith and sixteen companions, on a trading mission to an Indian village, are surrounded by "at least seven hundred Indians, armed with their bows and arrows, painted for war." An open fight proves unnecessary when Smith, even more wily than the Indians, challenges Opechancanough to a duel and the chief declines. On another occasion the little band in encircled by thousands of Powhatan's warriors, yet the captain and his six companions make "such a passage among the naked devils," that they gain their mainbody unharmed: "In the courage and bravery of Rolfe, Percy, West, Russel, Berkeley and Jeffery, he could confidently repose; and he considered them equivalent to a host of common colonists" (p. 88). With such exploits laid out before him, the reader is quite amenable to such an evaluation--for a time.

When not performing exploits or returning briefly to Jamestown to bolster the sad fortunes of the struggling community, the band roams the countryside hunting, feasting, and fighting somewhat in the spirit of Robin Hood's merry men or a house-party of English lords in fox-hunting season. They shoot prodigious amounts of deer, turkey, and fowl, but have less success when a bear puts them all to rout and takes possession of their small boat while the young dandies dive ludicrously into the water in all directions. Only the providential arrival of the captain and "Sargent" Jeffery saves them.

The heroic image of the group is further tarnished by some of their romantic escapades. Their roving expeditions to various Indian villages, ostensibly for supplies, are often the occasion for libidinous conduct. As in Walter Kennedy, Davis implies a certain looseness in the conduct of Indian women. Especially is this true in the village of Ozasau, ruled

by an Indian queen, who turns out to be a rather sophisticated madame. While Smith tended to his trading, his young men, more skilled in boudoir than in bear hunt, "approached the Indian damsels who composed the train of the Queen and were whispering a tale of tenderness in their ears." After the company has been bathed and "feasted like gods," the cpatain is ready to depart but "the English youths, seduced by the allurements of the Indian girls, secreted themselves in the woods." The ebb tide had grounded their boat before the high-spirited youths return. While they laboriously shove their vessel back into the water, Smith scolds them and warns: "When we pass again this village . . . I advise you, like the crew of Ulysses, to lash yourselves to the mast" (p. 95). They embark on the river, drifting gently in the moonlit tide, amid the Edenic surroundings of a "nature charming and bounteous." But by this time, the reader knows that as Greece had only one Ulysses, Jamestown had only one Smith. In his enlarged fiction, the founders of the new nation whom Davis had tried to portray as "men of family" had come to resemble a frigate crew on shore leave.

The character of Pocahontas also undergoes a certain change from the modest, unselfish creature of the earlier versions. Made to appear more sensually beautiful in her person and more womanly passionate in her actions, she now falls in love with the captain at first sight, and after affecting his rescue spends subsequent days coquettishly attempting to allure him with her "artful wiles." But all in vain: the captain is as obdurate as ever, and even colder: "To all this . . . Smith replied with smiles, but they were smiles imposed upon his countenance, and not those of passion. The object of his heart was the colony he had founded" (p. 42).

Eventually the captain sneaks away and Rolfe is "elected military commander by unanimous consent." Rolfe, however, is busy wooing the princess, whose mercurial affections, which bothered some readers of the Travels, are now excused as "the pliable tenderness of lovely woman." While Captain Rolfe rhymes love with dove, the colony is reduced from five hundred to sixty within six months following Smith's departure and in such extremity is abandoned by all but Smith's faithful cavaliers. In the nick of time reinforcements arrive with supplies from England, the colony is reestablished, Rolfe and Pocahontas are married, Rolfe's friend Throgmorton marries Watoga, Pocahontas's sixteen-year-old sister, and Nantaquas marries another sixteen-year-old Indian, who moments before has been wailing at the funeral of her husband--wailing not for the loss of her husband, she makes clear, but for her state of widowhood. The next day the party is augmented by "several other Indian damsels who had linked themselves with affectionate kindness to their European invaders" (p. 254). One is reminded both of a Restoration comedy and a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. There remains only the final act--the trip to England and the death of Pocahontas, a necessary token obéisance to actual history, but no great chore for a pen in sentimental hands. In view of Davis's assurance to Jefferson that in the work he was attempting "history without losing its dignity, will acquire new attractions," one wonders what the President thought of the work to which his gracious endorsment was once more conspicuously attached.

Six months after the book came out, Davis's fortunes took him to Virginia. He seems to have carried a supply of The First Settlers with him. Upon his arrival in Richmond, advertisements for the book began to

appear in the newspapers and continued to appear until January 1810, the time when Davis may have left the area. Yet he was still not entirely written out of the Pocahontas materials. He returned to them again in such sentimental poems as "Jamestown, An Elegy"[28] and in "The Angel of the Wild."[29] Even in 1822 The American Mariners devotes several lines to a celebration of the "tawny maid . . . Virginia's jewel."

As early as the publication of Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, Davis had announced a projected sequel, The Massacre of the Virginia Planters, based on a 1622 incident in Virginia history during which 347 white settlers were killed in an Indian uprising led by the treacherous Opechancanough, uncle to Pocahontas and brother-successor to Powhatan. He began preparing the Virginia market soon after his arrival in Richmond by a "Communication" inserted in the Richmond Enquirer (6 June 1806). Although signed "Nantaquas" the puff leaves no doubt by content, style, and purpose that it is written by Davis:

> . . . Mr. Davis has opened a source of elegant pleasure to the young people of this country. The finished history of Burk, copious, argumentative and sparkling with illustration, is for the matured mind susceptible to the higher energies: The Tales of Mr. Davis, embracing in their nature the allurements of romance, are for the youthful generation, and serve

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[28] Richmond Enquirer, 7 January 1812, and Port Folio, August 1812. This poem was always accompanied by an inscription "To Francis Emes, of Boston." A search through Boston and Massachusetts genealogical records of the period give no clue to the identity of Francis Emes, or Ames, or Eames. The gentleman might have been the Boston contact responsible for the favorable notices which Davis's work had received in the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review and perhaps even responsible for the appearance of some of Davis's unsigned work in that periodical. Or Davis might have intended Fisher Ames, the Massachusetts politician who expressed such concern for the development of an American literature. Investigation into the history of the Eames Indian collection housed in the New York Public Library might also be fruitful.

[29] Port Folio, April 1814.

> as a by-path of flowers and fragrance to the lofty vestibule of the historian.

The passage makes explicit, among other things, his goal of writing for the youthful generation a series of tales to parallel the scholarly histories and brings to mind that Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas has been a product of the Juvenile Bookstore in Philadelphia.[30] The associative reference with Burk's History of Virginia was not to be an isolated one. A year later (3 June 1807) the Enquirer carried a review of Burk's History and an extract from volume two dealing with Bacon's rebellion. The last paragraph of the review was designed more to advertise Davis's work than Burk's:

> We have already presented our readers with the Life of Pocahontas from the first volume. The life of Openchanough is perhaps the most dramatic incident in the volume before us. The first is already woven into a small story by a Mr. Davis, who has promised to write a series of such Indian Tales. The Massacre of the Virginia Planters contained in the following tract, is to be the next in succession.

By the next spring Davis launched a campaign for subscriptions with announcements appearing as far away as in The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review. His tenth letter was dispatched to Jefferson, now at Monticello, entreating his subscription. Beautifully written with elaborate script and many flourishes supporting the signature, evidence of his happiness and prosperity at Petersburg, the letter seems not to have received a

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[30] Not one to overlook the fair sex, he had also directed the Philadelphia advertisements of Captain Smith to the female clientele. Climaxing an impassioned cataloging of the princess's noble and daring deeds, he had prophesied with hope:

> Where shall we look for sensibility more tender, beauty more captivating, or grace more attractive, than in the Lady Pocahontas? If anywhere here, it must be among the Young Ladies of Philadelphia! And there is no doubt but they will all come forward with alacrity as Patronesses to the volume that records the virtues, and develops the conscious flame of Pocahontas the lovely, the susceptible and artless! ([Philadelphia] Advertiser, 6 March 1805)

response from the President, evidence perhaps of his evaluation of the first Indian tale. On June 24, 1808, the Petersburg Intelligencer carried Davis's letter acknowledging subscriptions from the students of Washington College. Once again he coupled his work with that of Burk:

> . . . sed multas nobis imagines ad intuendum fortissimarum vitorum expressas, scriptores et Stithius et Burkius reliquerunt. Ex hox esse hunc numero, quem patres vestri viderunt, divinum hominem Smithium, qui nihil in vita nisi laudanum aut fecit, aut dixit, aut sensit!

Throughout July and early August routine announcements appeared regularly that the manuscript was ready for the press and that arrangements were being made to print it without delay. Then, in the latter part of July, Davis suddenly announced the closing of his school for an indefinite period and by early September, deeply in debt, had moved to Richmond. No more is heard about The Massacre of the Virginia Planters despite his continued presence in Richmond for several subsequent months.

The place would seem to have been ideal for the writer of a series such as the one Davis projected. In Petersburg and Richmond, he could enjoy the association of some of Virginia's first families, among whom was John Randolph. Davis had been an admirer of Randolph since 1802 when he had heard the congressman from Virginia speak in the House, "a Demosthenes, but Demosthenes who had sacrificed to the Graces" (Travels, p. 336). From that time on he had dropped the Randolph name in significant places (e.g. Philadelphia Pursuits, Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, The First Settlers, The American Mariners, etc.), and had implied a correspondence between them.[31] The ancestral home of the Randolphs was located

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[31] The Randolph papers housed at the University of Virginia do not contain any remnants of such.

near Richmond, the site of Powhatan's village, and Randolph, a descendant of the Indian princess, must have been interested in Davis's historical projects; it is most likely that Davis had taken the opportunity to share with him the transcription of a manuscript entitled "The Genealogy of Pocahontas," which he had negotiated from the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia.[32]

He was also enjoying the friendship of John Daly Burk, whose scholarly yet popularly written History of Virginia had begun to appear in 1803. Fate had often linked the experiences and interests of these two men. A native of Ireland and distant relative to Edmund Burke, Burk had emigrated to the United States in 1796, motivated like Davis by an interest in American democracy. Also like Davis, he had begun to write immediately on American themes, specifically those of the Revolution. He sent copies off to Jefferson, including "an epic poem to eternize the glory of your Revolution," which extolled the operation of the army under Montgomery and Gates, like Davis's Tribute to the United States. In February 1797, he produced in Boston his play, Bunker-Hill, Or the Death of General Warren, which he dedicated to Aaron Burr as Davis was to dedicate his volume of poems. When Davis arrived in the United States early in 1798, Burk's second play, Joan of Arc, was running in New York. In June of that year he succeeded Freneau as editor of the Time-Piece, the paper Davis patronized during his first stay in the city. Like Davis he was strongly pro-Jefferson and pro-French, and had an uncanny ability to flaunt his superiority, bray of his success, and antagonize the natives.

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[32] Davis to Jefferson, 1 April 1805. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

After getting into trouble in both Boston and New York, he was befriended by Aaron Burr and settled in Petersburg, where he had friends among the best families, promoting the activities of the amateur Thespian society and writing his multi-volume history at the same time that Davis was working on his second projected Indian tale. The men shared many common interests. Undoubtedly Davis was also drawn by Burk's fiery yet popular personality and was genuinely grieved when his friend was killed in a duel resulting from a political quarrel in April 1808. (See "Burk's Garden Grave," p. 148.) Burk's only son, eight-year-old John Junius, was a student in Davis's school at the time.

During the course of Burk's unfinished research he had in his possession "Colonel Byrd's Journal, in a manuscript volume."[33] It is not commonly known which journal is referred to here. Coincidently or not, seven months after Burk's sudden death, Davis wrote his last letter to Jefferson. The subject was a manuscript journal of Colonel Byrd's:

> A friend of mine hearing that you propose to collect documents relative to the Antiquities of North America, has requested me to inform you that he empowers me to send you Colonel Byrd's Manuscript Journal, should you wish it. The M.S. contains 260 pp. and is very fairly written in the Colonel's own autography: The object of his Expedition was to determine the boundary line between North Carolina and Virginia, and to effect this, he travelled with the Commissioners through Dismal Swamp.
>
> Should you wish this M.S. it shall be immediately sent you; the price the owner sets on it is Thirty Dollars.
>
> I am, Sir,
> Your most obedient, most humble Servant,
> John Davis[34]
>
> Baltimore
> November 28, 1808

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[33] Charles Campbell, ed., Some Materials to Serve for a Brief Memoir of John Daly Burk (Albany: J. Munsell, 1868), p. v.

[34] Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

For whom Davis was acting remains a mystery. It may have been for someone whom he had met in Richmond, perhaps even a member of the Byrd family, who had more than one copy in their possession. Just which of the several extant manuscripts he was offering also remains a mystery. Only Jefferson's response is a certainty, recorded for posterity as a rare misjudgment, a misjudgment prompted perhaps by a Virginian's prejudice against things Carolinian, but perhaps even more against the agent of the proposition. Having been exploited by Davis off and on over a period of eight years, he might well have been reluctant to enter into any further business with him:

> Th. Jefferson presents his compliments to Mr. Davis and his thanks for the offer of the Ms. of Col. Byrd's journel: but not having in contemplation to make any collection of papers on the subject supposed, he declines the proposal. Indeed he conceived that the journal must be very uninteresting, as Col. Byrd was employed only on the lower part of the line between Virginia & N. Carolina, and of course gives a description only of the Dismal swamp & a little to the Westward of that, which part of the country is to this day nearly in the same condition it was then.[35]

Jefferson did not remain indifferent to the value of such an acquisition for the proper institution. In 1817 he obtained a journal manuscript of The Secret History from an executor of the Byrd estate and deposited it with the American Philosophical Society, thus unconsciously rounding out the final and surprisingly exotic chapter of Davis's last "handling" of the stuff of early American history.

One small, faint bit of flotsam was to surface years later. Early in 1825 The European Magazine, Davis's favorite English publisher, printed two articles on American subjects. One of these was a captivity

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35 Jefferson to Davis, 3 December 1808, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

narrative, a river ambush adventure on the Mississippi "written twenty years later." The second was an article entitled 'Religious Beliefs of the American Indians," an account taken from "an interesting journal kept by one of the commissioners, who ran a boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina, about a century past." The journal alluded to is Byrd's History of the Dividing Line. It is possible that Davis was the source for both of the articles.

F. CONCLUSION

With that smug combination of uncanny insight and offensive complacency which he often displayed about his works, Davis asserts:

> Thus have I delivered to the world the story of Pocahontas; nor can I refrain from indulging the idea, that it was reserved for my pen, to tell with discriminating circumstances, the tale of this Indian girl. No Traveller before me has erected a monument to her memory, by the display of her virtues. (Travels, p. 295)

So often has the story been subject for writers since that time that in American literature it is now considered a major theme, any study of which usually begins with the tales of John Davis, recognized as the first to have uncovered it, popularized it, and sentimentalized it.[36]

This is not to say that the theme's popularity evolved from the

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[36] A detailed tracing of the theme through the years is beyond the scope of this discussion, which will for the most part be confined to Davis's handling of it. Studies of wider magnitude may be found in two unpublished Master of Arts theses, that of Velda M. Fox, "The Development of the Pocahontas Story in American Literature," State University of Iowa 1927, and of Loy Y. Bryant, "The Pocahontas Theme in American Literature," University of North Carolina 1935. See also Jay B. Hubbell, "The Smith-Pocahontas Story in Literature," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 65 (1957), 275-300; and Philip Young, "The Mother of Us All: Pocahontas Reconsidered," The Kenyon Review, 24 (1962), 391-415, rpt. in Three Bags Full: Essays in American Fiction (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972).

excellence of Davis's treatment: as Pettee says, his fiction "was poor even by the standards of the contemporary American novel."[37] But it is to say that Davis, responsive to prevailing trends and imitative of popular styles, discovered the propitious combination of theme and the times. The skeletal story, as found in Smith's account, was alive with the elements of early nineteenth century romanticism: "when a thing is wonderful rather than probable, when it violates the normal sequence of cause and effect in favor of adventure, it is romantic."[38] No one denied that quality to the Smith-Pocahontas story. In its discussion of the Travels, The Annual Review [2 (1803)] objected that Davis's attribution of his own verses to Rolfe gave "a character of fiction to the story which was in itself too romantic to be believed without a solemn affirmation of its authenticity."

In addition, the action took place in a vast wilderness, partaking of the sublime, the foreign, the confrontation with nature. It provided insights into a primitivistic society which might somehow prove happier and simpler than one's own. The Englishman exposed to the continental trends was able to sense these elements earlier than the American writer. It is not coincidental that Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, his version of the theme most altered from its predecessor, was written in England when he was absorbing the new romanticism and corresponding with such writers as William Godwin. Well aware of the value of the materials

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[37] Henri Petter, The Early American Novel (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 289.

[38] Ernest Bernbaum, "The Romantic Movement," in Romanticism: Points of View, ed. Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 88-96.

in the context of the times, he wrote in 1806, while preparing The Massacre of the Virginia Planters, that he was "invoking the shake of St. Pierre, and the genius of Chateaubriand.[39]

As early as 1734 an Englishman had suggested to the Boston News-Letter the erection of a statue of that "glorious figure," Pocahontas, thrusting her own neck upon that of Captain Smith.[40] Europeans had increasingly tended to glamorize the aborigines, but it was not until the turn of the century, with the romantic mode rather than Indian arrows penetrating all about them that Americans were able to accept the Indian as a legitimate element in the search for native materials and were willing to romanticize him. A Virginia writer, William Wirt, while still extolling Smith as "that pink of gallantry, that flower of chivalry," could also melt with pity while traversing the ground where Pocahontas had "bounded and frolicked in the sprightly morning of her youth," and think of the wrongs the whites had committed against the Indians.[41]

Such literary sympathy represented a different point of view from that in which the Indian had appeared "only a grist for the conqueror's mill, not as a sensitive being fit for tragic, epic, or lyric treatment in his own right."[42] Nothing could have been more efficacious to the turn-about than the vision of a gentle, courageous Indian girl risking

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[39] Richmond Enquirer, 6 June 1806.

[40] Quoted by Lawrence W. Towner, "Ars Poetica et Sculpture: Pocahontas on Boston Common," Journal of Southern History, 28 (1962), 482-485.

[41] Wirt, pp. 161-170, p. 189.

[42] Spencer, p. 51.

her life for the conqueror. No one around was more experienced in sentimentalizing such a subject than Davis, veteran of The Original Letters, Farmer of New-Jersey, and The Wanderings of William.

There are several changes which Davis made in the original story as it had been found in the seventeenth century accounts and the eighteenth century histories. First of all he changed the focus of the story: it is no longer a record of the precarious survival of a colony, but a love story, or rather two love stories, interspersed with adventures of derring-do. The fate of the colony ranks a low third in order of prominence. The amorous emphasis is purely Davis's invention. Smith and other writers implied a mutual admiration and even love between the captain and the princess, but a father-daughter or brother-sister relationship was always made explicit.[43] To accommodate the love story and certain early nineteenth century conventions, actions and motivations were often altered: the circumstance which necessitated Pocahontas's warning Smith of danger, Smith's reasons for embarking for England, the place and time of Rolfe's falling in love with Pocahontas, and, as mentioned earlier, the new importance accorded Smith and Rolfe in the governing of the colony.

Davis's telling succeeds better in the shorter version of the Travels where Pocahontas serves as the unifying factor and the rescue scene is delayed proportionately to the over-all length of the story so that it does not come so early. The expanded story constitutes a patch-

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[43] Edmund Randolph, descendant of Pocahontas, described the lady in his History of Virginia (1808) as "beautiful, engaging, and innocent" with a "compassionate and susceptible heart," who "look[ed], however, up to Smith as a second father, not as a companion for love." (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 62.

work of borrowed historical exposition, hunting and battle adventures, and descriptions of the natural scenery, which do not adhere securely into unity of form or of tone. Instead of the sharply focused narrative highlighting the Indian girl in two climactic moments, the story hops about from one episode to another in a loose chronicle. The episodes which Pocahontas dominates are so far apart that a reader caught up in the exploits of the cavaliers almost forgets her. The two climactic scenes are lost in the dense shrubbery of small climaxes; while the extra padding in the middle which separates them again emphasizes the flaw inherent in the plot--the rescue scene comes too early. Davis weakens the plot even further by not dramatizing the rescue scene to its full potential, choosing instead to wander libidinously down the primrose path, surrounding Powhatan with a harem of concubines whom every other writer identifies as his daughters. Brief moments of excitement occur in isolated incidents, but the raison d'être, the founding of the colony having been bypassed there remains no single encompassing issue strong enough to hold the story together and to sustain a continuing tension. Davis had written of his book: "He who hopes to enchain attention by his works, must depict his scenes with the energy of immediate observation, and not thru the medium of another author's mind" (Richmond Enquirer, 6 June 1806). So caught up in the Aristotelian "energy of immediate observation" that he had missed the forest for the trees, he had failed to see the possibilities of the vast drama being played out before him and had failed to show the sometimes delicate and sometimes powerful tensions between idyll and reality, between the confrontation of the two cultures, the tension of the fate of a whole continent.

In 1800, a love story called for the sentimentalizing of the protagonists; the captain, Pocahontas, and Rolfe glowed more lushly with each retelling. The captain had already created for himself such a heroic image of the knight-errant and lover of high-born ladies that little needed to be done for him except to improve his physical attributes, thus heightening the attraction he is supposed to have had for all women:

> The person of Smith was tall, graceful and manly. His visage was striking. He had an eye to command, to threaten, or sooth. His aspect bespoke a man ready to face his man, yet capable of moderation; a character comprehending both firmness and refinement; blending taste with energy, and while ready to hit, yet able to forbear. It was a countenance that indicated a mind not easy to be deceived, and ever disposed more to suspicion than credulity. His vigorous, active figure qualified him eminently for the exercises of the field. It resembled more the graceful manliness of the Belvidere Apollo than the robust structure of the Farness Hercules. (p. 37)

In the Travels, the princess's physical properties--small waist, admirable proportions, exquisite instep, and delicate limbs--had been modestly generalized and subordinated to the spiritualization of her character; in The First Settlers her physical and emotional attributes are explicitly defined as became a lady of sensibility:

> This tender girl was the daughter of the Indian monarch. She was of a delicate form, but admirably proportioned. Her fine dark eyes beamed forth that moral sense, which imparts a magic to every look, and constitutes expression. There was a dash of melancholy in her countenance more interesting than smiles. It denoted a vacancy of heart; the want of some object on which to fix her affections. There was a delicious redness in her cherub lips, a red, a little riper than that which burnt on her cheek. . . . Her long black hair emulated in colour the glossy plumage of the eagle, and reflected the like luster at different exposures to the light. It flowed in luxuriant tresses down her comely back and neck, half concealing the polish and symmetry, the rise and fall, of the bosom just beginning to fill. (p. 38)

Professor Davis has pointed out how remarkable suggestive these por-

trayals are of the qualities later accepted as typical of the Virginia gentleman and the plantation belle, an achievement which places John Davis as a progenitor of the Virginia novel sub-genre.[44] Smith also bears a similarity to Captain Delancey of The American Mariners and the princess to Atala and Oosnooqua, some of the descriptive phrases above being verbatim duplicates of those used for the other characters.

Actually, Pocahontas becomes a dual-personality, a heroine filling two roles. In her relationship with Smith she is the passionate lady of romantic ardor--strong, capable, beautiful, resolute, and sexually aggressive, the Pocahontas whom Smith monastically rejected. That she is brunette is most significant for this role. In the latter part of the book she plays a new role, one usually reserved for a blonde--innocent, graceful, delicate, religious, the socially accomplished and happily married matron and mother, tragic and premature victim of a polluted atmosphere. As both the "romantic lady" and the "ideal woman" she mirrors the stereotypes for two patterns of popular nineteenth century heroines.[45]

As little of the sober planter remains in Rolfe as of the Indian in Pocahontas. He is transformed into an almost Byronic hero whose manliness is so undone by unfulfilled desire that he "walked about with his stockings ungartered" and was not above drinking from the lips of a swooning lady "the poison of delight." In keeping with such impetuous passions, Davis created for Rolfe a past consisting of an affair of

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[44] Richard Beale Davis, pp. 278-293.

[45] Ralph P. Boas, "The Romantic Lady," in Romanticism in America, ed. George Boas (1940; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), pp. 63-88.

honor with a superior officer and invented an aristocratic reason for the trip back to England, the settling of family estates.

A discussion of what Davis did with the story must differentiate between what he intended and what he accomplished, the latter often failing to meet the expectation of the former, flawed by Davis's old bugaboos, erring taste and lack of a clearly defined purpose. For instance, to make Pocahontas into a proper sentimental heroine he invented her unrequited passion for Smith, which yet left her pure and untouched for her tumultuous capitulation to Rolfe; and he left out as not suitable the calculated statement from pragmatic history that Smith could have done with her what he would and the picture given by the unsentimental Strachey of the "wanton, young girle" of eleven or twelve "cartwheeling naked all the fort over."[46] But he violates the supposed sensitivity of his heroine by having this favorite send her doting father a cruel message urging his relinquishment of the young Watoga to the white settlement: "Tell him it will be highly pleasing to me to have my sister near me. Inform him I have such an admiration of civilized life, that I wouldn't return and live again with him on any account" (p. 236). Not surprisingly, in London she absorbed the snobbery of court fashion so well that she "soon learned to receive her visitants with appropriate variations of deference."

Davis also intended a sentimentalizing of the setting, "the romantic scenes, the deep retirement of the still virgin soil" for which Rolfe

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[46] Yet his aphrodisiac tastes could not resist adding a couple of scenes which Young has called "mildly pornographic" (Young, p. 187). Twice he used Smith's incident of the Indian girls' titillating, teasing "Love you not me?", and in Pocahontas's initial meeting with Rolfe he presented her as "unrobed."

and Pocahontas yearn. Americans had bemoaned the lack of romantic association in their landscape, and Irving was to admonish them that the task was theirs to establish, that American rivers and hills could be made as significant to national pride as "history and moral fiction" had made those of Europe; "our majestic rivers roll their waters unheeded, because unsung," he declared. The forest, the birds, the trees of Virginia, Davis had already sung many times before; now he brought them all out again--Occoquan having been renamed Jamestown--sprinkling appreciative essays throughout the action. But the coupling of association does not come off as successfully as he proposed. Often when he desires to cast over his story an alluring, romantic atmosphere, the romantic language is abandoned to an objective kind of reporting which stresses details appropriate to a text but ludicrous to romance. The neoclassical mind could not consistently abandon itself to the sentimental heart.

In another area this same neoclassical mind prevented him from doing what he might have intended, or certainly what the reader might have expected. He did not create a race of noble savages. His Indians are much like those of Smith and the other early chroniclers--a realistic assortment of good and bad. When he likens them to the fabled orators of antiquity, lovers of freedom and warfare, virtually heroes out of Homer, he is following comparisons common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which acknowledged that Indian life had an integrity of its own and that in civilization they would sacrifice both good and evil found in their savage life.

By Smith's testimony Pocahontas was designated "the only Nonpareil of her country," but only because of her difference from the other

Indians in beauty and compassion. Smith wrote that the "proud and discreet" Powhatan possessed "such a grave and majesticall countenance as drove me into admiration to see such a state in a naked savage." He was host who "with all the kindness he could devise, sought to content" his prisoner. And Smith had received "exceeding great courtesie" from Nantaquas. Yet he also wrote of "quarrels, treacheries, and encounters amongst those savages" whose "insolence and villany" is sometimes activated by similar treatment at the hands of whites. Davis's conception of the red men does not mark him as a romantic primitivist. The realism of the New World was not necessarily a literary manifestation of Old World romanticism.

Yet certain romantic aspects of their lives fascinated him: the simplicity of their existence, their closeness to nature which implied a rejection of urban civilization, the Wertheristic characteristics which granted a freedom of restraint and allowed a capricious individualism. All of these romanticisms Davis employed in his writings, although nature and solitude were always more attractive to him as transient ideas than as prolonged realities.

He was also attracted to the Indian for reasons anti-romantic. He appreciated as a journalist the opportunity they presented for realistic narrative and as a neoclassicist the challenge they presented to civilized order. Such ambivalence precluded the "noble savage," particularly when the Indian was often portrayed as stupid, childlike, or lasciviously immoral. Thus that fierce and heroically tragic figure, Opechacanough, is seen holding up a compass "with the same smile of fondness that a child bestows on his rattle." Powhatan, whom history records as defiant-

ly refusing to allow Watoga to defect to the whites, is seen as rejecting many valuable gifts but finally bartering his daughter away for a lock and key which "was put on the door of his wigwam, and he would lock and unlock it a hundred times a day." Nantaquas, a lively young buck, seems at first the intended male counterpart to Pocahontas as child of nature, especially since he shares his sister's compassionate heart so completely that, like her, he is given to falling on Smith's neck "with mingled rapture and admiration." But in the end he has degenerated into a sort of Uncle Tom, forever wearing "an English shirt, notwithstanding it was become very foul and black" and "on his head . . . the old left-off gold laced hat which Captain Smith had presented him." The English soldiers had taught him to cock it over one eye.

The conclusion is forced that what is noble in Davis's Indians was already there when he found them; what he added was not noble. This lack of consistency in his characters was caused in part by his own inadequacies in taste and artistic purpose, and also by the ambivalence of the literary standards of his times. In the vanguard of the early American romanticism, the Indian was still shadowed disapprovingly by neoclassical propriety. Davis, like the rest of the Jeffersonian generation, saw him as a noble savage in paradise, but felt both the savage and his paradise could be improved by civilization[47]--an unrealistic vision and a fatal one artistically. The conforming, obliging Lady Rebecca, properly Christianized and civilized, peering through the drapes at Brentwood to see what kind of vehicle had conveyed her guests,

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[47] Bernard W. Sheehan, "Paradise and the Noble Savage in Jeffersonian Thought," William and Mary Quarterly, 26 (1969), 327-359.

is far removed from the romantic Indian by his romantic stream of which Chateaubriand made so much.

Flawed as his conceptions may have been, either as noble savages or as truly heroic figures, Davis's sentimentalized Indians and flowery love story struck a chord swelled into symphonic proportions by poets, dramatists, artists, and other novelists. In 1935 Bryant had found seven novels, twenty-nine plays, and thirty-five poems treating the theme, omitting juvenile pieces and works by English authors.[48] A number of others have come to light since that time.

The persistent popularity of the theme may owe something to its correspondence with a myth found in the folk literature of many peoples "not just roughly speaking . . . but precisely in all essential parts":

> The tale of an adventurer, that is, who becomes the captive of the king of another country and another faith, and is rescued by his beautiful daughter, a princess who then gives up her land and her religion for his, is a story known to the popular literatures of many peoples for many centuries. . . . This figure is a woman who characteristically offers herself to a captive Christian knight, the prisoner of her father, rescues him, is converted to Christianity, and goes to his native land--These events usually being followed by combat between his compatriots and hers.[49]

A bewildering element of the story from the beginning has been that the heroine never marries the hero. In its application to the American experience, the tale took on a nationalistic significance:

> Like Aeneas, Smith is regarded as the founder of a new nation and the embodiment of Virginian qualities, the ideal Cavalier. Pocahontas's role is that of protecting deity to the infant colony. Her supposed tragic love story adds romantic charm.[50]

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[48] Bryant, p. 141.

[49] Young, pp. 195-196.

[50] Jay B. Hubbell, Virginia Life in Fiction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 41.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the theme was developed by dramatists. In 1808 Thomas Nelson Barker's melodrama The Indian Princess, or la Belle Sauvage had been performed in Philadelphia, the first Indian play by an American to be performed and the first well-authenticated instance of an original American play being produced in London.[51] Barker claimed to have found his materials in Smith's General History, but he had subscribed to Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas and incorporated into his play details which were original with Davis. In 1830 George Washington Parke Custis produced his Pocahontas, or the Settlers of Virginia, reminiscent in title at least of Davis's novel. Other plays were less obviously influenced by Davis's work, yet for the first half of the century treatment of the theme followed his lead and intensified it, growing more primitivistic in tone and imaginative in the introduction of new characters and events. By 1855, the sentimental cult having done all it could to embellish and sugar, debunkers moved in against Smith himself and the legend become grist for comedy. John Brougham's Pocahontas, an outrageous and well-received burlesque, laid the story to rest for a time. More recent treatments have ranged from the romantic to the realistic, with twentieth century artists adding a new dimension by "pointing to some pregnant quality of the story which goes beyond its facts. . . . The result was the elevation of Pocahontas to myth,"[52] through the works of such writers as Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane:

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[51] Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama (New York: Harper, 1923), pp. 138-140.

[52] Young, p. 193.

> Thus we have a sort of American Ceres, or Demeter, or Gaea, developed from Pocahontas--a fertility goddess, the mother of us all. We, by our descent from her, become a new race, innocent of both European and all human origins--a race from the earth, as in ancient mythologies of other lands, but an earth that is made of her. We take on a brave, free, mythical past as our alternative to the more prosaic, sordid explanation of history.[53]

It was thus quite a tale which Davis had delivered to the world. He may not have done it well, but he did it first. To blame him for glaring weaknesses by today's standards is easy, forgetting that he was writing in a period which was only beginning to develop theories of fiction and which had not yet encountered the question of technique in the historical novel. More profitable is a recognition of what he did attempt and accomplish in a positive way.

Years before Scott had shown that the romance could be a vehicle for nationalism, Davis had touched on materials deeply nationalistic to the American people: in Walter Kennedy, the experience of the emigrant from the old world, leaving behind class distinctions, disappointments, and frustration to find a new challenge in the wilderness, a life of simple virtues and pleasures; and in the Smith-Pocahontas material, the confrontation with the red man. If the three chief matters of American romance in our earliest fictional attempts were the Revolution, the settlement, and the frontier,[54] Davis achieved the remarkable feat during his brief years here of writing on two of them--exploratory ventures in the Mississippi valley frontier and a dramatic, crucial incident relative to our first settlement. And his governing impulse flowed in

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[53] Young, p. 195.

[54] Carl Van Doren, The American Novel, 1789-1939, rev. ed. (1921; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 15-20.

the heroic vein.

At a time when Americans were inclined either to ignore our history or to treat it in a dull and pompous manner, he was motivated to project a whole series of historical tales poetically and emotionally conceived, popularizing the events in a vivid way. At a time when the concept of regionalism was just beginning to be enlarged from the foibles of personalities to the distinctive association with landscape in "a feeling for the place," he was trying, albeit clumsily, to incorporate the phenomena of natural history, its novelty, beauty, and delight, into his stories. If he did not do for the James what Irving was to do for the Hudson, the effort was attempted, and he hit on elements which would in time be distinctive for the Virginia regional novel. At a time when Americans were catching the vogue of antiquarianism and lamenting their impoverished past, he showed that such a new nation could point to a few spots hallowed for romantic history and association. If not rich in crumbling castles, at least America possessed a few piles of brick and stone signifying the ruins of one race and the heroic achievements of another.

At a time when many remained convinced that the fruits of the imagination could not flourish on American soil, he saw the possibilities in the most native American material of them all--the Indian. In 1818 John Bristed had written in The Resources of the United States:

> Of native novels we have no great stock, and none good; . . . nor is there much scope for fiction, as the country is quite new, and all that has happened from the first settlement to the present hour, respecting it, is known to every one. There is, to be sure, some traditionary romance about the Indians; but a novel describing these miserable

> barbarians, their squaws, and papooses, would not be very interesting to the present race of American readers.[55]

Full thirteen years before Bristed, Davis had written the Indian tales, destined to reprints in 1806, 1817, 1836, 1837. Almost twenty years before Cooper had glorified the American wilderness and peopled it with many types of Indians, Davis had caught reasonably well, the stalwart, stoic, eloquent Indian of the sentimental school, the romanticized Indian hidden in the forest, and the melodramatic Indian of the nineteenth century dime novel.[56] He had presented some of them with a degree of realism.

The closing of The First Settlers of Virginia, as Ossianic-like lamentation, expresses a depth of feeling not anticipated from the melange of style and material preceding it. A reverie of paradise lost is not an appropriate ending for a book extolling the settlers. But it suggests that his involvement with the story had deepened since he had first written it in the Travels, concluding with that egotistical boast that it had been reserved for his pen alone. Sentimental as the paragraph is, it demonstrates that Davis was very close to the mainstream of American literature in sensing the quality of mutability in the story he had been telling, a feeling to be shared by Irving and Cooper, following soon after:

> But alas! how changed is now the scene on the parent river of the Indian princess! No longer does the moon shed her silver light over the wigwams of the Indians sunk in profound repose. No more is the cry of arrival uttered by the

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[55] Quoted in Van Doren, pp. 14-15.

[56] For a discussion of the different literary treatments of the Indian in different periods, see Fred Lewis Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, 1770-1870 (1935; rpt. New York: Cooper Square, 1966), pp. 346-360.

young red warrior approaching the hamlet. No longer are the ebon tresses of the Indian nymph fanned by the evening gale, as she reclines her head upon the bosom, and listens to the vows of her roving lover. The race of Indians has been destroyed by the inroads of the whites! Surveyors with long chains have measured the wilderness, and lawyers contended for the right of possession. Beneath these forests once the favoured seat of freedom, the swarthy slave groans under the scourges of an imperious task-master; and the echoes multiply the strokes of the cleaving axe as he fells the proud tree of the melancholy waste. All alas! is changed. The cry of the hawk is heard where the mock-bird poured his melody; and no vestige is left behind of a powerful nation, who once unconscious of the existence of another people, dreamt not of invasions from foreign enemies, or inroads from colonists, but believed their strength invincible, their race eternal! (pp. 272-273)

CHAPTER VI

THE SEA NOVELS

A. THE POST-CAPTAIN

> I had read, or rather lisped, four books that determined my future life; namely, Robert Drury, the unfortunate Englishman, Pierre Vaud, and Captain Richard Falconer. Nothing now would satisfy me but going to sea, and a ship was the idol of my mind. (First Settlers, p. [275])[1]

In 1805 at the age of thirty-one, Davis realized only a little of how his future life was to be determined by his youthful reading and subsequent decision. He had not yet published the two sea novels nor the full-length sea epic, nor could he possibly foresee that thirty-eight years hence the poverty of his final eleven years would be relieved by an appointment to the Charterhouse, granted on his naval service and the fame of a maritime novel not yet printed.

For the better part of the years between 1788 and 1797, he served in either the East India Company or the Royal Navy, later utilizing the experiences over and over again in his writings. The first full-length book which he wrote was an account of his East India sailings. His second novel, though entitled Farmer of New-Jersey, was dominated by the personality of William, the gallant, skilled, but undisciplined young captain who became hero-villain of a sequel, The Wanderings of William.

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[1] Robert Drury (1687-ca.1725), English traveler to the East Indies and author of Travels (1729). Later a slave trader in Virginia. Wm. Rufus Chetwood, The Voyages, Dangerous Adventures and Imminent Escapes of Captain Richard Falconer (1720), an imitation voyage narrative of a boy sent to sea by impoverished father, shipwrecked, captured by Indians, he marries an Indian, escapes being burned at the stake by natives, and portrays native women as licentious.

Such relatively land-locked books as Walter Kennedy and The First Settlers contain maritime passages more extensive than the unity and theme of the books would require. The many sea poems and the epic American Mariners add to the bulk of the maritime writings. The Travels is enclosed by two lengthy sea chapters, the voyage to America, written in the tradition of most travel accounts, and the voyage back to England.

The latter has been considered an ill-chosen appendage so out of keeping with the tone and temper of the preceding portions of the book that Morrison and Cheney, editors of the 1909 and 1910 reprints, left it out. Crudely conceived and written with little cohesion or significance, it appears as a sort of journal exercise, recording isolated snatches of random conversations among the crew and disjointed incidents of the voyage. It is interesting in a study of Davis's development as a writer because so much of the material is destined to turn up again in later works. Vaguely sketched here are the experience of catching a shark, the visit of Neptune, an impressment scene, a description of the approach to the English shore, and the passenger's farewell to the ship and crew--all of which were woven into The American Mariners with more realistic detail and more thematic unity. Here are also found allusions, incidents, and discussions developed at greater length in The Post Captain. Particularly evident is the lavish exhibition of nautical lingo and the noticeable attempt to present characters possessing the attributes traditionally accepted as inherent in a seaman's personality.

He was drawing both from his own ship-board experiences and from an extensive knowledge of earlier naval plays and ballads. The names on the muster roll of the Olive's crew are rich in allusions to fictional

seagoing characters, and Neptune's message to "the author of this volume" proclaims a wrathful warning against "certain authors" who "have produced a bastard race" and "drawn such monsters as a ship never saw, and presumptuously called them sailors" (Travels, pp. 421, 422). Specifically cited are Cumberland, Pratt, Godwin, and Holcroft. The last two, according to The First Settlers, became his "intimate" friends in London during 1803-1804. Not only attempting an improvement over the works of previous maritime authors, Davis was consciously breaking new ground in his own style by abandoning both the sentimental mode of Richardson and Sterne, followed in his first three novels, and the classical pose approved by George and required in his role as a scholarly tutor in the United States:

> . . . there came on a heavy gale of wind, which put the wild waters in a roar. An Oxford scholar would in this place cite either Homer or Virgil; for my part I am sick of such common-place heathenish stuff; my attention retires fatigued from [Greek quotation], and [Latin quotation];--I will not send my reader again to school, but transport him on board of the good ship Olive. (Travels, p. 406)

Southey found the chapter commendable:

> . . . dramatically related, and in as seaman-like a manner as ever delighted a sailor in the prose of Smollett, or the verse of Falconer. We believe there is not a lubberly phrase to be found in it. In some parts perhaps it is exclusively calculated for a seaman's taste.[2]

Thus encouraged in a project already incubating in his mind, Davis lost no time in having ready for the press by the summer of 1804 a full-length novel in the same style. As late as April of 1805, having returned to America, he intended The Wooden Walls Well-Manned, or Picture of an English Frigate for its title and a dedication to Sir

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2 Annual Review and History of Literature, 2 (1803), 59.

Edmund Nagle, his former commander;[3] however, when the book was finally issued in England, probably late in 1805,[4] the title had been changed to The Post-Captain, . . . , and the inscription to Nagle was missing.

The Post Captain opens with a scene on board His Majesty's frigate Desdemona cruising in the British channel. The date is 1800. Captain Brilliant has just awakened and is soon occupied with instructions for his first lieutenant, Mr. Hurricane, and Midshipman Echo. The officers' conversation is interrupted when Desdemona takes prize an English West-India-man captured by the French a few hours before. As a consequence she receives as passengers an old gentleman and his beautiful young wife. Though Brilliant is love-lorn for Cassandra back in Wales, he can still act the part of the amorous rake with the willing Flora, whose French-Creole ancestry is offered as explanation of her compliance.

As soon as the ship arrives in Spithead, Brilliant is off to Wales to visit his friend Sir Hugh Morgan, who lives conveniently near Cassandra. Sneaking away from the Morgans, he finds his beloved sitting at a garden window "in maiden meditation, fancy free." Their embraces are interrupted by the approach of Sir Hugh seeking his guest; the captain beats an undignified retreat over "hedges, and ditches, and gates, and fences." Subsequent meetings reveal that Cassandra is being

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[3] Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas, p. 156.

[4] R. H. Case, ed., "Introduction," The Post-Captain, or The Wooden Walls Well Manned, Comprehending a View of Naval Society and Manners, by John Davis, (London: The Scholartis Press, 1928), p. 37. Mr. Case cites its appearance in the British Critic for December 1805 and a review in the April [1806] number of the General Review of British and Foreign Literature.

[5] John Davis, The Post-Captain, 3rd. ed. (1808; rpt. London: The Scholartis Press, 1928), p. 39. Subsequent references to the work are taken from this edition until otherwise noted.

courted by a wealthy, foppish youth in the military, Lord Fiddlefaddle, who "wore chicken-skin gloves; encased his body with stays, and when he washed his hands had recourse always to rose-water."[5] Cassandra and Brilliant decide to elope, the captain penning an explanatory note for Cassandra's uncle and guardian, Admiral Roughknot:

> Sir:
> Your niece being a lass who loves a sailor, declines the marriage settlement of my lord Fiddle-fumble [sic], to be spliced to a man who has no other house but his ship; which will sufficiently explain the motive of her shoving her boat off.
> (The Post-Captain, p. 48)

When the newly married couple arrive back at the ship, they find that Hurricane has married Flora upon the accommodating death of her old husband. Flora turns out to be a shrewish wife, given to jealousy, suspicion, and temper. When the Desdemona outbound to Virginia meets an England-bound sister-ship whose captain [Tempest] mischievously taunts Hurricane about his wives in other ports, Flora impulsively decides to leave her husband and go back to England; but a brief time spent on board the ship of the predatory Captain Tempest convinces her that she should return to her husband. While in Virginia, the company listens to Mr. Keith's narration of his Indian captivity. Discovering a large French frigate setting out from Hampton Roads, the smaller Desdemona engages her at unfavorable odds. The bloddy battle results in the loss of the Desdemona and the deaths of several crew members, but the capture of le Fripon. Midshipman Echo, "who had conspicuously distinguished himself on the deck of glory," is now made lieutenant. The accompanying comments recall Davis's own battle promotion and hopes for a naval advancement, shattered when his shipboard lieutenancy was not confirmed by the admiralty:

> Lieutenant Echo (I love to call him by his new title) was walking the deck, in company with Mr. Gale, one of his late messmates. Lieutenant Echo had derived some consequence from the accession of his lappels; and though not confirmed, he looked upon himself as a lieutenant, which was just the same thing. But his former companions would not acknowledge his title in private. They called him Acting Dickey; in fact, they asserted he was only half a luff-tackle. (p. 124)

After cruising three months off the capes of Virginia, the Fripon heads for home, Brilliant's brows "entwined both with heroic and domestic laurels." Like the fruitful bride in Roderick Random, Cassandra "was every day getting bigger . . . ; nor was Mrs. Hurricane without an accession to her size." The Fripon takes three more prizes and the heroes arrive in England knowing that their fortunes are made. Peace is proclaimed five days later, bringing the shipboard adventures to an end with little more than half the book completed.

The remaining pages take on the character of a rather primitive novel of manners as the naval heroes confront civilian and military society. While in London, the group is entertained by Mr. Million, the banker. The heart of Sophonisba Spa, a wealthy and beautiful heiress being wooed by the banker's son Caesar, a militiaman, is captured by Lieutenant Echo, and Captain Tempest wins the equally wealthy Amelia Million away from another ridiculously inept militiaman, demonstrating through all the maneuvers that sailors are far superior in every way. Both couples elope to Gretna Green, a place notorious for hasty, irregular marriages. Echo's motives appear to be honorable, Tempest's more suspect since his interest in Miss Million lies more in her money than in her person. The ceremonies are performed by the blacksmith-parson, a postillion and an ostler serving as fathers of the brides. Davis concludes the chapter with a quotation from "the chaste Milton."

Cassandra now anxious to see her uncle once again, the Brilliants set out for Wales accompanied by the Hurricanes and the Echos. Captain Tempest chooses to remain in London, where he is best able to supervise the thirty thousand pounds acquired through his marriage, "to sport his figure and possessions, to bully his wife's family, and to "polish into elegance her city awkwardness."

Journeying to Bristol, the party passes through Salisbury, where they observe the gluttonous indulgence of the rich and powerful contrasted with the starvation and neglect of the poor and unfortunate, another of Davis's insults to his home city. When they arrive in Wales, Admiral Roughknot is overjoyed at learning that Cassandra and Brilliant have decided to make his house their permanent home. Cassandra is soon delivered of a son, and an extravagant masquerade is given to celebrate the general felicity. The final chapters of the book follow the journey of Echo, Hurricane, and their wives to Swansea,[6] where they plan to retire in "rural privacy . . . , the retrospect of their former days bringing with it a self-approving conscience."

As might be inferred from the above, the loose, episodic plot leaves something to be desired. As each couple falls passionately and instantaneously in love, as one after another ridiculous military man loses the battle of romance, and as each amorous eloping pair "jigs it away for the temple of hymen," the plot must be acknowledged to suffer from lack of invention. It is also fragmented, towards the end of the book disappearing, as Davis's plots had a tendency to do, into a recita-

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[6] Case has traced the detailed "peregrinations of the lovers" in South Wales and concluded that Davis seems to have had real knowledge of the area.

tion of meals taken and inns visited during the course of a trip. Incredibly dull and irrelevant details of the masquerade extend page after page with no more significance and considerably less interest than a similar account found in a society column. Moreover, Brilliant and Cassandra, presumably the leading figures, are forgotten entirely while the narrator treks after their friends to settle them comfortably at Swansea.

A question might also be raised as to whether the book is really a sea novel. It commences in the vein of what Watson has classified "the Tempest school," showing scenes at sea where the atmosphere is created and sustained through a series of nautical activities accompanied by technical commands.[7] The early chapters contain a good deal of authentic and precise navigational technicalities, and conversation at the morning mess sheds light upon quarter-deck relationships and pokes fun at the foibles of such landsmen as the doctor, the purser, and the lieutenant of marines. The battle scene is also rich in realistic, nautical detail. But the sea scenes are a small proportion of the total, and the land scenes are naval only as they contain naval characters speaking in a naval sea-slang. Certainly it is not "naval" in the sense that Smollett's stories were as they satirized abominable conditions on board ships; nor is it naval in the sense that many of the plays and ballads of the time were in their ecstatic patriotism for the "wooden walls" and the "hearts of oak" that manned them. Only a few, very moderate allusions suggest "the defense of their king and country," a surprising

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[7] Harold Francis Watson, The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama, 1550-1800 (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 185.

ommission for an author so recently exhilarated by victory in battle, writing in what was still the golden age of the British navy, in probably the very year of the massive confrontation between the ineffective French fleet and the magnificently efficient English fleet under Nelson. Nor is the book naval in the sense of giving an insight into the life of the lower ratings. The featured characters are all young officers whose activities afloat are generally confined to the captain's cabin.

Yet the characters and their speech are what give the book its strongest claim to a place in the naval genre. The four male characters exemplify all the virtues and vices accepted as common to fictional seamen since Shakespeare's, crystallized through the years of the Restoration drama, and pretty well stereotyped by the time of the plays and ballads of the late eighteenth century--superstitious, given to drinking and whoring, blunt, rough, yet loyal, hard-working, professionally competent, and high-spirited. Their zest for life and indifference to the proprieties of land society are emphasized by Brilliant's uninhibited manners: "This was too much for the risible muscles of Captain Brilliant: he laughed, he stamped, he roared." His favorite saying reveals the sophisticated skepticism of the sailor: "You may tell the marines that, but the sailors will not believe it." A certain recklessness, developed out of a life of hardship and difficulty overcome, characterizes their activities; more than mortal, they lead an almost enchanted existence, making their way comfortably from one adventure to another.

Although indistinguishable when on board ship, some differentiation can be detected in their personalities on land. Brilliant is a little more dignified; Hurricane in his precipitous marriage, a little less astute; the young Echo, less worldly-wise in social situations, more

idealistic in battle; Tempest, in a deviation rare from the stereotype of the plain dealer, is hypocritical and conniving.

The women characters also share a certain sameness. Though more moral than William's bawdy trolls, they are all somewhat romps sharing with their gusty mates a certain recklessness in the tradition of the females found in Smollett and Fielding. Despite their wealth and beauty and propensity for bosoms which heave in various kinds of sighs (such an obligatory condition of Davis's heroines that Young accuses him of a "mammary fixation"), they never quite make it as ladies. Yet Davis has attempted to individualize them. Cassandra is mild and trusting, a foil to the tempestuous Flora of the early pages. Unfortunately, Flora's distinction is soon forgotten by the author or tamed by her husband, for it disappears and in the end only her chameleon-like aptitude for attuning to her immediate surroundings is suggestively retained by her having picked up the captain's favorite adage that "you can tell that to the Marines; but the sailors will never believe it." Sophonisba Spa is memorable by the familiarity of her physical description, identical to that afforded Oosnooqua and Pocahontas:

> . . . her lips full and ripe; her neck boded every symmetry, and her waist was gracefully slender. There was a dash of melancholy in her countenance, which became it more than smiles. It denoted a vacancy of heart, the want of some object, some transported lover, on whom to fix her affections. (The Post-Captain, p. 135)

Also like her Indian counterparts, "her penetration was intuition." The apprehensive Million sisters and their parents are distinguished by nervous attributes, dramatized either by speech, mannerisms, or physical complaints, presumably the result of the constrictive over-refinements of urban society, and by their bad grammar, the point being that wealth

does not assure culture, a point particularly close to Davis's heart and one which he made several times in the Travels, using families of certain Virginia and South Carolina plantation owners as proof of his argument.

All of the characters exude an exaggerated quality, leading to a suspicion of caricature and the question of Davis's purpose in the book. There can be little question but that he intended to convey the idea that the life of a naval officer is hard but good, that the challenge of sea and ship makes for the enterprise and endurance of men. Like an antidote to the previous Wertherian melancholia of his earlier novels, The Post-Captain states that life is worth living and meant to be enjoyed. Beyond that, the purpose of the book is blurred. At times the reader finds a seriously intended, realistic novel of life on board ship; at other times he finds a romance where life is so effortlessly and consistently mastered that the book seems a fantasy, as if Davis had penned the most exotic dreams of what his adolescence wished his own naval career and subsequent return to civilian life might have been. Some sections present comic satire aimed at multiple targets such as high society in the style of Peregrine Pickle or the aristocratic romances:

> As our heroes passed along the Strand, they were accosted by a hundred gay ladies, who asked them if they were good-natured.
>
> "Devil take me!" exclaimed Echo, "if I know which way my ship heads: but there is not a girl in the Strand that I would touch with my gloves on."
>
> "That will do for the marines," said captain Brilliant.
>
> "Last night, sir, at this hour, I would have steered into the midst of the grand fleet. I would in a very short time have brought some ship to action; but now I luff up, I bear away to keep clear of them."
>
> "You are in love, Echo. Hoa! the Sophonisba ahoy!"
>
> "I will send to-morrow for a tailor: I will bend a new suit of sails."
>
> "In love, by all that's true!"

"I will fumigate my pocket-handkerchief with lavender and bergamyhot."
"In love, or I am not here!"
"I will improve myself in flute-playing."
"In love, to a certainty!"
"I will have my hanger new-mounted."
"In love, there's no doubt!"
"I will have my teeth cleaned by a dentist."
"In love, as sure as the devil's in London!"
At Piccadilly these heroes took a coach and proceeded to Chelsea; captain Brilliant sleeping the whole way, and Echo singing, as he looked towards the moon,

"I saw her faint, or else 'twas fancy!" (pp. 150-151)

By far the dominant mode, however, suggested by both situation and language, is that of the farce-comedy: for example, the intention of the crudely vulgar and boorish Tempest to cultivate the mind of his wife, "to spread before her a rich intellectual banquet," or the wedding scene at Gretna Green. The farce occasionally spills over into pure slapstick, like the physical confrontations between the navy men and the militiamen, and Brilliant's hasty and undignified escape from Cassandra's garden.[8] Linguistically, the farcical atmosphere is maintained by the all-pervasive sea jargon, relieved only by the equally outrageous idioms of the militiamen. Frequent jokes about pregnant wives and numerous instances of double-entendre lend additional support.

Nautical lingo was not new to English audiences, but Davis out-Smolletts Smollett in a deliberate unintelligibility. Going beyond a mere attempt at vrai semblance, he plays a saucy game of "let the landsman guess." It is difficult to take seriously either the lady or the

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[8] Just as the first novels had evidenced the melodramatic melancholia of the sensibility school, his writings at this time revert to the cheerfull optimism of the earlier eighteenth century, e.g. Walter Kennedy. Farce-comedy is present not only in The Post-Captain but also in the last chapter of the Travels and in the latter part of The First Settlers--all written within a few months of each other.

hero who sighs over a picture of his enamoured thus:

> Can any face be more angelic? Such top-lights! Or can any form be more ravishing? Such a pair of cat-heads! And, oh! what hair! By ____, one might take a sheep-shank in it! (p. 2)

Davis's failure to achieve an aesthetically cohesive work of art, his common weakness, resulted in a book more like the primitive novels of an earlier age than what one might have expected in 1805. He had written hastily again drawing out of his eclectic reading experience elements from such diverse sources as accounts of actual sea voyages, the Greek romance tradition,[9] the humors school, the literature of roguery with its strong stress on sailor characterization, and the many naval plays of the late eighteenth century, his knowledge of which is evident by Neptune's message in the Travels.

The influence of the drama, until 1800 the genre most interested in naval materials, is everywhere evident--in the farcical elements, in the characterization, and in the dominance of action and dialogue at the expense of description and reflection. The periodic intrusion of the narrator adds to the impression that the characters are players upon a stage, puppets who move and speak only when he pulls the strings.

Like many of Davis's other works, the book not only draws on traditions from the past but looks ahead with hints of fashions to come. The sailor characters, unlike those of the earlier tradition, are neither hopelessly inept when out of water and thus objects of satire; nor are

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[9] Proposing that much of the material found in later nautical works derived from the Greek romances of the fourth century, A.D., Watson cites a number of specific incidents in The Post-Captain which are common to the Greek works: namely, the falling in love at first sight, Brilliant's acting the role of amorous captain, Flora's temporary kidnapping aboard ship, and the double elopement to Gretna Green involving a change of identity and a remarkable reunion. (Watson, p. 187)

they as immoral as William and his ilk. Still rather coarse and vulgar, they are nevertheless admirable, which was a reasonable and realistic step in the evolution of the literary navy of the mid-nineteenth century--those golden-haired cherubs, sentimental lovers of mother and country. Another prophetic note is the poetic attitude toward the sea and the ships. The eighteenth century naval writers had tended to view the sea as a destructive element exploited where possible for man's commercial and utilitarian needs, and the ship as merely a microcosm of society.[10] The suggestion that life at sea might make men larger in spirit and that the ship "urg[ing] her course with glory through the wind-obeying deep" or "stand[ing] out of Spithead with solemn majesty of mien" could be a creature of grace and beauty hinted of the new romanticism.

The Post-Captain served as harbinger of another new fashion--the naval novel so popular in the 1820's and 1830's. Smollett had whetted the English taste for shipboard scenes in fiction, but few novelists had pursued his lead in the years notable for Gothic terrors and sentimental-suicide epistolaries. Davis's work was to become one of the first in a long fleet of tales written mostly by retired naval officers like Marryat, Chamier, and Glascock, who sentimentalized the memories of their youthful years, idealizing the sailor and glorifying the service. A wily barometer of the public taste, Davis had come up with a subject for which the reading audience was waiting: "We took up this volume with our usual prepossession in favour of every thing connected with the

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[10] Thomas Philbrick, James Fennimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 18.

British navy, and with the hope of receiving entertainment from a description of Naval Society and Manners," admitted the reviewer for the British Critic. Then he concluded his response with one more sentence: "But we have been grievously disappointed, for a more stupid or nonsensical farrago was hardly ever put together."[11] More easily satisfied, The European Magazine (March 1806) found:

> Naval society and manners appear so well delineated . . . that those who are desirous of an acquaintance with a sea life will not be disappointed. . . . The men are brave and amorous, and the ladies are fair, and so very obliging as to consent to elope with their lovers at the first solicitation. There are few incidents in this performance, and none can be denominated novel or striking; yet the narrative will not be perused without interest. (pp. 217-218)

It should be remembered that The European Magazine was always favorably disposed to Davis's work. A recommendation from the General Review, quoted in the 1808, third edition of The Post-Captain, assured its readers that this "lively series of adventures . . . described in animated language . . . will afford our readers pleasure and entertainment." The prediction proved accurate. That vast number of people who read purely for pleasure, desiring no serious purpose or intellectual effort and enjoying humor and zest in a book, put it through numerous editions both in England and in America, including two reprintings in this century. Yet for many years and even today, confusion existed or exists concerning its authorship.

When Davis returned to the United States in the winter of 1804, he had left the manuscript of Walter Kennedy with Longmans and those of The Post-Captain and The Life of Chatterton with Thomas Tegg. All evidence indicates that The Post-Captain was first published in the

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[11] British Critic, 27 (1806), 551-552.

latter part of 1805; a second printing, identical except for the date, was issued early in 1806. Neither of these carried any clue regarding authorship,[12] nor did their reviewers venture any speculation concerning his identity. In November 1806, Tegg published Chatterton with an advertisement in the back of the volume listing several other new titles including "The Post-Captain . . . by Dr. Moore."[13] When the "3rd edition corrected" of The Post-Captain came out in 1808, followed by the fourth edition in 1810, the title pages boldly proclaimed, "by the author of 'Edward;' 'A View of Society in France;' etc.," books authored by Moore. Many readers accepted Moore's authorship without question, and the error persists in some modern libraries and bibliographical compilations despite the evidence which has been produced in refuation.[14] Those not deceived have assumed Davis to have been a party to the misrepresentation and condemned him accordingly. Southey's review of Chatterton in The Annual Review and History of Literature (7 [1808], 270-275) is one example:

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12 Mr. Case, editor of the 1928 reprint, found no copies earlier than the third edition of 1808 and was unable to trace ascription back beyond that date. Michael Sadleir (XIX Century Fiction, A Bibliographical Record Based on his own Collection [Cambridge: University Press, 1951], I, 103) has since reported an 1806 edition in his possession. Two libraries in the United States, the Newberry in Chicago and the Beinecke at Yale, each hold a copy of the 1806 edition.

13 John Moore, M.D. (1729-1802), physician and man of letters, was the friend and biographer of Smollett and a correspondent of Burns. He had published a number of books whose titles began "A View of Society and Manners in . . . ," very similar to the sub-title appended to The Post-Captain by either Davis or Tegg.

14 The editor of Moore's Works (1820) rejected Moore's authorship (I, xli); his grandson repudiated it in Notes and Queries (5S 9 [1878], 259). Articles in Notes and Queries (5S 10 [1879], 239); in the Athenaeum (9 Dec. 1843, p. 1032); and in The Times (13 Dec. 1843), all have identified Davis as the author.

> Mr. Davis seems particularly anxious to prove the propriety of [Chatterton's] forgery. We are not disposed to be very severe upon the conduct of Chatterton in this instance, but the less that is said about the morality the better. There is indeed a vast distinction to be made between the conduct of a man who published in the name of a well known writer to his book [sic], and so cheats the public into a belief that they are purchasing the works of an old acquaintance. Mr. Davis might have quoted examples of the latter species of fraud, and thus have palliated the conduct of Chatterton, naming a much greater delinquent.[15]

Case attempts to ameliorate Davis's part by suggesting that he "acquiesced in the fraud as a huge joke." More likely, having returned to America, he was unaware that it had been perpetrated. His communication with Tegg was at best poor. Chatterton had been published in 1806; yet in terms suggesting the news was recent to him, he wrote Jefferson in September 1807: "I have been informed that [my] life of Chatterton has made its appearance in London."[16] He had made no secret of his authorship of The Post-Captain when he asked Nagle about the dedication, nor when he listed it among his recent works in "Memoir of the Author," published in both Captain Smith and Princess Pocahontas (1805) and The First Settlers (1806).

The faulty ascription disappeared in the fifth edition of 1811, significantly the first edition Tegg printed after Davis had possibly returned to England in 1810.[17] Instead of blame, perhaps he deserved

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[15] A more recent illustration is the Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature (6 [1932], entry no. 422), which listed Moore as the author in 1928. Correcting the error in 1932, it accuses Davis of "deliberate dishonesty."

[16] Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[17] Most editions after this date carry no ascription, but a Boston edition of 1848, probably hoping to capitalize on the recently published Jack Ariel, announced itself "By the author of Jack Ariel, Zeluco, Edward Mordaunt, etc." The two latter titles were by John Moore.

credit for having put an end to the misrepresentation. A closer look at the publisher might have suggested the true source. A self-made man, son of a grocer, Tegg (1776-1845; the original of "Twigg" in Hood's novel Tilney Hall) started out peddling and auctioning "remainders" (books that had failed) and second-hands garnered from other sources. His business grew into the largest of its kind, and he published four thousand works of his own account. Eventually he became a dignified public official endowing scholarships and libraries, but in 1805 when Davis first knew him he had just opened his shop at 111 Cheapside and was still scrambling in a rough-and-tumble way to gain a toe-hold in a competitive field.[18] For many subsequent years the book appeared without ascription. Understandably, after all the embarrassing charges Davis might have been reluctant to attach his name so belatedly. Years later in Jack Ariel, he spoke fondly of the earlier work, not failing to deride his critics and competitors, more out of habit than of venom:

> The newspapers have lately contained a particular encomium on a novel I published some fifty years ago; the critics have approved it with the strokes of their red pencil; the "Post Captain" walks the deck with an accession of dignity, and I am recognized by the public as the founder of a new school of composition. For half a century or more I have been in the condition of the monarch whose boundaries became narrower by the officious zeal of his auxilliaries; but the holy alliance formed by the critics has reinstated me on the throne, and the captains have been taught the duty of subordination. To the fiat of the critics I owe my supremacy. I could obtain no redress by the softer methods of remonstrance and expostulation, when suddenly the sails of the Marryats, the Chamiers, and the Neales are taken flat aback, and I have nothing more to apprehend from rivals. There is a report current, but I will not vouch for its accuracy, that "Mr. Midshipman Easy" despairs of promotion in the service; that "Ben Brace," hitherto going

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[18] Tegg's prominence earns him mention in most of the histories of book-selling in the nineteenth century. See especially the DNB and Royal A. Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers (Cambridge: England, Richard Bentley, 1960).

> large, has been constrained to get his tacks on board and brace up and haul aft; and that the frightful phantom of the "Flying Dutchman" has mysteriously vanished. . . . Now all I have to do is to keep a sharp look out and mind my helm.[19]

In recognizing The Post-Captain as founder of a new school, Davis was not blowing empty bombast as he had often done before. Chamier (Life of a Sailor) and Glascock (Naval Sketch Book) had both paid obeisance to his pre-eminence in the genre. The Athenaeum in 1843 designated it "the parent of all our nautical novels."

As the book passed through its publishing history from a hard cover at seven shillings, to a mid-century shilling reprint, to the later "library edition," those series of popular fiction collections, it found itself bound with various accoutrements, most often assorted sea and naval ballads. More important, Davis enlarged and re-worked the original text for an 1841 edition published by Tegg. The result was a book very different from the original, a product of its later time, reflecting the better defined concepts of the novel genre as they had evolved in the intervening thirty years--"the transition from the novel of incident to that concerned with the study of character and with the conflict between nature and man . . . , the evolution from the simple and spontaneous to the complex and self-conscious."[20]

The later version reflected in equal strength the more mature artist that Davis had become.[21] Brief allusion has already been made

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[19] Jack Ariel; or, Life on Board an East-Indiaman (London: T. C. Newby, 1847), II, [1]-3. Ironically, later editions carried the ascription "By Capt. Chamier" on their covers.

[20] Elsie A. Parry, "When Literature Went to Sea," The Bookman, 75 (1932), 245.

[21] The title was expanded with the words: "In the Reign of George the Third/ A New and Enlarged Edition/ By the Author." This text was

to some of the changes which he had effected in earlier works--the 1813 version of Buonaparte's Campaign in Italy compared with that of 1798, and the shortened version of the Travels (1817). One can only guess that sometime in the years between 1810 and 1822, Davis, man and artist, experienced a profound disciplining process which resulted in such an extraordinary production as The American Mariners and in a Post-Captain vastly altered from the original pot boiler.

Among the noticeable modifications is the greater emphasis on the nautical. The importance of the love stories is reduced in favor of more detailed descriptions of life on board ship. Several new nautical characters are introduced, like Clueline, the philosophical old ship's carpenter, and the boy Gale, a winsome young midshipman. The navy man's feeling for his ship and the sea receives more attention. Irrelevancies have been deleted from the plot, also many of the vulgarisms, particularly the lubricious remarks about marriage. (Unfortunately, the insults against Salisbury and its citizens are even more offensive than in the earlier editions.) Characterization is more consistent and believable; major characters are more admirable. Brilliant no longer mocks the ridiculous, yet pathetic, Lord Fiddlefaddle; he is not forced to flee ludicrously from Cassandra's room, nor does he dally with Flora. Instead

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used for an 1844 New York edition. Later editions reverted to the early text, probably because it was more easily available and because publishers were unaware of the author's new version. Two twentieth century reprints also reproduced the early version. Although cognizant of the 1841 edition, Case notes only that it reveals "verbal changes, additions and omissions throughout, the latter including the eight preliminary pages and the page headings between lines." He gives no suggestion of the extent of the revision. He mentions that the number of chapters has been reduced but does not explain that some chapters had been incorporated with the adjoining ones and that two chapters totalling twenty-six pages were all new material.

he finds her "loose." Cassandra's elopement, in the earlier version a whim indulged with no concern for its effect on her loving and indulgent uncle, is now justified by turning old Admiral Roughknot into a tyrannical guardian who has exiled her from his manor to a solitary existence in the summer house. Her only companion is Georgiana, one of the new characters, a tawny little girl in an oriental costume, an innocent witness to the interviews between Brilliant and his lady. Child and mistress are so devoted that at the last moment Cassandra takes her along in the elopement. The many changes effect a softening and humanizing of the characters, an effect augmented by the more mellow and reflective tones of the narrator.

The considerably amplified American materials, constituting the bulk of the two new chapters referred to above, are worth examining because of their intrinsic merit and because they were written twenty years after The American Mariners and represent Davis's last known use of his American experience. While the Desdemona cruises the Chesapeake Bay area, the officers and their wives enjoy the "proverbial" Virginia hospitality. A repast of "delicious food" on which "the party fed most luxuriously" in the 1805 edition is now itemized in loving detail:

> . . . everything about the house wore an air of opulence; and when the sea-faring guests adjorned to the supper-room, they found a profusion of good things on the table. The repast consisted of hams, pork-steaks, fried chicken, broiled shad, hominy, rice, muffins, waffles, cakes, hot-bread of maize and wheat, pickles, preserves, and musk and water-melons. The tea and coffee pots were of chased silver, and the furniture of the apartment was mahogany.[22]

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[22] "The Post-Captain; or, the Wooden Walls Well-Manned. A Novel," in The Omnibus of Modern Romance (New York: James Mowatt, 1844), p. 117. The title page contains a facetious injunction from Neptune warning against "a spurious Post-Captain which has made its appearance in the Metropolis, torturing the text, and spoiling the spirit of the original work."

The description of the plantation includes many of the traditional features:

> The dwelling of Mr. Keith, situated on a gentle acclivity, commanded a noble view of Hampton roads. . . . The dwelling-house, surrounded with a verandah, and shaded with Lombardy-poplars, was large and neat; and the negro-quarter, composed of a dozen or more cabins, associated ideas of an exemption from labour on the part of the whites. The plantation might consist of two hundred acres, seventy of which were under cultivation; the rest consisted of a vast forest of gigantic timber, which supplied fuel for the homestead. The staple produce of the plantation was wheat and tobacco. (p. 129)

When the ladies stroll the grounds, mention is made of "some children sauntering with their satchels to school." Davis manages a humorous thrust with a two-edged sword:

> "What, then, you are not without schools," said Cassandra, "in this part of the world. The school-master is every where abroad!"
>
> "Yes, my dear, with a vengeance. A school-master, a yankee, boards with us; but it being now a month of vacation, he is abroad with his cart, selling gridirons and frying-pans, Jew's-harps and ginger-bread, throughout the district."
>
> "Why he must be a pedlar," exclaimed Cassandra.
>
> "Did you ever know a yankee, my dear," replied Mrs. Keith, "who was not a pedlar and a cheat into the bargain?" (p. 129-130)

As a diversion Mr. Keith proposes to conduct Captain Brilliant to a camp-meeting in progress a day's journey away. They are accompanied by Mr. Archer, "reputed to be a good classical scholar," a graduate of the University of Virginia. The self-possessed young Archer, a surgeon of "genteel appearance" and "an easy unembarrassed air," finds his element most happily in showing the elegible ladies every attention. Booted and spurred, something of a Southern dandy, he reminds Davis of a London cockney; "for the species is not confined exclusively to the banks of the Thames; there are cockneys on James River, and cockneys in London" (p. 131).

The camp-meeting passage, the most carefully written and detailed in the book, is Davis at his best. With narrative, dramatic, and descriptive skill he paints for the reader a graphic picture of the camp: "the lonely magnificence of awful nature," a full moon just rising over the Peaks of Otter, the sheltered valley below, the fireflies scintillating like bright sparks of fire, the multiplied lights of the tents, the echoing cries of whip-poor-will and owl, the muted outbreak of prayer from behind the drapery, and in the center, the open area of the camp--the pen and preacher's scafford--from which the tall lank figure of Lorenzo Dow would soon exhort the multitude "with that kind of religious enthusiasm which is a complete barrier to reflection."[23]

In the rear of the camp fastened to the lower branches of "an interminable line of majestic cedars, raising their trunks in tall relief above the tents" stand the horses:

> . . . generally mean in appearance. . . . Those rode to the camp by the Kentuckians were without any saddles, and had only a rope in their mouths to guide them through the woods. Tall, athletic men, in hunting shirts, the forest rangers of the west, with their thoughts abstracted from the worship of the place, were seen handling the mouths of the better looking steeds, and deciding with earnestness on their respective ages. Their wives and children, in gay busy groups, were picking up the nuts that had fallen from the walnut tree and hickory, the rival monarchs of the forest. (p. 134)

While "a motley multitude" of wild backwoodsmen, negroes, and mulattos continue to crowd into the open area surrounding the pen, another group has already gathered on the brow of a hill:

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23 Dow was a Connecticut Methodist circuit rider who left his circuit and went "ranging." His eccentricities earned him the nickname "Crazy." He is referred to several times in The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury. ed. Elmer T. Clark (London: Epworth Press, 1958).

> Pre-eminent on the green sward, the patrician families of Virginia, the magnates of "the ancient dominion," had taken their stand, for curiosity has its demands in the circles of the wealthy. So polite were they in their manners, that one might have conceived they were assembled to pay each other compliments. Democratic in their political professions, they were rather nice and aristocratic in their habits, and kept aloof from the vulgar crowd. There was the proud and haughty visage of the opulent slave-holder, the beautiful countenance of the southern young lady, the intelligent looks of the seldom gay but always genteel youth, all indicating, by their easy air and graceful intercourse, an order of the highest caste. (p. 134)

An unexpected diversion occurs when Jack Rattle, an "impudent" Richmond attorney and counsel for Burr, approaches the pen and accuses Dow of "booring vociferating." The crowd reacts with an uproar forcing Rattle to retreat and recant with some loss of dignity. At the close of the meeting the multitude retires to their tents or forest bivouacs. The aristocracy on the hill are served a sumptuous supper by their colored servants and spend the rest of the night debating the merits of religious freedom, the conduct of Jack Rattle, and the latest London periodicals. At the breaking up of the feast, the chirp of the oriole is heard from the trees and the Peak of Otter, "in its supreme dominion over the mountain scenery, [assumes] the soft, pale, crimson hue of returning day" (p. 140).

If Davis had only realized his strengths and written like that more often! Reminiscent of his Brueghel-like prose description of Occoquan, "The Camp-Meeting" crowds its canvas with photographic details filled with life. So fresh and immediate are the sensations it evokes that it does not seem the product of notes over thirty years old.[24]

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[24] Or could his memory have been refreshed by a much later visit to Virginia? His 1836 letter from Winchester stating he had not been in London since his return from America raises such a possibility.

B. JACK ARIEL

Nonetheless, in the 1847 Jack Ariel he was to prove eminently capable of re-creating with vitality experiences almost sixty years past. Based on his voyages to China and India in 1788 and 1790, he had first written this book in 1797 and had attempted to publish it in Charleston in 1799 under the title "Two Voyages." An abbreviated account of the former appeared in The European Magazine for June 1802, accompanied by the poetic "Epistle to the Author" which Lucas George had written as a preface for the volume. Judging from the brief sample, the original version was little more than a factual travel account of the kind so common in the journals of that day with much less human interest and artistic structure than the Travels. Whatever prevented its appearance at that time was a disguised blessing; when the book appeared in 1847, a product of his mature writing like the added chapters of The Post-Captain, it was much changed and far superior to anything he could have written in 1797.

In the rewriting, he compressed the voyages into one and fictionalized the account by dramatizing the experiences and by creating Jack Ariel, the narrator and central character. Jack is recalling his first voyage as a youth of fourteen enrolled midshipman on an East Indiaman bound for India and China. The only child of a retired gentleman who had made his fortune in India and of a wife much younger, Jack's early passion for the ocean had been encouraged by his father and fed by the sea-shore location of the family mansion in Weymouth. Like Davis, his real-life counterpart, he had been educated jointly in the classics and in mathematics and astronomy; and like Davis he had been "infected" by

his early reading of voyages, both real and fictional. Endowed with a desire for freedom and the golden guineas of his father's liberality, he sets out for London to be outfitted and thence proceeds to Gravesend to join the Mars, "a ship of such exquisite beauty, . . . the crack craft of the fleet" (I, [1]).

After considerable delay by unfavorable winds off Cornwall, the ship sails south touching at Teneriffe in the Canary Islands for fresh supplies. Picking up the trade winds she crosses the equator, rounds the Cape, and two months out of Teneriffe puts in at Joanna, an island lying between Africa and the northern end of Madagascar in the Comoro group. Once more freshly provisioned, she heads east over the Arabian Sea, repulses a boarding attack by Arabian pirates, and puts in at Bombay. Her route then crosses the Indian Ocean to Java, north up the China Sea, where she fights off Chinese pirates before arriving in Canton, her main port of call. Taking on a full cargo of tea, she sets sail for England. The day-by-day routine, often tedious to all but a midshipman, and the occasional exciting adventures comprise the action of the book, in its final form somewhat a cross between a travel account and a conventional novel.

Although Davis was still no great draftsman of structure and Jack Ariel does not present any single major conflict worthy of being called plot, the book holds together much better than The Wanderings of William or The Post-Captain, where a series of unrelated episodes had succeeded each other at random. Circumscribed by the completion of one long voyage, Jack Ariel is thereby guaranteed a certain unity of action. Situations introduced at the beginning thread their way to resolution at the end, serving as effective subplots: for example, the age

difference between Jack's parents, his suspicion and confirmation that Mr. Slade, the chief mate, had been a former admirer of his mother, and the flashback giving the reasons why their courtship had been terminated, all foreshadow Slade's solicitous care for Jack throughout the voyage and his eventual marriage to Mrs. Ariel after the death of Jack's father. In additional improvement over his earlier books, Davis has carried through a consistency of tone, themes, and characterization. Jack, as narrator, provides a center of interest and a limiting point of view, thus preventing the aimless digressions and the final neglect of the main characters that occurred in The Post-Captain. As a participant in the action, his authority is immediate and compelling; yet because he is more of an observer than a leading actor, in personality and in position, he allows a variety of other characters to fill the stage.

Davis handles the device with skill. Although Jack Ariel the man is telling the story, he strives to re-create the experience of the boy, to see things as the boy had seen them and not to impose unduly upon his story the later, mature reactions of the man. Young Jack has the limitations of youth. He often does not understand the elusive interrelationships of the adults around him, like that between the mates. He merely reports what his physical senses have registered; yet the reader understands nuances which escape the boy. In the following paragraph, Jack does not suspect the complexities of East meeting West, the hypocrisy and potential treachery hidden under the surface cordiality, but these are suggested:

> The [Persian] Prince, in his discourse with the Nabob, professed unbounded attachment to the Honourable East India Company and the whole British nation. He spoke with an eagerness of delight of the justice and humanity of the Company's resident-agents in

> Hindostan. He said that he had always been zealous to promote their commerce between Muscat and Bossorah, . . . and reprobated the tariff on imported goods as much too high. In return, the Nabob spoke in rapturous terms of Persia, and the splendid hospitality he had found in the gorgeous halls of its accomplished nobles. (I, 297).

Jack is also limited in self-knowledge. Newly arrived in London, exhilarated with his freedom and confident in his golden guineas, he does not care that he is over-paying and over-tipping, and does not perceive that the older sailor with "the keen, raven eye" and "equivocal grin" has conned him into an extravagant meal. Sensitive enough to rebuke the sailors for cruelty to their monkey pets and to empathize with the Sepoy soldiers whose feet, accustomed to soft sandals, have been encased unnaturally in English boots, he is not mature enough to question the conduct of his peers. When the three middies from the Mars sally into the native bazaar at Bombay, far from models of decorum, they cause a certain amount of commotion; but the arrival of the rakish, swaggering gang from the Lord Camden demonstrates even more how barbarously the English could behave to their native hosts. Jack, limited by his times as well as by his youth, gazes in mute surprise and perhaps some admiration; he seemingly feels no need for rebuke:

> I never saw such heroes. I now cannot think of them without trembling. Indulging in all the petulance and effrontery of their years and profession, they made their debût by knocking the turbans off the heads of every Moslem boy that came in their way, accompanying the act with the exclamation of--
>
> "Out of our north-west passage. Give us a clear berth. This place is as bad as the straits of Baffle-man, where you cannot square your yards for monkeys."
>
> It was a ludicrous sight to behold the Mahometan boys, pale with terror, running away from the midshipmen, and ejaculating, "Allah! Allah!" in their fearful flight; while the reckless officers amused themselves with kicking their turbans after them. There is the same difference between a school-boy's holiday and the holiday of a midshipman, as between a zephyr and a gale of wind.

> These Camdens entirely cut us out. We were saints compared to them--for going up to the Hindoo girls, they without ceremony pulled the chudders away with which they coyly concealed their faces--then conferring together for a few moments, each took a lass in tow, and arm in arm shaped their course for Dungaree, singing, or rather roaring, "Rule Britannia, Brittannia rule the waves!" (III, 114-115)

Yet the reader is occasionally reminded that the boy's story is passing through the mind of the man, a process which enlarges the dimensions of the narrative. It is the man who writes "the petulance and effrontery of their years and profession," not the boy. It is the astuteness of the man who generalizes of Derelincourt, the British attaché at Anjengo, that he is "doomed" to rusticate at the extremity of the Penninsula of India"; but it is the boy Jack who shows the specifics of "rustification" as he tells of his visit at the attaché's residence, having been dispatched from the Mars with a letter bag. He finds "a well-bred courtier of about thirty, graceful in his bearing," seated at the breakfast-table with a native lady older than himself, "but a very Ninon in the seduction of her discourse."

> When I came into the parlour she had wound up her talk to that point of philosophy which coolly looks down on the priests of all religions as hypocrites, cheats, and impostors, whether they be Moslems, Hindoos, Buddhists, or Christians.
>
> She might have had her motive for unsettling any faith yet hanging to the Attaché; and as she preached dereliction of religion beneath the punkah waving its cool breath over her turbaned head, surely no priestess ever looked half so charming. (III, 162-163)

To Jack's surprise the books which engage the attaché are French novels and romances, which he justifies as a "shield against the calamities of life, . . . the solace of my exile." His only English companions, he adds, the officers of a cantonment half a day's journey, do not resemble him in his "passion for study," finding wine a greater exhilaration than books. Other visitors are announced and the native lady abruptly with-

draws; but the visitors are only two officers from the cantonment who laugh heartily at their mail--a letter from a borah at Bombay requesting payment for a debt incurred three years back. When Jack departs he is "huzzed at" by his host and the two guests, now breakfasting and "already under excitement from the Tuscan grape." It is the cynicism of the man which concludes the incident. "Anjengo adieu. . . . and I may have given thee a mirthful interest in the eye of the honest sailor, by my recorded interview with thy diplomatic agent, Derelincourt--the hospitable, the idle, and the gay."

Such sophistication rarely intrudes upon the optimistic spirit of romance radiated by both the boy and the adult narrators--the youthful enthusiasm in the boy for adventure and exotic scenes, the warm glow of reminiscence in the man who remarks, "Talk of the joy of our early years! It is with the young sailor that life is a glorious thing, and not the lad of the insipid sod, on whom existence hangs comparatively a dead weight, even in his merriest moments" (III, 291).

The frequent insistence that an apprenticeship at sea is the best of all possible arenas for turning boys into seasoned and responsible men makes the major theme of the book. Granted that many of Jack's experiences are of a nature to develop hardihood, independence, and confidence, a major flaw is the author's obtuseness in not recognizing that certain other experiences, particularly those in port, tend to turn a boy into a bully and, judging from the example of some of the characters, a boy is just as likely to be confirmed in one direction as another. No distinction is made between the effects of the different kinds of experience.

Another constantly reiterated theme is the glorification of service in the East India Company, especially as it is contrasted with service in the Royal Navy. Jack is initiated early into the difference between them. Before his ship leaves port, he learns that "you may know a [man-of-war] has received her sailing orders by the leg of mutton hanging over the stern," sometimes munificently accompanied by "a bunch of turnips and three cabbages." On the Mars he finds at breakfast "a haunch of venison, which the admiral had coveted for his own board on shore . . . but could not prevail on himself to pay the cost of it, . . . a pair of plump roasted fowls, flanked by a Westphalia ham and a tempting tongue; and to complete the cabin déjournè à la fourchette an occasional glass of champagne, or moselle, gave a zest to the Mocha coffee" (I, 108-109).

Sir Jasper Pomeroy, the captain's guest during the delay off Cornwall, is inspired to poetry by his accommodations:

> Before this visit to your ship I had but a partial conception of the magnificent scale on which every thing is conducted on board an East Indiaman, and the festivity of its domestic economy. It is the transplantation of an European mind into an Asiatic scene--the prophet's picture of Paradise realized--the masts of the ship, by an easy effort of the imagination are transformed into trees bearing delicious fruit, the blocks of the rigging into pomegranates, and when I catch the whistle of the boatswain, its melting music falls on my ear like the dying notes of the bulbul." (I, 217-218)

Breakfast served in the great Hall of the Company Factory in Canton treats Jack to a view of the Company's "gentlemen mariners":

> . . . there were at least fifty Captains and Officers sitting at table, and swaying away upon all top-ropes,--some of rather a John Bull aspect, and others so polite in their bearing, that their manners might have polished Courts.
>
> We judge always by comparison; and in estimating their attire by that of the best-dressed gentlemen I ever saw in London or Paris, I think the advantage was hardly in favour of the landsmen.

> This circumstance does them the more credit as they were entirely shut out from all female society at Canton; and in the choice, the care, and the cost of their habiliments, they respected themselves.
>
> I believe they were nearly all men of fortune, and had not occasion, like the Captains and Lieutenants who sailed under the swallow-tailed bunting, to look no less anxiously out for payday than the making of land.
>
> Many of the Captains and Mates had each his own servant, standing in jacket and trousers behind his chair. (III, 318-319)

Contrasted to these men are the naval officers--such as the "doughty lieutenant" of the man-of-war Nonsuch, "a vigilant old chap in a thread bare naval uniform, with a rusty speaking-trumpet under his arm" and the frigate lieutenant sent aboard the Mars for impressment recruits:

> He was received at the gangway by Mr. Slade and Mr. Quin, with whom he exchanged salutations very courteously, formally raising his three-cornered, tarnished gold-laced hat, which the hot sun of the West Indies had played the mischief with--converting its colour from black into brown. He wore a full uniform blue coat, which did not seem to have been much tormented with the brush, and yet the nap was gone; his waistcoat and breeches were of blue cloth, and to crown the whole, the faded white lappels of his coat were so extravagant in their dimensions, that he looked as if he had embarked in haste, and shipped on to his principal garment the washboards of the frigate's boat. A just idea may be formed of the antiquity of his attire when it is averred that its anchor buttons were worn smooth, and discovered no superscription or legend. He was apparently not more than thirty, displaying the marks of his profession, in every thing he said or did. His flippancy was the more striking in being contrasted with the self-possession of Mr. Slade, who in a plain suit of clothes, a chocolate colored coat, won a respect and deference from a sailor when he addressed him, which this Luff Tackle with all the pride, pomp and circumstance of naval rank, could never for the life of him command. There was little or nothing intrinsical about him, but he was supported by adventitious aids. (I, 87-88)

"[The naval officer]," said the captain, in a calm, dispassionate tone, "is a moral study. He is a striking example of the evil habits engendered by the uncontrolled exercise of arbitrary power" (I, 115). The East Indiaman does "not wear a pennant and could dispense with the

military mockery of those who sail under it." The gentlemen officers eschew uniforms as emblems of authority; they do not depend on ceremony or severe discipline. The sailor of the Indiaman responds accordingly: "Not pressed into the service, nor feeling abject in bonds, he diffuses joy around him." The contrast is most tellingly drawn as the Mars weighs anchor:

> We were now underway, the hoisted top-sails were fluttering to the breeze, when Mr. Slade made his appearance, and seizing a speaking-trumpet, cast the ship in a masterly manner, accompanied in giving his orders with the shrill, clear note of the boatswain's silver whistle. Under his direction our beautiful barkey seemed endowed with sense and volition, and literally "walked the waters like a thing of life." No hoarse reproof, no vulgar execration fell from the lips of the mate, but he addressed the crew in a kind, affectionate way, calling them "my hearties," and sometimes "my sons," making everything so easy. In our stretch out we passed close under the stern of the flag-ship at Spithead. She was a tremendous three decker. There was some punishment going on board of her. The hands were turned up on the quarter-deck. We could distinguish the old admiral standing at the capstern with his sword drawn, surrounded by his captains and lieutenants arrayed in their full uniforms. The grating was rigged. The wretched culprit, stripped to the waist, was hearing the articles of war read to him by the clerk, and the stalwart boatswain standing forward from the assembled crew, was drawing his fingers through the nine-knotted tails of the torturing cat.
>
> . . . Look on this ship and on that! Behold our peopled deck, lo, what animation prevails there. Their cheerful, seaward shout is a signal for the green-tailed tritons to sound their conchs, and sea-nymphs, pillioned on dolphins, are seen sporting around us. There on the forecastle, that "ancient mariner," old Sam Swab . . . gives them a smile of recognition, and happy in heart on board an Indiaman, has no woeful tale to relate of lacerated flesh, but spins them a yarn of the Flying Dutchman seen off the Cape of Good Hope, recorded on oath in the log-book. (I, 148-150)

Such freedom from restraint sometimes leads to pride and even recklessness. Amusing are the rivalries among the captains who make departure from a port crowded with other Indiamen a complex maneuver of which ships to parade before and which ships to give a wide berth. Such free-wheeling rivalry is less amusing when Roebuck of the Essex, "that

reckless son of the ocean," losing an impromptu race out of Macao Roads, tacks in front of the Mars, grazing her and causing much damage, although not disabling her as he had hoped.

The brashness also extends to insulting treatment of the navy. When the captain rebukes Lieutenant Quin for not lowering his sails in salute to a passing naval vessel thereby provoking a salvo from the latter, Quin retorts: "Do you think I could bring myself to settle the top-gallant-sails of a ship of seven hundred tons burden to a dirty little craft that we could have hoisted in and stowed away upon our booms, with no provisions on board but a beaker of fresh water in the cabin, and a leg of mutton hanging over the stern, with perhaps no pot to boil it in?" (I, 68). The captain reminds Quin of the injunction of the Company charter that the sails of an Indiaman shall be lowered to every vessel bearing the king's pennant:"

> "Has that been the case," slyly demanded the Quaker pilot, "since the Company extended their dominion in India, forgot they were merchants, and assumed a purely military character, giving the sad employment to the historian of their territories to record the innocent blood of the natives shed in war? Whew! they are traders with a vengeance. They have made a trade of war, and miserable trade it is." (I, 66-67)

The role of the Company on shore introduces a more complex subject and one which is never fully resolved. Sir Jasper Pomeroy, a provincial John Bull in outlook and hyperbolic in speech, expresses one view:

> "What is the Court of Directors composed of but Merchant Princes? When I was in town . . . at the India House . . . I heard the citizen princes, the saints, I might justly denominate them, of Leadenhall Street, in a fit of godly piety implore Heaven to give them an enlightened understanding to direct them in the right path. They appeared to me the parental protectors of the great India family--the sincere, zealous friends of their princes and chiefs--the benevolent dispensers of comfort, charity and security to the meanest of the most abject castes."

The Nabob, Mr. Impey, a former member of the Supreme Court at Calcutta, returning on the Mars for further government service counters with another view. Throughout the book his is often the voice of wisdom:

> "I think, captain," said the Nabob, calmly puffing his hookah, "I think the knight might have enquired abroad before he took for gospel every thing that was said at home. It will not pass muster, Sir Jasper. It was all gammon--the kind of food John Bull devours with such voracity. Where were the ghosts of the dethroned princes of the East, to complain of compacts trampled under foot--slaughter, rapine, oppression and usurpation? The execrations they hurled at the Imperial traders for solemn treaties violated, were smothered in the clamours of a venal crowd. Poor ghosts! you did not hear, Sir Jasper, their bitter lamentations." (I, 219-222)

Much later, in seeming contradiction to the Nabob, the mature narrator obtrudes to apostrophize "this fleet--the pride and glory of England, so gigantic in her stride across the ocean" (II, 267) and to express "a regret that this proud monument of England's commercial greatness is now no more, and that by the removal of the East India Company's Charter, hardly a lingering remnant of its splendour is left to save it from the character of a vision that has faded from the sight. . . . the commerce of our merchant princes flourishes only in the history page" (III, 265).

In the light of such opposing statements, it is difficult to determine just what Davis intended to convey. Possibly the contradiction comes from the revision--the nostalgic statements quoted above having been written in the waning glow of memory and inadvertently included with the Nabob's lines written in the indignation of youth. These match in substance and in tone Davis's castigations of slavery in America written many years before. It is also possible that he was speaking only of that part of the Company's operations which he knew--the fleet and the bustling prosperity of its dockside commerce. Of such peripheral matters as the conduct of Englishmen ashore and their confrontation with

the native peoples he is noticeably mute. The reader is left to form his own judgments from the uncomplimentary incidents related by young Jack. "Yet," he says at one point, "the people are reduced to such humiliation by their Mandarins as to be easily intimidated. I have seen an English sailor reeling through the street under influence of too potent a draught of Sampson, drive hundreds of Chinese before him with an angry flourish of his cudgel. The shopkeepers, putting their heads out of their doors, would look on and laugh with a seeming unconsciousness of the ignominy inflicted on their fellow citizens" (III, 324).

The boorishness of the English abroad is matched by the innocence of the English at home. "There is some wisdom," says the Doctor, "in the usages of the Chinese, and they only want their Pagan Temples to be razed and forsaken by their votaries, to become a great nation" (III, 251-252). Coral Hobby, supposedly endowed with wisdom and quick perception, remarks on admiring a jar in the captain's cabin:

> "A beautiful jar! captain. It is from the quaint devices on their jars and tea-cups that I have formed my notions of the Chinese."
>
> "And all we know of them, madam, from books, is that their great men can bow back home our ambassadors without satisfying their demands. But I am curious to know your opinion of them."
>
> "Why, captain, my opinion of them is not very favourable. Their jars and tea-cups impress me irresistably with the fancy that they are a toddling people, with little feet, little eyes, and little minds. Their bridges one may step over, and their birds are as large as their boats."
>
> "Are not these, madam, the Chinese of teacups and the grocers' shops?"
>
> "I think not, captain, for a nation so sensitive would hardly caricature themselves." (I, 213-214)

Months later in Canton, Jack watches Frank Morrice, his fellow midshipman mischievously tease a young Chinese servant:

> In eyeing this urchin with the tuft on his head, covered with a fantastical cap--habited in a kind of petticoat, and wearing slippers on his feet--it was impossible not to

> associate him with his prototype on our tea-cups and saucers at home,--and we laughed at the droll idea that we had seen him before; but no sooner did he find access to the upper-deck debarred him by the removal of the ladder, than his face assumed an expression which no enameller's art could depict. (III, 300-301)

The tea cup syndrome is forever shattered for Jack. In his only overt allusion to "empire," he opines that it is a "fluctuating" condition subject to the sufferance of national authorities.

All this is not to suggest that the book presents itself a novel of empire. The reader is never allowed to forget that the subject of the book is the wondrous adventure of a boy's "odyssey." But underlying all the excitement, the high spirits, the pranks, the youthful glee, are the nagging suspicions, not expressed because not consciously recognized, that the "savages" are not simple and that the blustering "conquerors" are uncomfortable and degraded in their role--a role subject to considerable fluctuation. Though not a novel of empire, Jack Ariel manages to suggest the "limitless inconsistency and confusion" of empire reflected in novels dealing more explicitly with the problem, "whether they expose empire as a colossal exhibition of effrontery and the callous aggression of man against his fellow man; or whether they celebrate it as a school for character building, a kind of Indo-African-Antipodean extension of the playing fields of Eton; or unroll it as part of the panorama of history; or take it cheerfully for granted on the basis of its neoromantic entertainment value."[25]

By far Davis's most extended work, the book offers large variety and scope. Its geographical range alone, seen through Davis's lively

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[25] Susanne Howe, Novels of Empire (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 163-164.

eye, suggests diversity of one kind, but he had more in mind: he speaks of "the microcosm of the ship" and beyond the ship "the waves of the open ocean before us . . . about to take the place of a stirring world, its shifting, jarrings, and jostlings" (I, 263). That stirring world is to present a kaleidoscope of contrasts: in scene, from the main-top to the hold, from a crowded waterfront pub in England to a rural road outside Canton; in activity, from the frenzied violence of a pirate attack to the creeping listlessness of days "when Time seemed to move as slowly as our ship," in setting, from the sublime power of a typhoon to the lush vegetation of a tropical island; in situation, from the oriental luxury of a fête at the Viceroy's palace in Canton, to the Spartan economy of the midshipmen's quarter. He matches all of these with skilled shifts in style--vigorously robust, languidly poetic, literal or figurative, sentimental or restrained. Always that talent for narrative, that seemingly effortless tale-telling, carries the story briskly along.

Of the varied elements, not the least are the characters, a gallery of social classes and personality types. Generally speaking they are his most likeable; unquestionably, his most believable. For the first time, his fictional characters speak in their own voices to reveal subtly the individual personalities assigned to them. Among the most completely portrayed are the two midshipmen who share with Jack "that sanguine period of life when every anticipation of the mind [is] coloured with the dream of romance" (II, 176). Tim Yates, eleven years old and favorite of all the crew, is "the beautiful boy of the ocean." Diminutive, light, agile, with a head of golden curling hair, his fragile appearance belies his skilled strength in the yards and his knowledge of

seamanship: intuitively, on board he is always at the right post of duty even before he is needed. A juvenile Billy Budd, his entrance into a room brings pleasant smiles, and his presence in a group calms ruffled feelings, a charisma of which he is not conscious. No docile angel despite his haloed looks, he had run away from Winchester College at nine, was already a veteran of two previous voyages, and quite innocently shocked the guests at a dancing school in Bombay who, judging him from his appearance, had been treating him like a toy doll:

> We shaped our course for a crowded part of the room, and, to our surprise and amazement, found Tim, surrounded by a posse of laughing lasses. . . . The girls had prevailed on the beautiful boy to dress himself in female attire. Over his duck trousers, he had drawn a pair made of rich crimson silk, confined by gold bangles at the ancles. He had divested himself of his jacket, and substituted for it a chemise of exquisite fabric, white as the driven snow, fastened at the throat by a gem which his sparkling eyes rivalled in brilliancy. . . .
>
> The music struck up from the orchestra, and Tim began to figure away.
>
> He danced his hornpipe, after the vulgar manner of a ruffian sailor on the forecastle. The room shook with laughter and applause: but I thought it would have come down with screams, when, at the conclusion of the hornpipe, instead of making his bow to the spectators, he seated himself on the floor, and began very deliberately to haul off his outer trousers, and next his jacket, which he threw from him to some distance, exclaiming in an irritable tone--
>
> "I don't know, young ladies, how you may feel affected, but I can say for myself that I am b___y hot!"
>
> This speech, so little expected, produced universal consternation.
>
> "The vulgar little wretch!" exclaimed the lady of the establishment, in a hollow and fearful voice.
>
> The pupils ran away shrieking. (III, 126-128)

The other midshipman, Frank Morrice, presents himself as the nephew of an earl, his previous sea experience having been confined to cruises on his uncle's yacht. Although he is the same age as Jack, the other boys look up to him as a leader, impressed by his social sophistication and suave manners. Jack particularly admires "his fine open countenance

and frank deportment." They never wonder why despite his claims of a good education particularly in mathematics, he gives a wrong answer to an elementary geometry question posed as a test by the Nabob. Nor do they think it strange that Sambo, the Jamaican cook, twice identifies Frank as the rakish reefer he had known on a man-of-war anchored in Kingston. Despite numerous instances of Frank's dubious integrity, Jack, typically uncritical, still sees him as "a capital fellow."

"We were now playing un grand rôle," Jack says of the scene in the hotel dining room in Bombay where the boys, led by Frank, order an extravagant meal which he has no intention of paying for. Much of their activities are role playing. Still boys, yet junior officers often required to perform a man's job, they bully other members of the crew who accept their orders with good humor, although knowing, as Jack admits, "that a great deal of our authority was assumed, and that we came on board at Blackwall without commission or warrant" (III, 246-247). With paternal concern the older men sharing a night watch with the boys often let them doze off until the next bell.

Because they are most often portrayed "skylarking about in all directions," an occasional reminder is provided that they are little more than children and far from home. Tim's trunk list including some gingerbread packed as "sea stock" by his grandmother is one such instance; another is a night scene during a typhoon in the China Sea. The ship has already received some damage bringing a rare sobriety to their boyish bravado and is now scudding wildly through the raging foam:

> As I stood on the poop, looking around at the dark and stormy waters of the rolling ocean, I felt appalled. Tim quailed at the sight, and involuntarily caught me by the hand. The dark and heavy clouds seemed to assume a more fearful

> aspect--the rain poured down from them in an overwhelming torrent, and there being an empty hen-coop on the poop, we both crept into it. It was capacious enough to held several persons and was boarded at the top. Tim felt reassured under its shelter. He had a piece of gingerbread in his jacket, and I observed he flirted with it while the rain rattled on the roof. He did not offer me any, and I believe would not have parted with a crumb. Eating sparingly of it himself, I conceive it was the last of his sea stock. (III, 207-208)

The three chief officers provide as much contrast as the middies. Mr. Slade, the first mate, is the perfect man. Handsome, wise, charitable, temperate, he always says and does just the right thing.[26] Less comforting but more interesting is Mr. Quin, second mate. Although reckless and impetuous on the quarter-deck, he systemizes his drinking, allowing himself total inebriation only while on board, in port, and under the care of Grub, the steward, who rations out in advance the twelve glasses necessary to do the job. He finds no delight in women, preferring the pleasurable stimulation of crowded sail: "We will keep it standing if the gale takes the canvas out of the bolt-rope." During his more foolhardy watches, only the intervention of Slade saves the ship. Outspoken and aggressive, he bluntly pronounces "a plague on all cowards" in the presence of the captain, the butt of his scorn.

The aptly named Captain Mountain, so rotund that he cannot climb the ladder and has to be hoisted aboard, suffers from two infirmities, portliness and timidity. Rough weather sends him into cabin seclusion, the sound of firecrackers into paroxysm. Fearful of violence and insist-

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[26] Slade's real-life counterpart is found in chief mate Ebenezer Roebuck of the Essex into whose "care and guidance" young John Davis had been committed. "A man of an active vigorous mind, conversant with every branch of the mathematics, an excellent seaman, and a dignified Officer," he instructed Davis in geometry and navigation during the voyage. ("Voyage to St. Helena, Batavia, and China," The European Magazine, [June 1802]).

ing that he is "only a tea merchant--nothing more than a tea merchant," he has ordered the ship's guns stored in the hold, contrary to general practice, thus inviting attack either from marauding impressment officers of the Royal Navy or from pirates. When the ship is boarded by Arabian pirates, he abdicates command to Slade, who directs the successful repulse though at some loss of life. Quin argues for mutiny, but Slade, finally forced to act against his commander, chooses the appeal to authority and upon landing in Bombay secures permission for the proper installation of the ship's guns.

The real-life models for the captain and Quin are easily recognized in Davis's account of his voyage aboard the Worcester:

> The chief officer . . . was Owen Ellis, . . . full of fire, fancy and mischief. Our captain and he did not agree. Hall was timorous; Ellis rash. Hall was uncommonly corpulent; remarkable for the circumference of his belly, and Ellis swore the ship could never be in trim, as, by being in the cabin, he brought her down by the stern.
>
> Off the high land of Chaul the Worcester was attacked by Angria's Pirates. Our captain was scared almost to death.
>
> Ellis saved the ship. He jumped down on the gun deck, and cast loose a midship-gun. "A match here!" said he . . . (First Settlers, pp. 276-277)[27]

Resisting the impulse to caricature a character easily lending himself to such treatment, Davis allows the captain "a great proportion of beauty mixed up with his character, and even of dignity." He is an exceptionally good navigator; he is kind to and concerned about the young midshipmen; he keeps a good table for his officers, a gourmet of fine food yet abstemious in his own habits. His company at dinner is welcomed as "a valuable accession, for in the colloquies where he presides, the guests were sure to come upon a mine of gold. Even Grub seemed sensible

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[27] For purposes of fictional characterization the saving of the Mars is attributed to Slade.

of his master's intellectual eminence" (II, 99). Sensitive to his inadequacies as a commander, he sometimes vents his frustration at Grub, his steward, who cheerfully ignores his petulance.[28]

The single passenger on board is Mr. Impey, the Nabob. A diplomat and former judge who had amassed a fortune in India, he displays "much amenity in his manners, and no man who had his fortune to make could evince a greater desire to please." His cosmopolitan urbanity is a foil to the prosaic character of the doctor, the only other landsman aboard. Together with the captain, these men provide mature conversation and thoughtful observations which balance the highjinks of the midshipmen.[29]

Among the minor characters are a host of interesting seamen of all

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[28] The charitable restraint of Davis's portrayal is emphasized by a time-faded marginal note written into an 1806 edition of The First Settlers at The University of Tennessee library. Of Captain Hall of the Worcester it records: "An overgrown monster. His timidity was cowardice, His delight indolence, and his gratification, good living. He lived without a friend, He died without a tear being shed for him. I had the good fortune to please this monster of the deep. He was first officer on the . . . Holland in the years 1776-1777."

[29] The Nabob's name, Impey, immediately brings to mind Sir Eliza Impey (1732-1809), chief justice at Bengal and later a member of the supreme court at Calcutta. Accused of acting as a tool of Hastings and recalled to England, he embarked in 1783 "on board the Worcester, East Indiaman." After exoneration, he settled in England and later retired for a time in Wiltshire. It is not known whether Davis ever met him, but details of his character given in the DNB--including "a foible of vanity" and a "certain weakness of character [which] led him to yield all too readily," "a remarkably amiable temper," good scholarship and ill health--correspond with Davis's fictional character. A footnote appended to a discussion of the Nabob's charm and good breeding reveals that Davis still retained fond memories of an American friend and benefactor whose reputation had suffered in other quarters: "A man of high breeding is unconsciously a great actor. I never saw it exhibited to such advantage as in the manners of Colonel Burr, of the United States. Though a diminutive man his address was transcendent. He appropriated the graces of enchantment, and was a present Chesterfield in the classic and poetic sense" (II, 255). The doctor may be patterned after Mungo Park, the famous African traveller and writer, who had shipped surgeon's mate on the Worcester.

ranks. Natives appear briefly but tellingly. Hindoos bear a countenance of "imperturbable gravity," displaying no emotion, although a certain few influenced by the English have not been improved. Jack calls them "a sort of comic-play-Englishman kind of Hindoo." They have usually renounced the costume of their own country to dress inappropriately in English attire; they speak in surly tones and assume a contemptuous air.

Portraits of the Chinese are more humorous. After a spirited and unsatisfactory bargaining session over his fee, an aged Tartar pilot declares, "High-aw! Too litty; no can do!" But when Slade shows indifference toward his services, he cheerfully resigns himself with "High-aw! Too litty; but must do." Concerning a matter of broader import--the ability of the Mandarin class to maintain order in Chinese waters, Jack records a visit from the Admiral of the Chinese fleet, "a jolly Tartar Mandarin" dressed sumptuously in robes of state. Typically, he conveys his inference through the facts selected: "[The Admiral] expressed his regret that our broadside had killed [the Buccaneer of the Ladrone Island], as he was going out with his junks to give him battle, and had promised the Emperor to bring him to Peking in an iron cage. . . . The Pirate carried twelve-pounders on his main-deck, and knew how to handle them; while the Mandarin Admiral, in his largest junk, mounted only swivels, which had never been discharged horizontally" (III, 256). Also humorously portrayed are two American seamen, passengers in a Canton ferry boat. Extremely courteous to each other and deeply involved in a serious and proper discussion about courtship and marriage, they speak in Yankee dialect, homely idiom, and swear by nothing stronger than "Martha's Vineyard!" Noticeable by their absence are the women, a rare omission in a Davis novel. Coral Hobby, the only female to grace the

Mars, visits the ship briefly with her husband. A smuggler's daughter, beautiful and intelligent, but more memorable for her liberated notions and the "petticoat government" under which she rules her husband, she bears no resemblance to Davis's buxom characters of earlier works. She may be a product of the Victorian climate and perhaps of his advancing years. Commenting on the satisfactions of the captain's buffet, the older narrator recalls: "There was only one thing wanted to make it complete--the presence of a few females. . . . Such were my ideas then. Now, I might say after a residence among the Trappists [The Charterhouse?], in the words of the hermit of Fortequerri, in the Riciardetto, but not with his dissembled spirit:--'Rinaldo mio, io son gia morto al mondo,/ E piu non penso a queste cose.'" (II, 97).

In the midst of new changes, the book retains many of the distinguishing Davis peculiarities, both good and bad. As usual, his current hobby horse is prominently paraded--in this case, a strong argument for the abolishment of Latin and Greek as academic requirements in favor of mathematics and astronomy--subjects he had been promoting most recently as a tutor in Winchester. He had apparently forgotten having written of his own experience in those subjects that they had "cured my illusion" of their value and that they had "nothing fascinating" for his mind. He is still carrying on a peevish vendetta against the clergy, academicians, critics, other novelists, and whatever town he had most recently resided in--Winchester having replaced Salisbury. He is still inserting his poems, albeit only one of an early vintage, "Address to the Tropic Bird." He is still enriching his writing with allusions from the classics and Gil Blas, and now, reflecting another Victorian taste, also from the Italian.

More important for the artistic merits of the book, he still has that poetic feeling for nature which spiritualizes the story, raising it above the level of a common adventure tale and helping to compensate for other inadequacies. He has returned to that kind of humor, so charming in the Travels--"good humor without coarseness" to quote Farmer of New-Jersey which he admired but did not always achieve. Happily he has abandoned the broad Restoration type of comedy, always embarrassingly awkward in his handling, for the quiet, understated type growing out of character or situation. An example is the general confusion of the crew, once the guns had finally been installed, to find there was no drum aboard with which to "Beat to Quarters."

An overall view of the book convinces that Davis had advanced a long way in the craft of novel making since his first attempts in 1798. Always imitative in technique, he had absorbed a good deal from contemporary masters who had welded the novel into a defined art form and had picked up a few hints from the Marryats and the Chamiers as well.

Besides its technical sophistication, the novel reflects in many ways the ideologies of its era. For the first time in history large numbers of men from the West were penetrating exotic Eastern regions, capturing the imagination by sweeping away centuries-old barriers in the interests of "progress." For the middies the trip is an eye-boggling experience of luxury, power, and adventure--as the period was for all of England, that period when the Company's "rich Argosies whitened with their snowy canvas every inlet . . . giving each other the joyous hail in going to and returning from the crowded ports," a period with neither "precedent nor parallel to the spirit of resolute enterprize and preservering industry" (I, xii). But the hint is there, hardly strong enough

to be ominous, that the time will come when the party will be over; when the tea cup, even now showing signs of cracking, will shatter; a time when the boys and England will have to grow up. In short, while a great deal of romance remains for boyish eyes, the world is real and complex in a way no previous book of Davis's admitted. With Victorian seriousness of temper, the characters project a sense of responsibility and commitment to the successful completion of a long-term goal. With enlightened Victorian humaneness those within the microcosm of the ship exercise forbearance and tolerance to one another, demonstrated "in the bland courtesy of their manners." Of the Company policy and the officers' treatment of the men, "there is something grand in their calm confidence of moral force, in the conviction that a true benevolence of spirit contributes more to the assertion of their authority than the threat and infliction of punishment" (I, vii-viii). This is less the old world of Smollett and Fielding than the new world of Thackeray and Dickens. That the benevolence did not extend to the treatment of native peoples was a shortcoming of the times, one of the contradictions.

The author, too, had changed. Still spicy in his prejudices, he had mellowed all the same. Personal experiences had always provided the richest harvest for his imagination. In Jack Ariel, time and the winds of strife had blown away the distracting trivia, the chaff, leaving in the memory the vital details, the germ, of the experience. Unlike many of his earlier works written "under the necessity of want," Jack Ariel was composed in leisure and with loving care. The scenes radiate a rarely achieved sense of zest and immediacy tempered with reminiscence and reflection. The consciousness of the passing of the years is ex-

pressed in the dedication to Macaulay, printed in the 1847 edition, but subsequently dropped. Expressing appreciation for Macaulay's favorable remarks about the Travels, he writes: "Empires have fallen and dynasties undergone a change since that Volume made its appearance."[30]

Jack Ariel was first launched, appropriately, as a "three decker," a nautical term applied to the fashionable three-volume sets sold at a guinea and a half, a luxury item in the book publishing business of the mid-nineteenth century. Few novels having sufficient length to warrant such space, the publisher usually "bumped it out" to three volumes by various means--"expansive margins, heavy leading (space between the lines), reducing the number of lines on the page," and by leaving "blank one third of the first page of each chapter and the partial page at the close of each chapter."[31] All of these devices are noticeable in the 1847 edition by Newby. Usually a book was reprinted a few months later in a one-volume edition after the market for the three-volume was exhausted.[32] Accordingly, in 1848 H. Long of New York produced a paperback in double columns for seventy-five cents. Other editions followed on both sides of the Atlantic. Some time after the Civil War (post-1864 and pre-1876), T. B. Peterson of Philadelphia, America's largest publisher of dime novels (custom-made thrillers and reprints of the classics), issued a paperback as one of their "Peterson's Military Novels" series,

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[30] An Athenaeum article (9 December 1843) quotes "a recent letter" from Macaulay concerning the Travels: "I have long been acquainted . . . "

[31] Gettmann, "The Three-Decker," pp. 231-263.

[32] Charles S. Lauterbach, "The Nineteenth Century Three-Volume Novel," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, 51 (1957), 263-302.

also for seventy-five cents. Identical in text to the Long edition, including the typographical errors, it sported a flamboyant cover ornately decorated in red, blue and gold and pictured a group of hopeless souls cast away on a raft, a print bearing no relation to the story. The new sub-title, "A Thrilling Tale of the Sea," was at least more modest than the title-page claim of another Peterson cover for the same book, "Best Sea Tale Ever Written."

Although the Newby and Long editions had identified the work as "By the Author of 'The Post Captain,' 'Travels in America,' and a 'Life of Chatterton,'" Peterson's editions proclaimed themselves either "By the Author of 'The Post Captain,' 'The Pirate,' etc., etc.," or "By Capt. Chamier."[33] As early as 1848, through the confusion of a Bristol Museum cataloger, Jack Ariel was attributed to John Dix,[34] an attribution which still persists.[35]

Jack Ariel was not loudly hailed by the critics. Trailing a long line of sea novels, the fashion for which had long since crested, it was probably brushed aside as just another one of the same, although Davis characteristically took pains to point out that it was a progenitor of a new breed and used the occasion to emphasize what would be his main theme--not "the hum and stir of a man-of-war . . . familiar to every reader, as exhibited in the thousand and one novels of our naval chroni-

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33 Frederick Chamier (1796-1870), captain in the Royal Navy retired, wrote a number of sea novels but none entitled The Pirate. A London 1839 imprint entitled The Pirate; or Lafitte of the Gulf of Mexico is credited to Joseph Holt Ingraham. Sadleir lists such a title by Marryat.

34 Dix, alias John Ross (1800-1865), was a Bristol surgeon and "shameless literary forger" who had traveled in America and published some accounts of his visits there. He also published A Life of Chatterton.

35 DNB; also Notes and Queries, 4 S (1872), 294-296.

clers," but "the facts and anecdotes of actual life on board a Canton ship . . . that floating home of contentment." He regretted that "no writer of capacity has taken up the subject . . . not the slightest notice in memoir, popular miscellany, or even what in our new-fangled English is termed a reminiscence" (I, viii-xv). Critics could probably find little excitement in a tribute to the East India Company. England's commerce was still celebrating the 1833 annulling of the Company's monopoly, opening the China trade to all merchants, and was still too dazzled over the new steamships to sentimentalize at this early date the passing of sail.

Davis was right; few writers ever did give proper notice to England's great merchant fleet. But "the Genius of the oriental ocean" had beckoned him to the task: he had written for the East India service as Melville was to write for the American whaling industry. Exaggerated as the comparison may seem, Jack Ariel and Moby Dick share many similarities--if one can visualize Moby Dick without Ahab and the whale. Nevertheless, independent of critical notice, the reading public appreciated a good tale, and as the book rolled on into multiple printings some valid critical remarks were put together for an editor's Preface to the 1848 Long editions:

> In introducing "Jack Ariel" to the American public, it would be a work of supererogation to forestall public opinion by any remarks of our own as to its merit or analysis of its style. It is sufficient to say, that this book has had an immense sale in England, and that the unknown author has been ranked in many respects far above Marryatt, [sic] the sea-novelist of England, and Cooper, the sea-novelist of America. That the writer is a thorough-bred seaman, is evident; that he is also a professed scholar, is equally so; and the work is perhaps sui generis in this respect, that, like our own two mighty rivers, the Missouri and the Mississippi, whilst their united streams are blended in the "Father of Waters," they yet for a long distance maintain their identity. So with the

> author of "Jack Ariel." He writes a book in which the seaman and the scholar are so blended, that we are willing to sail down its united stream, equally delighted which of its banks we approach, certain of being pleased with the scenery either may afford us.

Of all the epithets that could have been applied to him and all the metaphors that could have been chosen, it is difficult to imagine any that would have pleased him more. It was almost as if he had written it himself.

SUMMARY

A study of Davis's works is like a stroll through a century and a half of English literary history. His early tastes had been formed by saturation in the writings of the early eighteenth century--in the fiction of Fielding, Smollett, and Richardson; in the poetry of Pope, Dryden, and other Augustans; and in the writings of the pre-Romantics--Thomson, Macpherson, and Goldsmith. Equally familiar was his acquaintance with Shakespeare and the classical writers of Greece and Rome. His own writing was largely influenced by this youthful reading and in the long course of his literary career reflected multiple vogues from the vigorous picaresque tradition with its comedy and burlesque, to the emotional sentimental fashion of the late eighteenth century, through the Victorian temper of the mid-nineteenth century.

Imitative in technique, he was often innovative in concept. He attempted one of the first novels of American manners; one of the first historical novels on American themes; one of the first nautical novels; and one of the first, and few, novels of England's merchant service. His Travels is in a class by itself--not an ordinary travel book of the prosaic journal type, but a study of a young man seeking his fortune in a new country. The American Mariners, most innovative of all his works and most imaginatively conceived, stands as the definitive American epic for its time.

If Davis is not a major figure in American literature, he is an important one historically. Much of his writing was composed and published in America; even more of it was about America. While some

native writers were apostrophizing nightingales and larks, Davis was communing with our mockingbirds and whippoorwills. While native poets searching for epic materials were looking backwards at Columbus and events far removed from the concerns of the burgeoning republic, Davis, looking ahead in vision, was writing an epic celebrating the modern American spirit. When many national writers were decrying a lack of historical past, Davis was re-creating the saga of Jamestown; when many American were either sentimentalizing the "noble savage" or disparaging the animal savage, Davis, as a follower of Jefferson and a forerunner of Cooper, was portraying the Indian as mortal man, both good and bad.

He was among the earliest imaginative writers to delineate in fictional characters the regional differences among Americans, to transpose to paper the diverse dialects, to catch in characterization both the small distinctions later accepted as sectional stereotypes, and the large elemental qualities of the American character--hospitality, generosity, friendliness, and the idealism and buoyancy of spirit derived from a democratic climate.

A synthesis of intellectual position, so popular in summaries, is difficult for John Davis. Intellectual and moral concerns were not primary to his work. He was a writer of the individual heart, most effective when re-creating a mood, an emotion, a reaction. One idea, however, he maintained with consummate commitment--the idea that men should be free, not held under undue restraint, with equal justice for all. In his youthful years this passion was expressed in the Byronic prose of the Ferdinands, the Williams, in the poetry of the Charleston era, and to a lesser extent in the Brilliants and the Hurricanes. It

is also found in the indignant expositions on slavery, on the dispossession of the Indian, and on the disciplinary practices of the Royal Navy.

His best writing are those in which he spoke with his own voice--the essays, the Travels, Jack Ariel, and brief passages in various other works. None of his fictional characters could match the lively appeal of his own candid personality. Although he affected to emulate the style of Addison, his most successful prose finds its literary ancestor in the down-to-earth journalistic realism of Daniel Defoe.

It is pleasant to have made a case for his strengths, both personal and literary, which have been often unrecognized or ignored. Yet one cannot make a case that he was a great writer; indeed his work suffers much in comparison with the giants of his age. He had charm, intelligence, phenomenal industry, and extraordinarily diversified talents--even genius according to Southey. For him, these did not lead to fortune and immortal fame, but they did allow him in his own time a pretty big splash from which rings still make faint ripples of literary waters.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Newspaper Contributions Peripheral to the Early Novels

A discussion of Farmer of New-Jersey and The Wanderings of William gives only a partial report of Davis's literary activities during the period in which they appeared. An examination of his newspaper work during this same period illuminates further both his personality and his versatile literary talents at their best and at their worst. Such an examination also illuminates Davis's reaction to criticism of his work wherever it showed its head, for his experience in New York is typical of other experiences in other places.

Just a little over a year had passed following the 1799 war of words in which Davis and George had aligned themselves against a number of either amused or indignant readers of the Charleston City Gazette and Daily Advertiser. They had discovered that submitting miscellaneous contributions to the newspaper was a capital way for unknown strangers to get their names before the public, and if some of the local citizens were challenged to give answer, the result was marvelous fun, at least for two young litterateurs who had little to lose except a depressing obscurity. If the battle became so acrimonious that the hoped-for fame degenerated into a notoriety, a combatant could always retire from the field and move on, which, in the case of George and Davis, he was probably ready to do anyway.

Now in New York they were together again. Davis was tutoring the children of the Ludlow family, beginning work on The Wanderings of William, outlining the format of Caritat's proposed Volume of Modern

Poetry he expected to edit, and looking for ways to promote the sales of both it and the newly issued Farmer of New-Jersey. George was teaching in Long Island and had been writing an essay column entitled "The Observer," but its duration had been as brief as most American essay series of that time. Soon after Farmer of New-Jersey had been issued, it was reviewed in the usually very commercial New York Commercial Advertiser. The "Critical Communication," written by a mysterious Aulus Gellius, seemed at first reading to be a sincerely flattering evaluation, written, nonetheless, with an objectivity which could point out certain deficiencies in the work. A second, closer reading might raise questions about the original interpretation, for certain portions could have been intended as tongue-in-cheek satire, both of the book and of the current jargon of reviewers. It was calculated to bait a response. The very next day "A Citizen" responded to the lure:

> Permit one of your correspondents to return his most obsequious compliments to Aulus Gellius, and to thank him for the very delicious morsel of criticism he has favored us with in this afternoon's paper. If he had not been quite so severe upon the work--, If he had not pounced down with his huge iron claws upon this most celebrated production among the moderns --the candid would have read with more satisfaction, and uncandid would have had less occasion to raise a laugh. . . . To speak more seriously Sir, I suspect all this will hardly persuade the public to pay 4s for a book the size of an almanack, and I really think this attempt in G____e to puff off the Tom Thumb production of D___s
>
> Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
> To waft a feather or to drown a fly. (8 January 1801)

"Citizen" was probably right. The Gellius article bears many of the marks of the impish Celtic wit coupled with the classical allusions and quotations that Lucas George had already sparred with in South Carolina.[1]

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[1] Of George's style Davis had written, "Jamais personne n'a su mieux se servir de la finesse qui saisit les ridicules."

Gellius's immediate response to "A Citizen" revealed that he, in turn, knew the identity of Citizen, apparently a lawyer who had already engaged in combat over "The Observer," and who was probably a member of Charles Brockden Brown's literary group--at that time the only literary group active in New York. Aulus Gellius answered in a letter which coyly teased the question of his original intent in the review: "My critique on the Farmer of New-Jersey does not resemble much of a puff; but whether it be a puff, a satire, or an impartial analysis, I lament that it should be ascribed to the pen of a G____e! . . . Alas! Alas! Another wears the laurels that I've reap'd." His conclusion was designed to confuse further the question of authorship:

> When the Citizen shall produce a work that contains but a fiftieth part of the humour and simplicity of the New-Jersey Farmer, Aulus Gellius will exclaim, O Mirum! and bring it into notice. I do not design by this promise to heap praise upon Mr. Davis; I know him not, nor do I wish to become acquainted with him. Aulus Gellius has other things to do than to give audience to Novel writers. . . . Yet he will find leisure to silence the barking of the profane and unenlightened. (10 January 1801)

On January 12 "A Citizen" announced in heightened indignation that he had discovered the "puffing critique" to have been written not by the author's friend, but by the author himself. "Such an outrage on decorum is not often to be met with, and never before I believe in this country." Acknowledging that the final two chapters of Farmer had "considerable merit," he concluded, "At any rate, I advise him to abstain from publishing commendatory criticism upon his own writings. It is both indecorous and ineffectual."

With undisturbed aplomb and consistent ambiguity, Aulus Gellius answered:

> I cannot but smile at the consummate skill of a "Citizen" in discovering from internal evidence the real author of the pieces, which, from literary diffidence, I have subscribed with the name of Aulus Gellius. One day it was G____ and the next it is D____. . . .
>
> But surely the public is not so credulous as to admit . . . that Mr. D____ is the author of my criticism on his own book called The Farmer of New Jersey. Were such really the case I would be one of the first to compliment his candor and impartiality of self examination; for the aforesaid Criticism contains more censure than applause, and tends rather to expose the faults than to recommend the beauties of the performance. I only asserted that the Scene on the Beach . . . was pathetic, and that he who could read it without emotion must have feelings very different from my own. . . . But by the common sense of readers uncorrupted "with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtility and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to literary reputation;" and the spontaneous praise that has been already given to the Farmer of New Jersey by those who read not to criticize but to be amused, will outway any commendation from a "Citizen" . . . (13 January 1801)

Additional letters to the editor on other subjects reinforce the probability that to this point George had been the chief author of Aulus Gellius correspondence, though probably with the full knowledge and collaboration of his friend Davis, who was reaping a great deal of free and provocative publicity.

By January 24 Aulus Gellius had expanded his activities to inaugurate a regular literary column under the title of "Noctes Americanae," his "refined and classical taste" having rejected the title "Yankee." Of most interest in this first essay was the author's brief account of himself. Was Aulus Gellius, John Davis? Lucas George? or someone else, as he had earlier intimated?

> I was born in a country where literature is but little cultivated, and my ancestors had always such an unconquerable aversion to it that my great grandfather was frequently heard to exclaim, "Oh! that I had been at the burning of the Alexandrian Library!" When I read, it was by stealth; either in my walks, my messages, or before the family was risen. It was Spence's Comparison between Hill and Magliabechi, that kindled in my breast a love of the Latin language, and with no other implements than half an Ainsworth's Dictionary, a torn edition of Mant's Phaedrus (with

> a parsing Index) and old Lily's Grammar,--I laid a foundation in the language of Tully; on which I have since superstructured at my leisure. Such is my skill in this far-famed idiom, that I have made an Index to Virgil nearly thrice as ample as that of Ruaeus, and discovered that he is little more than a plagiarist from Homer. But I cannot read Virgil like those youths who were bred at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the professors who assist at their elbows. Such I am told can go through the whole of the Mantuan Bard, from Melibaes accosting Tityrus to the fall of the enamored Turnus, without betraying any emotion, or uttering one word of explanation.

Light in tone and gentle in humor, the essay continued with anecdotes of other people who were also "ignorant of letters" and with an announced determination that the author will not care about the "censures of the malignant."

The weight of evidence leans towards authorship by Davis. The library anecdote he had used in Charleston. Much of the rest he excerpted in bits and pieces for brief autobiographical memoirs which he wrote for later works, such as The First Settlers of Virginia. More conclusive is the account of self-teaching from Spence, Lily, and Mant. He had described the same process in an essay called "A Short System of Self-Education," which had been published in The European Magazine for December 1797. "Noctes IV,"[2] February 14 consisted of a discussion of biography as a literary form, once again utilizing material which Davis had submitted to The European Magazine for January 1798. The author promised in a future "Noctes" to pursue the subject of "Self-Biography, and Egotism in Writing," which would have been the final half of the 1798 article; but

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[2] There does not seem to have been a number three. Number two consists of small notes about various subjects. Most significant is its salute to the first issue of the Port Folio, although objecting to the "crudeness" of "Colon and Spondee" as a column heading. The remainder of the essay is a lengthy excerpt from a London paper on the fashionable education of females.

American readers were left unenlightened, for the last "Noctes" on 18 March 1801 was a discussion contrasting the imagined bliss of "solitary meditation" to be enjoyed in the country with the boredom of the reality. Clearly recognizable is Davis's own recent experience on the shores of the Coosahatchie. It seems safe to conjecture that the Aulus Gellius of the "Noctes Americanae" was John Davis.

Why the column, a refreshing contribution, was not continued can be only speculation. On April 3 Aulus Gellius announced in a letter to the editor, "I am devoting part of my time to the study of Chemistry, with which I am much enamoured,"[3] hardly an adequate excuse but characteristic of Davis's eclectic enthusiasms and instability of purpose. Probably, however, the real truth is that he had been shaken out of his Addisonian equability by the March appearance of Charles Brockden Brown's American Review and its critical comments about Farmer and the Poems. The reviews were not all that acrimonious; compared to Davis's violent reaction to them, they seem quite inoffensive. What had been started in fun by George and Davis now developed into grimmer business.

On April 13, he published in the Commercial Advertiser the first number of a proposed quarterly paper entitled "The Reviewers Reviewed":

> The first number of the American Review has appeared, and if we may judge from internal evidence, it was written in the cloudy month of March. Only one work receives praise in the whole Review; but this could not be otherwise than panegyrized, as it was composed and reviewed by one of the Reviewers. . . . It is pitiable to behold the havoc committed by the scalping knives and tomahawks of these Mohock Reviewers; to behold each poor author laying his head upon the block, and the executioner performing his office.
>
> To call these gentlemen Reviewers is to dignify them with a title to which they have little or no pretensions. . . .

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[3] The chemistry spoof of Don Oxygen in William may have been an outgrowth of this interest.

Labeling them "word mongers and syllable catchers," he denounced the shallowness of their critical evaluations, but especially dwelt upon the inadequacies of their literary styles, such as the beginning of a sentence with "at times," and the use of "as if." Obviously knowing the identity of his victims (members of Brown's literary circle), he mocked certain of their personal traits. The attack was continued three days later in the second number of the periodical. Paradoxically, his primary complaint was that the "hypercritical remarks and violent censures" of the American reviewers "were often personal. . . . Criticism at present is different from what it was upon the revival of taste in Europe," he lamented. ". . . instead we have a combination of trite observation, delivered in a style in which those who are disposed to make war upon words, will find endless opportunities of triumph." He had a remarkable talent for attacking in others those things of which he was most guilty himself. His "Reviewers Reviewed" were tedious, sarcastic, and embarrassing in their glaring exposure of the writer. George, knowing the temperament of his friend and remembering the Charleston debacle, had enjoined him to answer his critics not with anger but with ridicule. Davis seemed unable to do so.

On May 4 an undeniably "puffing" preview of The Wanderings of William together with another blast at the reviewers, appeared over the initials "L.G."[4] The style is not George; it is much like Davis, who was probably presuming on his friendship with George, expecting that what they had done for Farmer of New-Jersey in January would be equally acceptable for William in May. But the climate had changed. George undoubtedly felt

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[4] This column is quoted in part on page 94.

that in "The Reviewers Reviewed" the matter had already gone too far. Moreover, he had expressed disappointment that Davis was spending time and talent which could be better utilized elsewhere in writing another novel. And this particular novel, George could never have approved. Besides, the William puff lacked the wit of the previous one, and George could not be blamed for not wanting to have it credited to him. On May 6 another letter appeared over the initial of L.G.:

> I beg that the readers of your paper will not consider me as the author of any publication that has appeared, or may hereafter be published in censure or commendation of the productions of J. Davis. Tho' these little things can indeed merit no great attention from the world, yet I wish by no means to usurp an honor, which by every man of penetration will be attributed to J.D. himself! A person possessed of such singular powers of self-commendation can surely want no assistance from another and if Wandering William be dignified with eulogy, it will require no great discernment to discover that Wandering John is the eulogist!
>
> It is not to be wondered at that this young versifier should descend so low as to become the trumpeter of his own reputation, but it gives me real concern to behold him the jest of the critic and the derision of the multitude. If my name could have screened him from either of these, I could most willingly have pardoned the imposture, since it ought to have been attributed rather to puerile vanity than premeditated insolence. . . .

George's annoyance was tempered with a genuine concern for his friend; Davis's response (May 8) was bitter and crude:

> From a piece in your paper of last evening one would be led to imagine that the name of L.G. was so illustrious as to belong to Lucas George. Why what would this irascible be at? L. G. stands for Lemuel Gulliver, who traveled among the Lilliputians; and is known by his works to every child than can read.

The lengthy letter continued in personal abuse, ending with a final insult, "The next time I make a visit to the regions of Parnassus, I will enquire for his [George's] house at the foot of the Hill." For the next ten days nasty letters--pro-Davis or pro-George--from miscellaneous pseudonyms joined the fray, which had become neither good publicity nor good friendship.

On May 26 the Commercial Advertiser carried the third number of a series called "The Spy," credited earlier to George by one of the combatants. In a calm and objective discussion of the problems of an author, it pointed out philosophically that the desire for fame is often the source of perpetual misery and that an author, by nature of his activity constantly open to censure, must listen to it, must learn from his errors, and must acquire a just knowledge of himself. Like the quiet after a storm, the essay concluded:

> This will never be learned from the treasure of learning or the kindness of friendship. One foe will make him more sensible of error than a thousand friends. He should therefore not suffer his pride, to predominate over his prudence; and tho he may permit the envious to die in silence, he should stoop even to censure for instruction.

Its tone of sober sincerity was unmistakable. The venom of his anger worn out, Davis accepted the counsel in a similar spirit.

The war was over. Some time about the end of June, he left for Washington and Virginia. Before boarding the stage from New York he was cheered by letters from George, still on Long Island. Later he wrote:

> My friendship with Mr. George was still unimpaired, and I consider it no small felicity that I have been able to preserve so many of his letters amidst the casualities to which the life of a Wanderer is subject. The gloom of my solitude at Occoquan, was cheered by the sincerity of his friendship, and the sprightliness of his wit. (Travels, p. 262)

In Spetember he spent a happy week with his friend in Newtown, noting sadly in the Travels that it was the last time they visited together. But in 1806, with Davis back in the United States once more, their friendship was renewed, and he recorded another enjoyable visit which they shared at Raritan, New Jersey, where George was living at the time.[5]

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[5] George Gates Raddin, Jr. in Hocquet Caritat and the Early New York Literary Scene (pp. 61-75) discusses in entertaining detail the publish-

It is unfortunate that Davis did not pursue the essay genre more consistently. His articles in The European Magazine, the Port Folio, and the identifiable pieces in the columns of the [S.C.] Gazette and the New York papers are among his best writing. Not encumbered by fictional characterization and plot, the essay enabled him to approximate what he did best in the Travels--to write out of his own experience, his mind and wit wandering where they would. But Davis's restlessness during this period coupled with his obvious personality problems which quickly disaffected those who might have been his best allies prevented his pursuance of any long term project. As one follows his various removes a behavior pattern emerges which becomes painfully repetitive and destructive to his own self-interest. Almost immediately after arriving in a new place he would force the attention of the reading public by a deluge of compositions and perhaps advertisements in the local papers. His talents recognized, his work would be initially welcomed, but such acceptance he seemed unable to accommodate in a normal manner. Letters to the editor accompanying his ever-increasing "effusions" would become more and more offensively exalted. Under ill-disguised pseudonyms he would puff his own books, antagonizing local readers and before long

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ing association of Messrs. Caritat and Davis. His intuitive insights are often enlightening, but several of his most disparaging conclusions about Davis lack supporting evidence.

For example, he writes: "From January through May, in both the Commercial Advertiser and The Spectator, Davis and a former crony, an Irishman by the name of Lucas George, poured on each other a steady stream of vituperation and puerile, carping criticism. . . ." He repeats his reference to George as a "former crony" who "gave him [Davis] no respite" and who "finished Davis off in New York." Davis does not come off well during this six months period; and to make him appear worse than he was is not necessary. He remained friends for some years with George, as he did even after the Philadelphia feud with Joseph Dennie, though possibly not with Charles Brockden Brown. But then he always said Brown lacked a sense of humor, an opinion shared by Brown's closest friends.

spurring them into some sort of attempted deflation. No matter how slight the insult, how well-meant or how humorously phrased, Davis would immediately lash into his critics with a zest reminiscent of William's attacking the pirates, his belles-lettres all but forgotten. Strangely perverse, he gave indication of enjoying, at least for a season, what to most writers would have been an extremely unpleasant situation. Gradually, however, the exchange of insult would grow increasingly destructive and whatever gratification he had originally derived mutated to a psychotic spleen, he would move on from New York, from Charleston, from Philadelphia, and probably from London--a literary scorched earth policy.

Joseph Dennie of the Port Folio, devastating to authors and works of which he did not approve, was never as ruthless with Davis as he was with many others, liberally sprinkling critiques of his work with encouragement. In January 1809, he welcomed Davis back to the pages of the Port Folio with an acute perception of Davis's problems and advice which Davis had heard before both from Dennie and from George:

> We have always been inclined to think favorably of this young man's talents, and have often regretted that they were not more frequently and judiciously employed. If he thought **proper, he** might become a celebrated votary of the miscellany Muse. His genius is naturally inclined to the joy and sportive, and though he may not soar like the Theban Swan, he does not waddle and creep like the goose of Cibber. It appears to us after a very careful scrutiny of his powers, that he has studied with attention, admires with enthusiasm, and may copy with neatness the sweet and cheerful style of Oliver Goldsmith. Our sometime correspondent, we know, has some of the capricious feelings of the irritabile genius. As whim inspired, he has sometimes been prodigal of his praise, and sometimes lavish of his lampoons. But in all his humours, whether grave or mellow, we have never been so provoked by his petulance, as to refuse justice to his abilities. Let him peruse this article with that docility, which is so delightful a feature in the character of Addison, and many other eminent authors, who justly aspired to a noble distinction. Let him weigh his strength. Let him calculate

> his resources, and then, if in conformity to our opinion, he can emulate the gayer style of the essayists, let him come out, and remember that the exercise of writing twelve concise papers in a year is not a very terrific task; that as there is no fear that Dullness will cause him to stumble at his threshhold, there is a willing presumption that Time and Talents will conduct him through the Temple.

Perhaps Dennie's counsel, together with maturity and experience, was efficacious on the "irritabile genius." No evidence has come to light that Davis participated in any additional newspaper feuds.

APPENDIX B

SOME DAVIS POEMS AND THE PARODIES THEY INSPIRED

Dislike of Davis personally, disapproval of the affectations permeating some of his verse, and disgust at the vain presumption of the notes accompanying them inspired several mischievous parodies of his poems in Charleston, in New York, and in Philadelphia. Erupting unexpectedly on the staid poetry pages of various periodicals, they offered the reader a rare smile in that age of sobriety in American letters, yet a smile of serious satiric intent to laugh folly out of countenance. Cruel as they may have been to the feelings of the youthful author, in the long view they helped him artistically and emotionally.

At the height of the "Alienus" combat in Charleston, Davis had written, "O! for the Poet's deathless fame,/ Th'applause of distant worlds to claim,/ And live through endless song."[1]

In response, Alienus had advised:

> Woulds't thou, O, Davis! seek applause, be wise;
> O'erleap not Nature's modest boundaries;
> Restrain thy Muse, in some dark cell confined;
> Reflect the major sense of all mankind:
> Charleston hath frauds of more resplendent name
> Who far transcend a scribbling rhymer's fame.[2]

When Davis's "The Passage Boat. Swift Imitated" appeared, it was obvious that the counsel had been given in vain:

> On the wave, with flowing sail,
> Quickly wafted by the gale,

---

[1] "Horace, Book II, Ode 20. Imitated," City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 29 August 1799.

[2] From "Ode to J. Davis," Ibid., 18 September 1799.

Lo! the Crescent of the night
Rising, glads the seaman's sight,
While the island larger grows,
And its sandy aspect shews.
Hark! the boatman's deaf'ning cry,
"Quick, and let the jib-sheet fly;
"Or the squall that comes ahead,
"Will give us all a wat'ry bed.
"See! our fore-sail's flat aback.
"D_n that cloud, how horrid black;
"Bear a hand and dowse the sail,
"Loud and louder roars the gale,
Now the Passengers prepare
Each to pay the man his share;
One and six-pence is the sum,
Better spent in this than rum!
([S.C.] State Gazette and Timothy's Daily Advertiser, 20 September [1799])

An imitation of Swift in the Popian propriety of Charleston represented a certain overleaping of "Nature's modest boundaries"; the nautical idiom, a vulgar bid for applause. Four days later "The Spectacle. Davis Imitated" appeared in raucous retribution:

On the muse's flowing sail,
Wafted by ambrosial gale,
Lo! great Carolina's bard,
Rises, hanging by his beard;
Whilst the stage still smaller grows,
And lookers-on appear like crows,
Hark the showman croaking loud,
Affrighting half the gaping crowd:
"Conspicuous see great Davis shine,
"Approach with awe his laurel'd shrine;[3]
"We want mirth, approach and stare,
"See great Davis cleave the air;
"We want song, we want rhymes
"Davis! up, and lash the times.
"Give us bull frogs, "Give us rain;[4]
"Fry us bacon once again.
"Thy name above the skies shall soar,
"But never trouble Charleston more."
He ceas'd with loud groans and grimaces,
Horrid grins, and long drawn faces.
See the lookers-on prepare

---

3 "Laurel'd shrine" was a favorite Davis allusion.

4 See "To Lucas George," Chapter IV, pp. 143-144.

To pay the Showman for their fare;
"One and sixpence is the sum,"
But troth, 'twere better spent on rum.
MOMUS

A poem characteristic of Davis's sentimental style, "Sonnet to the Chick-Willow," was also written in Charleston but not doomed to parody until after its publication in Charles Brockden Brown's Monthly Magazine of June 1800.

Sonnet to the Chick-Willow

Poor, plaintive bird! whose melancholy lay
Suits the despondence of my troubled breast,
I hail thy coming at the close of day,
When all thy tribe are hush'd in balmy rest.

Wisely thou shunn'st the gay, tumultuous throng,
Whose mingled voices empty joys denote,
And for the sober night reserv'st thy song,
When echo from the woods repeats thy note.

Pensive, at silent night, I love to roam,
Where elves and fairies tread the dewy green,
While the clear moon, beneath the azure dome,
Sheds a soft lustre o'er the sylvan scene,

And hear thee tell thy moving tale of woe,
To the bright Empress of the Silver Bow.*[5]

*This bird is, perhaps, better known by the name Whip-poor-Will, though it agree not with the softness of poesy so well as that of Chick-Willow. It is heard after the last frost.

The following month some wag in Brown's coterie had written "Sonnet to John Davis, by Chick-Willow," borrowing lines from several of Davis's poems, exaggerating the preciousness of the original, and utilizing inversion and diminution to deflate the untoward eagerness

---

[5] Previously published in the [Charleston] City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, 25 June 1799. Also published in Poems [1799] and in the Travels where the bird's name has been changed to "whip-poor-will," probably because several complaints from American readers insisted that the sounds of the bird more closely resembled the latter.

for fast and lucrative fame which had marked his assault on the New York reading public.

Sonnet to John Davis. By Chick-Willow.

Whence, and what art thou, solitary wight?
Skulking sweet Coosohatchie's groves among,
When eve drags down the curtain of the night,
And every little chirper holds his tongue.
Haply some bard, who, hopeless of reknown,
Since men to praise thy rhymes will not subscribe,
Most wisely shun'st the tuneless, tasteless town,
To chant thy sonnets to the owling tribe.
Oh! how Chick-Willow loves to hear thee sing,
Yet weeps to think he can no longer stay,
For hark! the humming beetle's on the wing,
And hunger calls me to the chase away;
For I, this live-long day, as I'm a sinner,
Like, thee, prechance, poor bard! have eat no dinner.

Nothwithstanding this ungracious treatment of a prolific contributor, Brown still relied heavily on Davis's work. Of five poems published in the August issue, all of them had been sent in by Davis: three were his own, one was by Lucas George about Davis, and one was by Eleanor.

In November The Monthly Magazine published the following ditty inserted in the midst of several other poems by Davis and "Ennius," who was sometimes George, sometimes Davis:

To an Owl
Written at Coosahatchie

As through these gloomy woods I wind,
And hear, O Owl, thy mournful lay;
I often ponder in my mind,
Had I thy wings, I'd fly away.

A reader finding echoes of Davis's melancholy mood, his favorite rhythm, and several of his most used phrases and persistent images would have assumed the poem to be his. But it is so horrible that it must surely be another joke from the New York "scribbling crew," slyly suggesting a practical solution to the poet's oft expressed misery.

As a chastising parent will punish a lesser fault with exasperation withheld over greater offenses, the parodied poem was not always the most deserving of the lampoon. In 1805 "Ode to the River Raritan" (pp. 167-168) also fell victim to a parodist's wit. Even the introductory note was a burlesque of Davis's customary address to the editor:

> Mr. Oldschool, As you admire "effusions," permit me to present for insertion in your misc. the following, as a companion for the admirable ode to that "sacred stream" and "Queen of rivers, Raritan."
>
> R. Shallow.
>
> Ode to Market-Street Gutter.
>
> Oh, Sweetest gutter! though a clown,
> I love to see thee running down,
> To mark thee stop awhile, then, free
> From ice, joy on again--like me.
> Just like the lasses, whom I meet,
> Thou trip-st so lightly through the street,
> As if thou hads't no where to go.
> So slowly on thy waters flow,
> That did the cits not wish in vain,
> Thou would'st be in the pumps again
> But like a pig, whom fates deny
> To find again his wonted sty,
> You turn and stop, and run and turn,
> Yet ne'er shall find your 'native urn.'
> How oft has rolled down thy stream
> Things, which in song I dare not name,
> Ere scavengers their scrapers plied
> To drag manure from out thy tide,
> Or hydrants bade thy scant rill
> Desert its banks, and cellars fill!
> Last Tuesday morn, so very cold,
> A morn not better felt, than told,
> Then first, as I drove father's sleigh,
> Did I 'thy frozen form' survey;
> And goodness, what a great big steeple!
> What sights of houses! --and such people!
> And then I thought, did I not stutter,
> But verse could, like dear Davis, utter,
> How much I'd praise thee, sweetest gutter!
>
> A_____o.

This time the parodist, Robert Rose, M.D., was well known to Davis. One of the most frequent contributors to the Port Folio in its early days,

he wrote under such pseudonyms as "Asmodeo" and "R. Shallow," attacking institutions and fashions for which he bore aversions. The following month, writing under both names again, he mimicked "some of the recent pastorals by an emigrant." Davis was humble enough, for once, to resubmit the improved "Ode to the River Raritan" a few months later with an apology and excuse for its original "mutilated" form.

The "Raritan" episode and its offspring, The Philadelphia Pursuits, may have ended the trying of Davis in the Port Folio except for questions raised by an intriguing note and poem which appeared on July 1, 1805:

> Mr. Oldschool, Your former goodness in publishing several efforts of my wayward muse, give me a kind of claim on your indulgence; and an assurance that you will not reject the last petition, which, in all probability, you will receive from your obliged and obedient servant. D.
>
> Valedictory to my Muse
> Poeta loquitur
>
> Hence wanton Muse! no longer tease me,
> No longer do I court thy smiles,
> For now I known thy artful wiles,
> In vain thou'lt strive again to please me.
> . . . . . .
> For thou hast often forc'd me to resign
> The lessons grave, of Bacon, Locke, or Newton;
> For modern bards, with awkward wit who shine,
> Like 'prentice boy with Sunday suit on!
>
> And when my midnight taper dimly burns,
> Shedding a feeble ray on Hunter's page;
> How like a weathercock my fancy turns,
> And quits for thee, the grave, instructive page.
>
> Spare me henceforth! No longer let me rhyme,
> And wage no more with native dullness wars;
> Fill not my head with notions too sublime,
> Lest my thick skull be crack'd against the stars.*
> *Sublimi feriam sidera vertice. Horace.
> Decius

Was it by Davis as might be implied by the "D" and, even more incriminating, by the message, by some of the phrases he loved, and by the Latin

quotations? Or was it another jab from Rose, who sometimes used the initials "A.D."? Was it maliciously intended, just playful, or sincere?

The following January, in a section called "To Readers and Correspondents," an unusual, gossipy entry raises the possibility that for the "incrowd" Davis was still a subject for conversation:

> Juvenis is as mad as a March hare. His thoughts are turbid, and his style is disjointed and desultory. He must be one
> Who, lock'd from ink and paper, scrawls
> With desparate charcoal round his darken'd walls.

The description fits Davis in one of his rages; he had been the proprietor of the Juvenile Bookstore; and his pseudonym for The Philadelphia Pursuits had been "Juvenal Junius."

Barring the emended "Ode to the River Raritan," over three years elapsed before the Port Folio carried Davis's ascription to another poem, an exile self-imposed wither by deliberate withdrawal or by the press of other activities. In January 1809, Dennie welcomed him back in flattering terms which acknowledged his strong points, gently alluded to his past literary indiscretions, and suggested a specific way in which his talents could best be expended:

> The hand-writing of our old correspondent, John Davis, we have just again recognized, without a yawn of lassitude or the contempt of criticism. We have always been inclined to think favorably of this young man's talents, and have often regretted that they were not more frequently and judiciously employed. If he thought proper, he might become a celebrated votary of the miscellaneous Muse. His genius is naturally inclined to the joy and sportive, and though he may not soar like the Theban Swan, he does not waddle and creep like the goose of Cibber. It appears to us after a very careful scrutiny of his powers, that he has studied with attention, admires with enthusiasm, and may copy with neatness the sweet and cheerful style of Oliver Goldsmith. Our sometime correspondence, we know, has some of the capricious feelings of the irritabile genus. As whim inspired, he has sometimes been prodigal of his praise, and sometimes lavish of his lampoons. But in all his humours, whether grave or mellow, we have never been so

provoked by his petulance, as to refuse justice to his abilities. Let him peruse this article with that docility, which is so delightful a feature in the character of Addison, and many other eminent authors, who justly aspired to a noble distinction. Let him weigh his strength. Let him calculate his resources, and then, if in conformity to our opinion, he can emulate the gayer style of the essayists, let him <u>come out</u>, and remember that the exercise of writing twelve concise papers in a year is not a very terrific task; that as there is no fear that Dulness will cause him to stumble at his threshold, there is a willing presumption that Time and Talents will conduct him through the Temple.

VITA

Barbara Muir Butler Ruf was born in Somerville, Massachusetts. She attended the public schools of Arlington, Massachusetts, and was graduated from Arlington High School and from Columbia Junior College, Washington, D. C. In 1944 she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts. After a year of teaching at Greater Boston Academy, she enrolled in the Graduate School at Boston University and received the Master of Arts degree in 1946. Married to Rolland Miles Ruf, she has taught in secondary schools in various cities where his work as a clergyman has taken them. In 1969 she accepted a position with the English department at Southern Missionary College, where she is currently teaching. She received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in English in March, 1974, and is living in Collegedale, Tennessee, with her husband and three sons.