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Beyond the American Landscape: Tourism and the Significance of Hawthorne's Travel Sketches

*Toshikazu MASUNAGA**

INTRODUCTION: 1832

After graduating from Bowdoin College in 1825, Nathaniel Hawthorne went back to his hometown, Salem, Massachusetts, where he concentrated on writing in order to become a professional writer. His early masterpieces such as “Young Goodman Brown” and “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” were written during the so-called solitary years from 1825 to 1837, and he viewed those Salem years of his literary apprenticeship as “a form of limbo, a long and weary imprisonment” (Mellow 36). But biographers of Hawthorne point out that this self-portrait of a solitary genius was partly invented by his “self-dramatizations” (E. H. Miller 87) to romanticize his younger days. In fact, he maintained social engagements, and his sister Elizabeth testified that “he was always social” (Stewart 38). He was more active and outgoing than his own fabricated self-image, and he even made several trips with his uncle Samuel Manning as well as by himself.¹

While strenuously writing tales, he undertook an American grand tour alone, traveling around New England and upstate New York in 1832. He was one of those tourists who rushed to major tourist destinations of the day such as the Hudson Valley, Niagara Falls, and the White Mountains in order

*Professor, Kwansei Gakuin University

to spend leisure time and to find cultural significance in the scenic beauty of the American natural landscape. It was the 1820s when Americans finally could afford to travel, and they followed the example of well-to-do English people who traveled in search of picturesque and sublime scenery (Sears 3). The rise of tourism was one of the most spectacular cultural phenomena to emerge in early nineteenth-century America.

Richard Gassan points out that “the first exposure many Americans had to the idea of travel for pleasure was travel literature” (70). The tourist guidebook, a new subgenre of travel literature, was a primary source. According to *Hawthorne’s Reading: 1828-1850* (Kesselring 1975), Hawthorne borrowed quite a few books related to travel both at home and abroad from the Salem Athenaeum. For example, he borrowed Jonathan Carver’s *Travels through the Interior Parts of North-America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* in 1828 and *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* by William Bartram, a well-known American naturalist, in 1831.

Those readings must have raised his expectations for traveling and also might have aroused his interest in travel writing itself as a promising literary genre. With the boom of tourism in the United States, travel books had become steady sellers that were purchased and read by upper-middle-class Americans, who used them as guides for their own travels. It is quite natural to suppose that young Hawthorne wrote a series of travel sketches to achieve financial success and literary distinction.

A letter addressed to Franklin Pierce, his friend from college and the future president of the United States, reveals that the tour was not merely for taking a vacation but that it was professionally motivated to gather materials for his own future publications:

I was making preparations for a northern tour, when this accursed Cholera broke out in Canada. It was my intention to go by way of New-York and Albany to Niagara, from thence to Montreal and Quebec, and home through Vermont and New-Hampshire. I am very desirous of making this journey on account of a book by which I intended to acquire an (undoubtedly) immense literary reputation, but which I cannot commence writing till I have visited Canada.

(28 June 1832, 15: 224)

It is interesting that a literary giant traveled to the same tourist destinations Hawthorne visited amid the cholera scare in 1832.² This figure was

Washington Irving, who had just come back from seventeen years in Europe to the United States, arriving in New York on May 21, 1832. A few months later, he made trips to show his friends from Europe around America: he started out with West Point and the Catskill Mountains and then went up the Hudson River in July and to the White Mountains in August.

It is a sheer coincidence that both Hawthorne and Irving made trips around the same time, but it is no coincidence that both writers visited the same sites: the Hudson Valley, Niagara Falls, and the White Mountains were all must-see destinations, highly recommended by tourist guidebooks at that time. Irving, notably, was one of the key figures who contributed significantly to the development of tourism in early nineteenth-century America through his writings. It is undeniable that his two American pieces collected in *The Sketch Book* (1819-29), “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” both set in upstate New York, played a crucial role in promoting tourism in the Hudson Valley region.

Nathaniel Hawthorne undoubtedly followed Irving’s professional scheme of incorporating famous tourist sites into his imaginative tales. The story of “The Ambitious Guests” (1835) is based on a true tragedy that involved the Willey family in the Crawford Notch of the White Mountains, and “The Great Stone Face” (1850) was obviously inspired by the “Old Man of the Mountain,” granite cliffs located in Franconia Notch, also in the White Mountains.

Hawthorne’s solitary tour, conducted in 1832, provided subject matter for his later imaginative tales, and he wrote a series of travel sketches as a vivid record of his own experiences. One of the most conspicuous characteristics found in those sketches is the frequent use of aesthetic criteria of the picturesque and the sublime. These two aesthetic qualities, which were introduced from Europe to the United States in the early nineteenth century, affected peoples’ ways of viewing the natural landscape of America, and the aesthetic concepts exerted a strong influence on the landscape painters of the Hudson River school. In a way, Hawthorne’s travel sketches were a literary experiment to introduce the aesthetic notion into verbal expression.

There exists limited information about the exact route of the tour Hawthorne took because most of his letters to his family were destroyed at his request.³ But it is certain that he did depart Salem for New Hampshire in late summer of 1832, reached two major tourist destinations, the White Mountains and Niagara Falls, and probably traveled down the Hudson River to Saratoga Springs on the way back from Lake George (Weber 3-16). Traveling was his lifelong diversion, but the tour of 1832 was something

special for Hawthorne as it was professionally motivated. During this period of literary apprenticeship, Hawthorne was exploring the prospect of writing travel literature when he made this tour and was trying to include the aesthetic notions of the “picturesque” and “sublime” into his writings as he dreamed of acquiring “an immense literary reputation” (28 June 1832, 15: 224) in the future.

THE RISE OF TOURISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Leisure travel had been an aristocratic luxury both in Europe and America before the nineteenth century, and indeed it scarcely existed in America at the beginning of the century. Nonetheless, tourism in America developed with surprising rapidity, and it became common by the 1830s (Gassan 2-3). The Hudson Valley region developed into the first major tourist site because of its proximity to New York City, a rapidly growing economic center, and the inland transportation available by water on the Hudson River.

In the early stage of tourism in the Hudson Valley, destinations were quiet spa and health resorts, and people went there to seek the therapeutic benefits of drinking mineral water and bathing. Ballston Springs and Saratoga Springs were such health resorts at first, but soon the quiet atmosphere of these places was transformed by the appearance of gaudy, fashionable tourists who came to frequent the springs searching for “pleasure,” as Irving noted.⁴ As the tourist destinations in upstate New York expanded finally as far as Niagara Falls, the beautiful scenery of the region became the chief attraction for more tourist visits. The booming of guidebooks,⁵ travel literature, and the paintings of the Hudson River school all promoted the commercialization of tourism in this area and induced people to travel up the Hudson.⁶

Irving was one of the earliest major writers who played an important role in the growth of tourism in the region. He transformed a German tale into an American legend set in “the Kaatskill mountains” and the Hudson Valley, and thus he created the most iconic fictional character in America: Rip Van Winkle. To sustain tourism, each tourist site had to have a gripping story to capture tourists’ attention along with agreeable infrastructure. “Rip Van Winkle” (1819) was a perfect story to confer something of interest, unique to the Catskill Mountains. In fact, Rip was well commercialized to make the place into an attractive tourist spot in various ways. It is said that tourists on the coach heading for the Catskill Mountain House passed a small dwelling reputed to be Rip Van Winkle’s shanty and the hollow where he imbibed the

drink of the old Dutchmen playing ninepins (Schuyler 26).⁷ Those devices undoubtedly stimulated tourists' imaginations about the legendary figure and added charm to the region.

Hawthorne undertook his northern tour a decade after Irving featured the Hudson Valley as the setting of his famous "Rip Van Winkle." Following the popular route suggested by guidebooks,⁸ Hawthorne set out north, and wrote the sketches based on his travel. Several sketches of the tour developed later into imaginative tales set in the White Mountains. Obviously he had intended to attract readers with the settings of popular tourist destinations, as Irving did with the Hudson Valley in "Rip Van Winkle."⁹ It should be noted that the traveling class and the reading class overlapped considerably in early nineteenth-century America when "books were still relatively expensive" (Gassan 78). If a story had an appeal to tourists of the wealthy upper middle class, the author could expect good sales of his writings as well.

"The Ambitious Guest" (1835) is one of the earliest tales written by Hawthorne set in the White Mountains area; it was followed by "The Great Carbuncle" (1837) and "The Great Stone Face" (1850). On the night of August 28, 1826, an avalanche rushed down the mountainside and killed the whole Willey family, pioneer settlers of the Crawford Notch. The disaster made the region into a place of fame, and it engendered a host of artistic and commercial representations that conferred dignity on the site (McGrath 59).¹⁰ Inspired by the tragedy, Hawthorne fictionalized the catastrophe in a tale that made use of his own personal experiences on his northern tour in 1832. "The Ambitious Guest" became the most popular fiction of the tragedy, which continues to attract many tourists to the region to this day.

Incorporating a famous tourist site as the setting of a work of fiction is not rare but a common practice adopted by novelists around the world. But it should be pointed out that nineteenth-century Americans developed a special feeling for the landscape of America as they "had sought their identity in their relationship to the land they had settled." The American landscape was "the basis of that culture," and the booming of tourism in nineteenth-century America was deeply intertwined with the American aspirations for its nationhood (Sears 4). The involvement of artists and writers with nineteenth-century tourism, thus, could be taken as an effort to achieve cultural independence in art and literature through their works.

The relationship between tourism and writers or painters was reciprocal, as they collaborated with one another to publicize their writings and paintings as well as to promote tourist sites. While many tourists were

attracted to the area of Lake George by the historical novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), James Fenimore Cooper reciprocally gained readership by featuring the already popular tourist site as the setting of his story.¹¹ And Thomas Cole joined the collaboration to produce the painting *Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans," Cora Kneeling at the Feet of Tamenund* (1827), inspired by a passage in the novel.¹² Although their involvement with tourism might have been a pragmatic reason that drew people's attention to their works, it is undeniable that those paintings and writings that featured tourist sites contributed to the establishment of the cultural identity of America in one way or another.

With his northern tour, Hawthorne ventured into the reciprocal relationship between tourism and artistic representations, and he became conscious of the artistic criteria employed by painters and writers in assessing the beauty of the American landscape: the aesthetic categories of the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime.

THE PICTURESQUE AND THE SUBLIME

"The Notch of the White Mountains" is one of the earliest existing travel sketches that Hawthorne wrote based on his northern tour. When it first appeared anonymously with the title "The Notch" in 1835 in the *New-England Magazine* it had an editorial introduction written by the editor of the magazine, Park Benjamin, which was omitted when the sketch was later collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. It is interesting that the introduction reflects precisely the characteristics of tourism in America in the 1830s:

We are so fortunate to have in our possession the portfolio of a friend, who traveled on foot in search of the picturesque over New-England and New-York. . . . Some of his quiet delineations deserve rather to be called pictures than sketches, so lively are the colors shed over them. The first which we select, is a reminiscence of a day and night spent among the White Mountains, and will revive agreeable thoughts in the minds of tourists who have just returned from a visit to their sublime scenery.

(Benjamin, quoted in Hawthorne 10: 648)

The sketch was written by a traveler "in search of the picturesque," whose sketches should be called "pictures than sketches," and the sketch was meant for tourists "who have but just returned from a visit to their sublime

scenery.” The passage reveals that what tourists of the day went to find on their tour were picturesque and sublime landscapes.

The picturesque and the sublime were not aesthetic concepts invented in America originally, but they were brought from Europe and adapted to the American landscape. The sublime is an aesthetic quality in nature that was best defined by the philosopher, Edmund Burke in 1757. Sublime objects are “vast in dimensions,” “rugged and negligent,” and “dark and gloomy,” while beautiful ones are “comparatively small,” “smooth and polished,” and “light and delicate” (Burke 113). In Burke’s definition, the sublime is a kind of natural beauty that causes a feeling of terror among viewers of the landscape.¹³

The picturesque stands in the middle between the sublime and the beautiful (Gassan 55). In general usage, picturesque beauty often refers to “the kind of landscape beauty that would be suitable in a picture” (Lueck 6); but as an aesthetic criterion defined by William Gilpin, picturesque beauty is characterized by the “roughness” or “ruggedness” of the objects, compared to the smoothness that is associated with the beautiful (6).

As discussed, their desire to establish a national identity was a major factor that made Americans embark on landscape tours. And artists and writers endeavored to achieve the cultural independence of America through their works that described the picturesque and sublime landscape of their country. America considered itself to be “Nature’s nation” (P. Miller 242).¹⁴ The picturesque and sublime scenery of America was a metaphor for American nationhood, and Americans found their supremacy in the sublime nature of America. Niagara Falls, therefore, became the national icon, embodying the power of the nation in its sublimity. Along with George Washington, Niagara Falls was “the most often painted subject in the young country’s art” (McKinsey 2). And quite a few writings about Niagara Falls appeared in early nineteenth-century America, including Hawthorne’s travel sketch, “My Visit to Niagara” (1835).

Confronting the rough and rugged natural landscape, picturesque painters pursued the “unity in variety, creation of atmosphere, and strong contrast between light and dark (*chiaroscuro*).” To create that unity they added “a *coulisse* element, a tall foreground object usually at one edge of the canvas . . . somewhat analogous to a theater’s curtain” (McKinsey 59). What Hawthorne attempted in his northern tour was to make sketches of the American landscape, not by paintbrush but by pen. His travel sketches are much imbued with the idea of the picturesque and the sublime, and he incorporated the picturesque conventions of art into his verbal expressions.

VERBAL SKETCHES OF PICTURESQUE SCENERY

In his travel sketches, Hawthorne applied the aesthetics of the picturesque and the sublime to a considerable extent in the verbal depiction of landscapes and scenes that he saw. “A Night Scene” (1835) is a brief but an extraordinary verbal sketch of a picturesque night view from a steamboat on Lake Erie, which impresses us with its strong contrast between light and dark, leaving a distinct visual image with the reader.¹⁵ The effect brought by the contrast in the sketch is equivalent to the *chiaroscuro* that painters of the picturesque used in their visual art. On the steamboat, the narrator is fascinated with the night scene of the bonfire on the bank and the figures of Irishmen who were “continually emerging from the dense gloom, passing through the lurid glow, and vanishing into gloom on the other side”:

I stood on deck, watching a scene that would not have attracted a second glance in the day-time, but became picturesque by the magic of strong light and deep shade. Some wild Irishmen were replenishing our stock of wood, and had kindled a great fire on the bank, to illuminate their labors. . . . In short, these wild Irish, now bursting into sudden splendor, and now struggling between light and darkness, formed a picture which might have been transferred, almost unaltered, to a tale of supernatural.

(11: 304-5)

Hawthorne even applies “picturesque” himself to the description of people whom he met. In “Our Evening Party Among the Mountains” (1835), another travel sketch derived from his northern tour, the narrator makes a sketch of guests at Ethan Crawford’s inn as follows: “Ethan Crawford’s guests were of such a motley description as to form quite a *picturesque group*, seldom seen together, except at some place like this, at once the pleasure-house of fashionable tourists, and the homely inn of country travelers” (10: 425; emphasis added). After describing the people there individually in detail, the narrator intentionally juxtaposes those fashionable tourists consisting of upper-middle-class people including honeymooners with a half a dozen local wood-cutters of “the rugged county of Coos, . . . who had slain a bear in the forest and smitten off his paw” (10: 426). By juxtaposing those two totally different kinds/classes of people who lodged at the inn together, the narrator adds the rugged contrast to the scene effectively in the verbal sketch. What attracted the attention of the narrator

that night was the sharp contrast between the characters of two groups of people, and he observed this incongruity just like picturesque painters emphasized the roughness and ruggedness of objects to express the peculiar sort of beauty of a landscape.

Along with the strong contrast between light and dark, we find a “*coulisse* element,” a tall foreground object on the edge of the canvas in order to create unity and characteristic of picturesque paintings of the Hudson River school. Hawthorne also tried to imitate this artistic technique in “The Notch of the White Mountains”:

Height after height had risen and towered one above another, till the clouds began to hang below the peaks. Down their slopes, were the red path-ways of the Slides, those avalanches of earth, stones and trees, which descend into the hollows, leaving vestiges of their track, hardly to be effaced by the vegetation of ages. We had mountains behind us and mountains on each side, and a group of mightier ones ahead. Still our road went up along the Saco, right towards the centre of that group, as if to climb above the clouds, in its passage to the farther region.

(10: 422)

Surrounded by high mountains, travelers in this sketch are overwhelmed with the sublime beauty of the White Mountains, as they witness the vestiges of avalanches. In this highly realistic representation of the scenery, the narrator seems to follow the law of perspective in art: the “mountains on each side” surrounding the travelers in the scene is the verbal equivalent of *coulisse* in visual arts to highlight the mighty mountains in the distance ahead of them.

From that visual richness in the description, it is clear that Hawthorne was strongly conscious of artistic techniques employed in picturesque paintings. In his travel sketches, he made a literary experiment in verbalizing the picturesque and sublime landscapes that he saw as if they were paintings of the Hudson River school.

LITERARY PILGRIMAGE TO NIAGARA FALLS

Among tourist sites in nineteenth-century America, Niagara Falls was the preeminent attraction and served as “the climax of the northern tour for nineteenth-century tourists” (Lueck 135). Hawthorne was also attracted to the falls and expressed his special feeling about the place in his travel

sketch, “My Visit to Niagara,” as if it were a religious shrine: “Never did a pilgrim approach Niagara with deeper enthusiasm, than mine” (11: 281).

On this sacred place of sublime beauty, Hawthorne tries to write a verbal sketch in the form of visualization just like he did with other picturesque sceneries. The narrator “*beheld* a broad sheet of brilliant and unbroken foam, not shooting in a curved line from the top of the precipice, but falling headlong down from height to depth” (11: 283; emphasis added); he “*looked along* the whitening rapids, and *endeavored to distinguish* a mass of water far above the fall” (11: 283-84; emphasis added); and he “took in the whole scene *at a glance*, and tried to comprehend it in one vast idea” (11: 284; emphasis added) casting his eyes across the river and to every side. The narrator immerses himself in the act of seeing in order to draw a verbal sketch of the place. And he asks himself: “Were my long desires fulfilled? And had I seen Niagara?” (11: 284).

Compared to other travel sketches of his northern tour, however, the narrator of “My Visit to Niagara” is strangely diffident in depicting the sublime landscape. When he arrived at Niagara, he did not rush to the falls to enjoy the sublime scenery, but he cared about “the dinner-hour” of the hotel first. Waiting for the dinner, he becomes depressed in mood:

Within the last fifteen minutes, my mind had grown strangely benumbed, and my spirits apathetic, with a slight depression, not decided enough to be termed sadness. My enthusiasm was in a deathlike slumber. . . .

Such has often been my apathy, when objects, long sought, and earnestly desired, were placed within my reach. . . . Finally, with reluctant step, and the feeling of an intruder, I walked towards Goat Island.

(11: 282)

What made him so depressed about observing Niagara Falls? Lazar Ziff contends that “the fear of failure—the falls’ failure to meet expectations, his own failure to be able to see through his own eyes rather than the eyes of those who had written the descriptions he had read—held him back” (230). In fact, the narrator himself confesses his inability to describe the falls honestly as follows: “My mind had struggled to adapt these false conceptions to the reality, and finding the effort vain, *a wretched sense of disappointment* weighed me down. I climbed the precipice, and threw myself on the earth—feeling that I was unworthy to look at the Great Falls, and careless about

beholding them again” (11: 284; emphasis added).

It is interesting to note that the word, “disappointment,” appears in a remarkably high percentage of visitors’ accounts and guidebooks to the falls of the day (Sears 15). When Margaret Fuller visited Niagara Falls in 1843, she described her feeling on the spot in her travel sketches as follows:

When I arrived in sight of them [the rapids] I merely felt, “ah, yes, *here is the fall, just as I have seen it in pictures.*” When I arrived at the terrapin bridge, I expected to be overwhelmed, to retire trembling from this giddy eminence, and gaze with unlimited wonder and awe upon the immense mass rolling on and on, but, somehow or other, *I thought only of comparing the effect on my mind with what I had read and heard.* I looked for a short time, and then with almost *a feeling of disappointment*, turned to go to the other points of view to see if I was not mistaken in not feeling any surpassing emotion at this sight.

(8; emphasis added)

Fuller’s comment on the falls reveals that Hawthorne’s response at Niagara Falls was not peculiar to him but was a common visitors’ experience there. He endeavored to describe the sublime landscape of the falls consistently to the end of the sketch. But he could not discover any further semiotic meanings from the falls to be added than their already established significance as the power of the Creator or the supremacy of America.

The narrator makes the excuses that “time and thought must be employed in comprehending it” (11: 285) in order to finally attain the state of rapture after the first disappointment. Was Niagara Falls too vast and sublime to depict entirely, and did he need more time to complete the description? No. No matter how long he stayed there to capture the sublimity of the falls, he could never reach his goal. What afflicted him was the unsolvable discrepancy between his already established knowledge about the place formed by travel accounts and pictures of the falls and the actual Niagara Falls he was just witnessing. What occupied the narrator’s mind invariably in the sketch was an envious thought toward old discoverers of the falls: “Oh, that I had never heard of Niagara till I beheld it! Blessed were the wanderers of old, who heard its deep roar, sounding through the woods, as the summons to an unknown wonder”(11: 284).

At the very last moment of his departure, the narrator suddenly fell into a curious trance state:

The golden sunshine tinged the sheet of the American cascade, and painted on its heaving spray the broken semicircle of a rainbow, Heaven's own beauty crowning earth's sublimity. . . . The solitude of the old wilderness now reigned over the whole vicinity of the falls. My enjoyment became the more rapturous, because no poet shared it—nor wretch devoid of poetry, profaned it: but the spot, so famous through the world, was *all my own!*

(11: 288; emphasis added)

His conversion from the unintelligibility of the falls' sublimity to the full possession of them is so abrupt that it is not explicable at all. As Fuller noted that "happy were the first discoverers of Niagara, those who could come unawares upon this view and upon that, whose feelings were entirely their own" (9), only the first discoverers of the falls could probably enjoy the rapturous feelings, occupying the sublime scenery and wonders as their own.

Here is a young writer struggling to write something unique about the world-famous tourist site. The title of the sketch, "*My Visit to Niagara*," thus, is the reflection of his strong desire to write a sketch of his own. Although he faced the difficulty of trying to exceed existing travel accounts and in fact failed, "*My Visit to Niagara*" was part of his study of writing travel sketches, and he was on his way with his literary apprenticeship. Exploring the possibilities of aesthetics, he continued his pilgrimage. And he discovered another form of literary expression at Fort Ticonderoga near the shores of Lake Champlain.

BEYOND THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

In 1836, just one year after the publication of "*My Visit to Niagara*," "*Old Ticonderoga, a Picture of the Past*" was published anonymously in the February issue of *American Monthly Magazine*. In this travel sketch, Hawthorne made significant progress in his range of literary expression:

These are old French structures, and appear to have occupied three sides of a large area, now overgrown with grass, nettles, and thistles. The one, in which I sat, was long and narrow, as all the rest had been, with peaked gables. The exterior walls were nearly entire, constructed of gray, flat, unpicked stones, the aged strength of which promised

long to resist the elements, if no other violence should precipitate their fall. The roof, floors, partitions, and the rest of the wood-work, had probably been burnt, except some bars of stanch old oak, which were blackened with fire but still remained embedded into the window-sills and over the doors. . . . Grass and weeds grew in the windows, and in all the crevices of the stone, climbing, step by step, till a tuft of yellow flowers was waving on the highest peak of the gable. Some spicy herb diffused a pleasant odor through the ruin. . . .

Here I sat, with those roofless walls about me, the clear sky over my head, and the afternoon sunshine falling gently bright through the window-frames and doorway. I heard the tinkling of a cow-bell, the twittering of birds, and the pleasant hum of insects. Once a gay butterfly, with four gold-speckled wings, came and fluttered about my head, then flew up and lighted on the highest tuft of yellow flowers, and at last took wing across the lake. Next a bee buzzed through the sunshine, and found much sweetness among the weeds. After watching him till he went off to his distant hive, I closed my eyes on Ticonderoga in ruins, and cast a dream-like glance over pictures of the past, and scenes of which this spot had been the theatre.

(11: 188-89)

Sitting down in one of the roofless barracks, the narrator describes the ruin in much detail. It is impressive that Hawthorne had become more refined than he was earlier in depicting the picturesque scenery in the sketch. However, it should be noticed that the refinement is not achieved solely by the act of seeing. Along with the precise and colorful description of the old fort, it is worthy of remark that he makes the scene alive by employing sensations other than sight. While sitting in the ruin, he smells “a pleasant odor” diffused from some spicy herb, hears “the tinkling of a cow-bell, the twittering of birds, and the pleasant hum of insects,” and from the clear blue sky above him, the buzz of a bee reaches his ears. He is no longer obsessed with the act of seeing, which he had leaned on heavily to describe the sublimity at Niagara Falls.

Although Ticonderoga was a bloody battlefield generations ago, the present atmosphere of the place he describes is quite peaceful. Hawthorne, the narrator, who has made a step forward to maturity in artistic representation, is not as intense as he was in “My Visit to Niagara.” Freed from the constraint of the visual actualities, he now follows his imagination into the historical past of the landscape that he describes. After describing the old fort in much

detail, not only visually but also through sensations, he summons up people of the past involved in many battles, from one to the next.

General Abercrombie suffered a devastating setback in the Battle of Fort Carillon in 1758, but Jeffery Amherst, commander in chief of the British Army, took the fort from French troops the next year. Nearly twenty years later, the American Revolutionary War broke out, and Ethan Allen summoned the British Army at the fort to surrender. It was in 1777 when Arthur St. Clair and his troops were forced to retreat from the fort after brief occupancy of it, surrounded by British forces commanded by General Burgoyne. Suddenly, the narrator awakens from his reverie when he hears the sound of a bell ringing from a steamboat on Lake Champlain. The ghosts he summoned from the past had all disappeared, and he now beholds “only the gray and weed grown ruins”(11: 191). The narrator made a journey into the historical past through the medium of the ruin and returned to the present.

The brief travel sketch “Old Ticonderoga, a Picture of the Past” is a precursor to the Hawthornesque manner of historical representation. Later, it became a customary practice for him to use ruins or old objects as doorways into the past; in “Grandfather’s Chair” (1849), a historical account written for children, Grandfather tells a history of America to young children by describing the succession of ownerships of an old chair “made of oak, which had grown dark with age” (6: 10). In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), his magnum opus, a “rag of scarlet cloth” (1: 31) found in the second story of the Custom-House beckons the narrator to the early days of Puritan New England; the old Pyncheon House is a structure “to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us” in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) (2: 2). He had to resort to historical imagination to write a romance in a country “where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight” (4: 3).

For Hawthorne, the tour of 1832 was a literary trial and error to refine his artistry by employing the fashionable aesthetic ideas of the picturesque and sublime. “My Visit to Niagara” resulted in a literary impasse as Hawthorne tried to describe the American icon. But we can see his literary progress in “Old Ticonderoga, a Picture of the Past.” The narrator has a much more relaxed atmosphere when he depicts the old ruin, releasing himself from the obsession of seeing, and he immerses himself in all his senses as well as exercising his historical imagination. While working on the improvement of his art of writing, Hawthorne observed the changes that had happened in the country, too. He witnessed that pristine nature was disappearing rapidly

from America with massive land development. He observed not only the American landscape but also American people: “Here is the worshipper of Mammon at noonday; . . . here is the American!” (“The Canal-Boat,” 10: 435). As other American tourists sought their national identity in their nation’s landscape, Hawthorne as a tourist also tried to investigate his cultural identity during his 1832 tour. And in his later writings, he continued his effort to find it in the picture of the past beyond the American landscape.

NOTES

¹ In a letter to Louisa Hawthorne, Nathaniel’s younger sister, dated August 24, 1829, Hawthorne wrote about “many marvelous adventures” he had during the trip to Connecticut with his uncle, Samuel Manning (15: 198). Traveling was a constant diversion for him: “Once a year or thereabouts, I used to make an excursion of a few weeks, in which I enjoyed as much of life as other people do in the whole year’s around” (1: 97).

² Cholera raged not only in the southern part of Canada, but it also hit New York severely, where 2,565 New Yorkers were dead by mid-August of 1832 (Jones 299). In a letter to his brother Peter in Paris, Irving notes that he found New York “desolate and deserted on account of the cholera” when he stopped over in the city on the way back from his trip to the White Mountains (P. M. Irving 29).

³ See Alfred Weber, “Hawthorne’s Tour of 1832,” 2; and Nelson F. Adkins, “Early Projected Works of Hawthorne,” 131.

⁴ Irving had already paid attention to the trend of tourism as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century, and he noted the sudden change that happened at the springs in an article titled “Style at Ballston” for the periodical *Salmagundi*:

It originally meant nothing more than a relief from pain and sickness; and the patient who had journeyed many a weary mile to the Springs, with a heavy heart, and emaciated form, called it a pleasure when he threw by his crutches, and danced away from them with renovated spirits and limbs jocund with vigor . . . when, lo! all of a Sudden *Style* made its baneful appearance in the semblance of a gig and tandem, a pair of leather breeches, a liveried foot man and cockney!—since that fatal era pleasure has taken an entire new signification, and at present means nothing but *Style*.

Irving, “Style at Ballston” (Thursday, October, 15, 1807), *Salmagundi*, 286.

The fashion of drinking mineral waters at springs and expecting medicinal effect was

influenced by spa culture and the concept of hydrotherapy, both of which have a long history in Europe (Gassan 13-15). Sterngass points out that drinking mineral water was a popular alternative medical treatment in America “in an age of high mortality and puzzling epidemics” (8).

⁵ The first popular guide that entered the market was Gideon M. Davison’s *The Fashionable Tour or, a Trip to the Springs, Niagara, Quebec, and Boston, in the Summer of 1821* (1822). Theodore Dwight’s *The Northern Traveller; Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs* (1825) was another popular guidebook of the day (Brown 28).

⁶ The name “Hudson River school” was coined later, in the 1870s, and initially used pejoratively by critics of the day to criticize their old-fashioned landscape paintings (Kornhauser 14).

⁷ Catskill Mountain House, built in 1823 and opened in 1824, is a grand scenic hotel standing on a rock shelf in Pine Orchard above the Hudson Valley. It became itself a tourist attraction and a favorite subject of American landscapes for Hudson River school painters such as Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand (Zandt 170-88).

⁸ It has been pointed out that Hawthorne must have consulted some of those guidebooks. Lueck mentions Dwight’s popular tour guide *The Northern Traveller* (1825), which Hawthorne probably used to plan his tour. Dwight touts the White Mountains as “Switzerland in the United States” (175). See Weber, “Hawthorne’s Tour of 1832,” 10; Lueck, *American Writers and the Picturesque Tour*, 121.

⁹ “Rip Van Winkle” starts with the remark, “Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains” (Irving 769), and in reality, quite a few tourists had already “made a voyage up the Hudson” at that time (Gassan 78). The beginning of the story invites those tourists to recall their fond memories of the tour they made in an imaginative way, and it could possibly encourage others to pay a visit to the place to see the story setting with their own eyes.

¹⁰ The slide that destroyed the Willey family became a familiar motif for picturesque painters, and guidebook writers also devoted much space to the disaster. Gideon M. Davison writes about the impact of the avalanche on White Mountain tourism: “The number of visitors to the White Mountains has been considerably increased, on account of the interest excited by these *avalanches*” (339).

¹¹ Sears makes an important comment on the description of nineteenth-century tourist sites written by the popular authors: “Like Irving’s tales, Cooper’s novels are remarkably self-conscious and external to the place they treat. They invent the region rather than express it” (62).

¹² Just as novelists did not necessarily describe tourist sites faithfully, Thomas Cole made a significant modification in this painting. The background scene of the picture is not that of Lake George but of the White Mountains (Kornhauser 77).

¹³ “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*” (Burke 36).

¹⁴ Intellectuals in the early nineteenth century identified “the health, the very personality of America with Nature.” They set Nature “in opposition to the concept of city, the railroad, the steamboat” (P. Miller 242).

¹⁵ According to Weber, “A Night Scene” was included in “Sketches from Memory. By a Pedestrian. No.2” published in the *New-England Magazine* (December 1835) and it never appeared in any collection of Hawthorne’s short fiction published during his lifetime (34). Lueck refers to “A Night Scene” as “an excellent example of how contrast and unity can function in picturesque composition” (8), and she contends that “Hawthorne’s sketch suggests some of the diverse tonal qualities possible in picturesque discourse” (9).

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