

After the American Revolution, and increasingly after the War of 1812, American writers were exhorted to produce a literature that was truly native. In the old Southwest, meanwhile, such writers as Davy Crockett, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Johnson J. Hooper, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, Joseph G. Baldwin, and George Washington Harris drew lively pictures of the ebullient frontier and showed the interest in the common man that was a part of Jacksonian democracy. New England Brahmins Holmes, Oliver Wendell, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, although Lowell for a time was one of these writers of rather earthy humour, his lifelong ties were to a group of New England writers associated with Harvard and Cambridge, Massachusetts-- the Brahmins, as they came to be called--at an opposite extreme. His skill in weaving history into inventive plots and in characterizing his compatriots brought him acclaim not only in America and England but on the continent of Europe as well. Edgar Allan Poe, reared in the South, lived and worked as an author and editor in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Richmond, and New York City. He himself was overshadowed, in renown at least, by a native-born New Yorker, Washington Irving, the youngest member of a prosperous merchant family, joined with ebullient young men of the town in producing the *Salmagundi* papers (1807-08), which satirized the foibles of Manhattan's citizenry. The *Yemassee* (1835) and Revolutionary romances show him at his best. American Renaissance 6 The authors who began to come to prominence in the 1830s and were active until about the end of the Civil War--the humorists, the classic New Englanders, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and others--did their work in a new spirit, and their achievements were of a new sort. William Cullen Bryant, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe initiated a great half century of literary development. Bryant, a New Englander by birth, attracted attention in his 23rd year when the first version of his poem -- *Thanatopsis*? In part it was because, in this Romantic period of emphasis upon native scenes and characters in many literatures, they put much of America into their books. Particularly full of vivid touches were the writings of two groups of American humorists whose works appeared between 1830 and 1867. Longfellow adapted European methods of storytelling and versifying to narrative poems dealing with American history, and a few of his less didactic lyrics perfectly married technique and subject matter. His work was shaped largely by analytical skill that showed clearly in his role as an editor: time after time he gauged the taste of readers so accurately that circulation figures of magazines under his direction soared impressively. His work, especially his critical writings and carefully crafted poems, had perhaps a greater influence in France, where they were translated by Charles Baudelaire, than in his own country. Two Southern novelists were also outstanding in the earlier part of the century: John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms. His *Essays* (1841-44), *Representative Men* (1850), and *English Traits* (1856) were thoughtful and poetic explanations of his beliefs; and his rough hewn lyrics, packed with thought and feeling, were as close to 17th-century Metaphysical poems as any produced in his own time. Henry David Thoreau: *Walden Pond Cabin* An associate of Emerson with a salty personality of his own and an individual way of thinking, Henry David Thoreau, a sometime surveyor, labourer, and naturalist, was closer to the earthy and the practical than even Emerson was. Ralph Waldo Emerson, most famous of the Concord philosophers, started as a Unitarian minister but found even that liberal doctrine too confining for his broad beliefs. The latter was a record of his experiences and ponderings during the time he lived in a hut by Walden Pond--a defense of his belief that modern man

should simplify his demands if need be to –suck out all the marrow of life. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Lowell were all aristocrats, all steeped in foreign culture, all professors at Harvard. He became a Transcendentalist who, like other ancient and modern Platonists, trusted to insights transcending logic and experience for revelations of the deepest truths. His scheme of things ranged from the lowest objects and most practical chores to soaring flights of imagination and inspired beliefs. Simms's forte was the writing of historical novels like those of Scott and Cooper, which treated the history of the frontier and his native South Carolina. He also was more of a humorist—a dry Yankee commentator with a flair for paradoxical phrases and sentences. a burlesque history that mocked pedantic scholarship and sniped at the old Dutch families. He was the first American writer to win the ungrudging (if somewhat surprised) .respect of British critics 5 James Fenimore Cooper won even wider fame. It showed itself in his critical essays, wherein he lucidly explained and logically applied his criteria. His gothic tales of terror were written in accordance with his findings when he studied the most popular magazines of the day. In part this was because they were in some way influenced by the broadening democratic concepts that in 1829 triumphed in Andrew Jackson's inauguration as president. (1865)—gave .fine expression to noble sentiments The Transcendentalists Concord, Massachusetts, a village not far from Cambridge, was the home of leaders of another important New England group. These qualities gave distinction to *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) and to *Walden* (1854). Still later, however, under the influence of Wordsworth and other Romantics, he wrote nature lyrics that vividly represented the New England scene. Irving's models in these works were obviously Neoclassical English satirists, from whom he had learned to write in a polished, bright style. Later, having met Sir Walter Scott and having become acquainted with imaginative German literature, he introduced a new Romantic note in *The Sketch Book* (1819–20), *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), and other works. tales (1823–41), a five-volume series celebrating the career of a great frontiersman named Natty Bumppo. series (1858–91), brought touches of urbanity and jocosity to a perhaps oversober polite literature. The way for this group had been prepared by the rise of a theological system, Unitarianism, which early in the 19th century had replaced Calvinism as the faith of a large share of the New Englanders. As if in response, four authors of very respectable stature appeared. As a poet, he achieved fame with –*The Raven*? One group created several down-east Yankee characters who used commonsense arguments to comment upon the political and social scene. Lowell, in poems descriptive of the out-of-doors in America, put much of his homeland into verse. Finally, he was a learned man, widely read in Western classics and books of the Orient. His masterpieces of terror—–*The Fall of the House of Usher*? So were his detective stories, such as –*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*? (1841), which historians credited as the first of the genre. The most important of this group were Seba Smith, James Russell Lowell, and Benjamin P. Shillaber. Holmes, in occasional poems and his –*Breakfast Table*? His odes— particularly the –*Harvard Commemoration Ode*? This, as well as some later poems, was written under the influence of English 18th-century poets. Turning to journalism, he had a long career as a fighting liberal editor of *The Evening Post*. This was followed by *A History of New York* (1809), by –*Diedrich Knickerbocker*, ?novels, he did his best work in the –*Leatherstocking*? (1842), –*The Cask of Amontillado*? (1846), and others— were written according to a carefully worked out psychological

method. In *Swallow Barn* (1832), Kennedy wrote delightfully of life on the plantations. In his essay –*Civil Disobedience?* (1817) appeared. Following the pattern of Sir Walter Scott's –*Waverley?* (1839), –*The Masque of the Red Death?* These authors caught the talk and character of New England at that time as no one else had done. (1845).