States of Nature:
Revolution, Conservativism, and Anticipations of Ecological Thought

By

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Abstract

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In *States of Nature*, I trace an alternative prehistory to environmental thought in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates about revolution. I argue that proponents of revolution understood the state of nature not only as a philosophical abstraction but also through their engagements with science, agriculture, and frontier settlement. By contrast, conservatives claimed that revolution would disrupt the relational networks they imagined as vitally entangling human and nonhuman life. In particular, Edmund Burke describes ideal national communities as intricately interwoven, yet tenuous, social ecologies: evolving networks that bind together past, present, and future generations.

In the opening chapters, I depict Burke not as a reactionary opponent of change but as a practicing agriculturalist who looks to nature to regulate the pace of social transformation. I also consider challenges to Burke: Thomas Paine's assertion that revolution, rather than tradition, restores nature's true order; Mary Wollstonecraft's warning that normative appeals to the nonhuman world naturalize inequality; and Joel Barlow and Gilbert Imlay's beliefs that technocratic land transformation would fulfill America's revolutionary project.

In the middle chapters, I read James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels as restaging the Burke/Paine debate in an environmentally and socially precarious frontier setting. I interpret Natty Bumppo not as an embodiment of the state of nature, but as a social being who laments the decline from an intercultural and interspecies Burkean community to a Lockean polity where political belonging is purchased by appropriating natural objects as property. Building upon the temporal turns in queer and critical race studies, I also suggest that Cooper conflates racialized sexuality and environmental determinism, punishing characters he sees as too close to nature by associating their failures to reproduce with the forest's doomed embrace.

In my final chapter, I argue that writers throughout the age of revolution fixated on compost as a political metaphor capable of synthesizing Burkean gradualism and revolutionary renewal. Articulating what I call a "compostable past," Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman maintain that material bodies and political structures are best reinvigorated through regenerative decay. I argue that their re-workings of America's revolutionary tradition decouple the lapsed possibility of Burkean ecology from the more pernicious strains of Burke's social conservatism. By contrast, Charles Chesnutt exposes compost's role in sustaining Southern slave-holding agriculture, thereby anticipating central concerns of modern environmental justice scholarship.

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Introduction
Forgotten Futures: Oaks and Crab-Apples, Grafts and Seeds

In his 1841 lecture "The Conservative," Ralph Waldo Emerson posits "Innovation" and "Conservatism" as the fundamental forces driving not only political contests, but also all of "civil history." He depicts these "two parties which divide the state" as protean powers that "have disputed the possession of the world ever since it was made." He suggests that "war … rages" between innovation and conservatism within "every man's bosom," as well as in the political sphere (*Essays and Lectures* 173). Metaphorically, Emerson uses two images of trees—an oak and a crab-apple—to complicate this dialectic relationship. Instead of making one tree represent "Innovation," he makes them both into symbols for conservatism, suggesting that the ideological formation might be more multifaceted than expected. The oak tree appears early in the piece:

> Nature does not give the crown of its approbation, namely, beauty, to any action or emblem or actor, but to one which combines both these elements; not to the rock which resists the waves from age to age, nor to the wave which lashes incessantly the rock, but the superior beauty is with the oak which stands with its hundred arms against the storms of a century, and grows every year like a sapling; or the river which is ever flowing, yet is found in the same bed from age to age; or, greatest of all, the man who has subsisted for years amid the changes of nature, yet has distanced himself, so that when you remember what he was, and see what he is, you say, what strides! what a disparity is here! (175)

The image of the oak is not politically neutral. Because of its endurance, solidity, and branch structure that invoke the familiar ideogram of the family tree, the oak serves as a stock symbol of hierarchy and tradition. For Emerson, one of the benefits—and liabilities—of conservatism was the "superiority in its fact. It affirms because it holds. Its fingers clutch the fact, and it will not open its eyes to see a better fact" (174). The stout oak represents the category of the real, as opposed to the idealism that inspires radicalism. For Emerson the tree's ineluctable materiality serves as a reminder that "the existing world is not a dream, and cannot with impunity be treated as a dream" (177). Precisely these firm qualities made the oak a favorite metaphor for Edmund Burke, often referred to as the father of modern conservatism. In a famous letter, Burke represented hereditary nobles as "the great oaks that shade a country, and perpetuate your benefits from generation to generation" (*Correspondence* 2:377). For many traditionalists who trace their intellectual lineage back to Burke, this obdurate oakish quality is one of his main appeals.

But in Emerson's passage, the oak is also an avatar for "beauty": it synthesizes *both* endurance and growth, unlike the rock on the shore. The oak tree prescribes neither stasis nor revolution, but a measured pace of change: slow transformation grounded by deep roots. Emerson posits gradualism, not obstructionism, as the essence of real conservatism.[1] Though people in "national councils" (*Essays and Letters* 173) may take the side of either party, Emerson argues that no individual can be a pure conservative or innovator as no one opposes all change or all things as they are. One can be a political conservative and still evolve, albeit at a slow pace, just as one can be an innovator and cling to select institutions or seek to restore a few lost ideals. In many ways Emerson's oak tree is more like Edmund Burke himself (an Irish commoner) than the noble oak trees Burke described so admiringly. Whereas Burke's rhetorical oak trees tend to be static and

[1] Daniel M. Savage notes that even when Emerson pursued radical goals, "he believed that the proper pace of progress toward these goals was evolutionary rather than revolutionary" and that he gained his inspiration from "a natural aesthetic" (125).

unchanging emblems for aristocracy, in political practice Burke was more a gradualist than a reactionary. He wanted to regulate the pace of change rather than keep change from occurring. In an 1835 lecture titled "Edmund Burke," Emerson noticed Burke's gradualist inclinations and stressed his legacy as an anti-colonial reformer rather than focusing on his opposition to the French Revolution (*The Early Lectures* I:183-204).[2] In fact, Emerson seems to have seen no contradiction between Burke's anti-colonialism and his anti-revolutionism. He imagines Burke, like the oak, producing new branches on the same trunk: an act of extension rather than creation, a change of degree rather than kind.[3]

After recurring to his oak image, Emerson concludes his essay with a celebration of progress and a more daring arboreal image: a crab-apple tree.

> It is a happiness for mankind that innovation has got on so far, and has so free a field before it. The boldness of the hope men entertain transcends all former experience. It calms and cheers them with the picture of a simple and equal life of truth and piety. And this hope flowered on what tree? It was not imported from the stock of some celestial plant, but grew here on the wild crab of conservatism. It is much that this old and vituperated system of things has borne so fair a child. It predicts that amidst a planet peopled with conservatives, one Reformer may yet be born. (189)

The crab-apple tree has none of the lofty associations of the oak. Instead of possessing a noble European lineage, it is America's only native apple tree. Most settlers found its fruits to be inedible unless fermented to make hard cider (Thoreau was a notable exception, celebrating crab-apples' "wild" accents). Yet, Emerson also represents this humble species as an image for conservatism, and surprisingly suggests that *true* innovation can only "flower" from its stock, just as "hope" already has.

Emerson's metaphor relies on a biological fact that was well-known in the nineteenth-century. Apples are heterozygous to an extreme; that is to say, without human intervention apple trees reproduce sexually, and "an apple grown from a seed will be a wildling bearing little resemblance to its parent" (Pollan, *Botany* 9). Most apples grown from seeds produce fruits that taste exceedingly bitter to the average pallet. As a result, the vast majority of apples we eat are clones produced by grafting. But in very rare cases, a seed produces a delicious variety that never existed before: something new under the sun. Henry David Thoreau celebrates this capacity in "Wild-Apples": "Who knows but this chance wild fruit, planted by a cow or a bird on some remote and rocky hillside, where it is as yet unobserved by man, may be the choicest of all its kind… What a lesson to man!" (*Natural History* 195). In a similar vein, as Emerson makes his hopes for change clear at the end of "The Conservative," he shifts from an image of endurance and hereditary likeness (oak and acorn) to a figure for wild unpredictability and potential. Even if the proverbial apple does not fall far from the tree, Emerson suggests that the unpalatable, "vituperated" parent might produce surprisingly nourishing offspring. Progress, he reminds us, does not simply appear *ex nihilo* from

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[2] As Drew Maciag notes, Emerson's assessment was part of a common nineteenth-century trend whereby commentators emphasized Burke's opposition to British colonialism and corruption as much as his later disgust with the French Revolution. As detailed in a footnote in the first chapter, Burke's name only became synonymous with opposition to revolution after World War Two.

[3] Critics have debated whether Burke's positions were philosophically consistent for centuries, though there seems to be an emerging consensus that his opposition to the French Revolution was based on principles espoused throughout his career. I briefly recap that dispute in footnotes to the first chapter.

"some celestial plant." The seeds of change emerge from institutional structures as well as in opposition to them.

By associating conservatism with both the wild crab and the oak (a seemingly more "noble" species, but one which has also never been fully domesticated), Emerson suggests that surprisingly transgressive possibility might emerge from seemingly conservative sources.[4] However, conservatives like Edmund Burke tend to be interpreted in politicized ways that deny Emerson's vision. For leftists, Burke is often one of the archenemies: a crabby old white man grasping at the fading vestiges of class privilege. Within a regime of skeptical hermeneutics, Burke is usually subject to critique on the rare occasions he is even considered worth of countenancing. Burkean offshoots are either weeded out or deemed irrelevant and permitted to grow in neglected corners of the field. Meanwhile, right-wing critics tend to repress Burke's wilder seeds before seeing what they might produce. Instead of allowing cross-fertilization, such scholars engraft conservative scions onto conservative stock to ensure palatable fruits of research. Claiming ownership, they attempt to enclose an orchard that includes wild-apples as well as domesticated varieties.[5]

By contrast, in "Wild-Apples" Thoreau argues that fruit trees do not rightly (or at least entirely) belong to property owners. "They belong to children as wild as themselves," Thoreau opines, "to the wild-eyed women of the fields, to whom nothing comes amiss, who gleans after the world, and, moreover to us walkers" (*Natural History* 196). Following Thoreau's suggestion, I attempt to glean insights overlooked in two centuries of scholarship on Burke's texts. Because my critical methodology generally builds upon progressive reading practices, the analysis partakes of some of the pleasures of trespass. But my goal is neither a symptomatic critique that finds fault nor an act of revision that tries to claim Burke as a closeted liberal. Instead, these chapters track a

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[4] In locating slow-blooming seeds of American progressivism within conservative responses to the French Revolution, I have been especially influenced by Sunil M. Agnani's transformative *Hating Empire Properly* and Rachel Hope Cleves's excellent monograph *The Reign of Terror in America*. Agnani is one of the few scholars to put Burke's advocacy about British colonialism in India in direct conversation with his writings on France. Agnani suggests that "one might say that there have been many revolutionary books written against colonialism, Burke, however, wrote a conservative book against it" (71). Cleves tracks the way that anti-slavery activists and pacifists appropriated rhetorical strategies within Anti-Jacobin literature ("blood as a recurring symbol," slaveholders/Jacobins as cannibals, landscapes of death) during the Early Republic and antebellum periods (106). However, Cleves's characterization of Southern "slaveholding conservatism" as "Burkean" is hardly fair: despite his defense of monarchy, which Cleves contrasts to American anti-Jacobin efforts to cast "Republicanism as the pacific middle road between the brutality of monarchy and the savagery of democracy" (99), Burke vigorously argued for ending the slave trade in 1788. However, Burke's enthusiasm for the cause waned over time until his final position was ambiguous. Equally to the point, Burke's gothic *excesses* in his passages on the invasion of Marie Antoinette's bedchamber helped inaugurate the often-hyperbolic Anti-Jacobin style which abolitionists repurposed as they opposed an evil deserving of moral outrage.

[5] Daniel M. Savage, one of the few critics to write about Emerson and Burke in conjunction, argues that Emerson and Burke's visions are only superficially similar. He claims that while Burke was a gradualist, Emerson's plant analogies "allow conservatism no forward movement" (137). Drew Maciag gives a more doctrinaire reading of Burke. He claims that Emerson's emphasis on innovation is "contrary to Burke's belief in the collective wisdom of the past" and questions whether the crab-apple tree can really "replace" Burke's "great oaks" (70). Both are right to point to distinctions between Burke and Emerson but pushing the point too far risks missing the specific valences of the crab-apple image. Emerson is not trying to *replicate* Burke's ideology, but instead suggest that progressive fruits might emerge from the seeds of conservative insights. Burke might disagree with Emerson, but his disagreement would not obviate Emerson's larger point: that traces of transgressive ideologies might exist hidden even in conservative doctrines, unrecognized until later generations.

transatlantic lineage. Historians have long claimed that Burke failed to have "a profound impact in the United States" during the nineteenth-century. However, I find that nineteenth-century American fiction writers took Burke (or at least Burkean concerns) much more seriously than antebellum politicians.[6] Accordingly, I look less intensively at the realms of politics or natural science than at works by writers such as James Fenimore Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne who were inspired by Burke but also created a distinctively post-revolutionary, American tradition of environmentally-engaged, complex conservativism. I focus most particularly on these (often) Burkean writers' work spreading the surprisingly transgressive seeds of proto-ecological consciousness. In texts such as *The Pioneers* (1823), these seeds sprout branches and bear fruit, enabling Cooper to frame a surprisingly developed debate about environmental precarity which foreshadows contests between conservationists and preservationists a century later (and beyond).

Even though almost all the texts considered here were early environmental works published before Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) or George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature* (1864), I am nearly as interested in lateness—or more precisely, *latency*—as in anticipation. One of the most powerful facets of seeds is their capacity to maintain viability for centuries, or even millennia (in 2012, a 32,000-year-old *Selene Stenophylla* seed encased in ice was successfully regenerated and germinated by a research team). Building on Emerson's metaphor of wild crab-apple seeds, I suggest that foundational conservative texts might hold latent potentiality: they often contain lapsed futures that failed to emerge, but which can still produce profound change with proper tending. More particularly, in our polarized political climate today, we tend to encode environmental awareness and activism as exclusively liberal. This dissertation reaches back to the French Revolution—a historical moment often considered the birth of the political right and left—and its American aftermath to make a case that there is no inherent or natural reason that only liberals should care for nature. Instead, I ask that we imagine the possibilities of new alliances with a still-nascent mode of conservatism that chooses to care about conservationism.

If one of this dissertation's central interventions is the suggestion that a new reading of Burkean writers might reorient both the history and future of environmental politics, its second major argument is that many Americans understood the state of nature less as a philosophical abstraction than as an *experience* of living with the land (both directly lived and circulated through published accounts of life). Rather than exclusively invoking natural law philosophy, American revolutionaries and their successors drew from these experiences—and the discourses they shaped—to articulate the existence of *many states* of nature. The founders' understanding of the content and character of nature's "laws" came in part from tracts of political philosophy and enlightenment naturalism, which emphasized collection, collation, and classification to project order onto nature. But their conceptions also depended upon accounts of frontier settlement, agricultural journals, and testimonials to indigenous and subsistence modes of relating to the land. Most of all, they understood the land *as farmers* for whom the "laws of nature" were not merely moral or legal guidelines *within* the realm of human conduct, but also material limitations set *upon* human efforts to control the natural world. The knowledge formations that resulted from this mixture of direct observation and secondhand reading privileged interchanges between political philosophy, land management, and glimmering ecological thought. For instance, James Madison could derive the concept of the balance of powers largely from the so-called balance of nature while also arguing for

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[6] For the claim that Burke did not have a meaningful nineteenth-century American legacy, see Slotkin (332-48, 395-98). While recent critics such as Drew Maciag have traced a number of ways that nineteenth-century thinkers *did* engage with Burke, earlier historians were correct to note that American conservatism has tended to take on different valences than the kind of Burkean classical conservatism that predominates on the right within England.

the application of compost to worn out soils in order to create communities that were both politically and environmentally sustainable.

The founders' ability to see nature, culture, and politics as mutually constitutive helped allow their literary heirs to synthesize a vision of "natural rights" in a distinctly post-Enlightenment sense. In nineteenth-century fictions, previously abstract and ideological understandings of natural rights become embodied and immanent as individualized human subjects (rather than abstract "persons") come into contact with new environments. I grant a central role to James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels because they so often hinge upon debates about whether natural rights might be contingent upon certain modes of relating to the natural world, rather than universal. In Natty Bumppo's telling, most foundational rights *emerge from* responsible, environmentally attuned interactions that accrue over time. Instead of endorsing Paine's account of rights deriving from a fictive, original state of nature, his articulations extend Burke's belief that rights and responsibilities evolve over time within a social sphere to a contact zone made up of both human and nonhuman ecosystem participants.

The dissertation's third major argument concerns not conservatism, but American efforts to navigate the complex paradoxes of a legacy of revolution. To justify their breaks with oppressive regimes, Americans in 1776 and French subjects in 1789 played with the double meanings of the term "revolution." In response to conservatives who claimed that aristocratic social orders were natural, revolutionaries tried to naturalize political upheaval by claiming that they were *returning* society to a lost, *original* order (the "state of nature"). In bringing things full circle, they imagined themselves mimicking the heavenly spheres as they completed celestial revolutions. By contrast, in the antebellum period, writers navigated two equal and opposite fears about incessant *rhetorical* returns to America's tradition of revolution: first, the threat that a nation founded on revolutionary violence would inevitably erupt into recursions of revolutionary violence, and second, the possibility that revolutionary tradition would degenerate into empty rituals devoid of meaning and vitality. This question of how to ensure an appropriate amount (and type) of revolutionary energy was a central preoccupation from the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in 1826 until the late 1850s. Although writers had many ways to navigate these persistent anxieties, I argue that they achieved one of their most energetic syntheses by returning to their knowledge of the natural world—and the farming practice of composting in particular—in order to both maintain and manage revolutionary energies.

Methodologically, this dissertation attempts to build upon insights deriving from three critical traditions: new historicism, ecocriticism, and constructivism. Most basically, I attempt to evaluate texts not only through modern theoretical apparatuses, but also by considering their placement in their cultural matrix. A commitment to historicism means prioritizing comparative readings and juxtaposing texts that would traditionally be considered "literary" with other forms of discourse (pamphlets, manifestoes, declarations, letters, etc.) that shaped political discourse more directly. The first section of this dissertation primarily offers readings of nonfiction documents—texts that aimed less to tell a story than to make things happen in the world—while the latter two sections prioritize novels and short stories (while still reading them in dialog with nonfiction works). But because they were written in a period where genre distinctions were less absolute, *all* the works I consider blur any absolute distinction between figurative language and political purposiveness. As a result, I find that evaluating eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century texts in terms of their cultural milieu means taking seriously the ideas that political potency is often achieved through the manipulation of aesthetics and form (as Frederick Douglass knew) and that novels might directly impact politics (as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* epitomized). Attunement to the text's aesthetic effects need not compromise the critic's ability to interrogate the complicated, often-complicit role that

constructions of the beautiful or expressions of sympathy can play in sustaining systems of oppression.

Because much of my focus is on figurative depictions of the nonhuman world, I frequently appeal to debates and developments within the field of ecocriticism. While most of my engagement is with works written within the last fifteen years, I find it useful to return to central turning points in ecocritical thought, such as William Cronon's essay "The Trouble with Wilderness" (*Uncommon Ground* 69-90). I am particularly interested in ways that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts not only substantiate, but also often *anticipate*, Cronon's criticism that a wilderness/civilization dualism artificially separates people from nature and erases indigenous presence. Rather than merely serving as examples of naïve or reactionary thought, the texts considered herein often maintain the disruptive capacity to move our conversations forward. To attempt to do so, this dissertation seeks to build upon three particular arenas of ecocritical thought: new agrarianism, plant studies, and new materialism.

According to most histories, the roots of the field of ecocriticism lie in Henry Nash Smith and Leo Marx's constructions of the pastoral, the frontier, and wilderness as central American ideological categories. In their mid-century works, farming appears less as a set of material practices than as a mythopoeic mode of narrating self, nation, and world. Because ecocritics have often signaled critical turns in the field by posing new insights *against* the myth and symbol school's obsession with farming and the frontier, early American agrarianism may seem like a retrograde field of study. However, it is worth revisiting in light of the development of ecofeminism, the post-humanities, and object-oriented ontologies, to name just a few critical schools. More particularly, the field of new agrarianism—sketched out by Wendell Berry's body of work, formulated in Caroline Merchant's *Ecological Revolutions* (1989), critically elaborated in Timothy Sweet's *American Georgics* (2002), and popularized in several of Michael Pollan's works—takes a deep interest in archival records and the factual specifics of farming practices. I aim to build upon this later body of work by considering farming not only as a function of the national imaginary, but also by drawing attention to authors' practices as farmers and gardeners. Strikingly, a majority of the authors considered at length within this dissertation (including Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Burke, Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne) were involved with agricultural reform efforts, or at a minimum, found their psychic life and literary expressions entangled in their cultivation of the soil. The final chapter on compost, in particular, focuses on ways that the sometimes-granular details of agricultural reform efforts helped to enable and shape these writers' senses of political possibility. Instead of imagining that agricultural labor automatically signaled democratic virtue (like Jefferson or Crèvecœur), many of them *differentiated between* types of agricultural labor and suggested that such distinctions would determine the shape of American democracy, the health of agrarian communities, and even dominant modes of revolutionary remembrance.

Though it may be surprising to learn how directly involved these writers were with agricultural *projects*, the fact that they lived in a predominantly agrarian society comes as no shock. The still emergent discipline of plant studies attempts to compensate for the gap between the commonly held knowledge of botanical life in antebellum American life and what Randy Laist calls the "defoliation of the cultural imagination common today" (Laist 10). Americans gained their knowledge of plant life in many ways: through agricultural labor, through botanical exhibitions and seed exchanges, and even through popular guides to the "language of flowers," which offered lovers quasi-secret codes to communicate their true feelings by exchanging bouquets (if you received a yellow tulip, you would know that your suitor was consumed with hopeless love; a variegated tulip signified only that they thought you had beautiful eyes). The extended reading of the oak and the crab-apple tree that opens this introduction testifies to the way that writers in the Age of Revolution depended upon a kind of common knowledge that is now highly specialized. The result is that we

often grasp only the broad outlines of some of their most potent metaphors. Had it not been for Michael Pollan's recent revival of knowledge about apple propagation, we might miss something essential about Emerson's disposition towards conservatism. Though I am far from a horticultural expert, this dissertation considers the culturally and textually contextual distinctions between plant species, insisting on the importance of Emerson's contrast between oaks to apples, Melville's modulation from verdant mosses to "prohibitory" lichens, Hawthorne's surprising slippage from hierarchical tree to rhizomatic potato, and Cooper's enjambment of Indian corn and European roses.

Whereas discourse about race recurred to rhetoric about animality with lamentable frequency, seemingly innocuous plants were the most central metaphoric figure in polemics throughout the Age of Revolution. Certain agricultural and horticultural modes accrue complexity as they recur across dissertation chapters. For instance, whereas seeds were often deployed in nineteenth-century discourse as straightforward representations of naturalized inheritance, grafting gave writers a metaphor to meditate on less linear, more complex modes of filiation: queer bonds that combine the natural and the artificial/cultural. Meanwhile, the single feature of plants that *most* made them a source of enduring fascination throughout the Age of Revolution was rootedness. Burke, Paine, Wollstonecraft, and Adams all used the image of plants being violently uprooted to encapsulate the French Revolution itself. Burke granted images of interwoven roots and vines "cast wide and deep" a central place in his writings, using them to represent society as a complex, interrelated proto-ecosystem (*Reflections* 157). Accordingly, he portrayed uprooting as a deplorable destruction of culture and tradition. However, Paine and Wollstonecraft saw uprooting as clearing the ground for a new garden of state to be planted from scratch (preferably in the geometric French style). Adams expanded the metaphor's range, cautioning that the uprooting process might unintentionally sow new seeds of discord. Meanwhile, Crèvecœur's Farmer James, who initially framed transatlantic transplantation as a salubrious process whereby degraded European plants "become men" in the New World, finds the metaphor of transplantation traumatically anthropomorphized when the American Revolution forcibly dislocates his family (Crèvecœur 69). Melville's Israel Potter is likewise "torn up by the roots" at the revolution's onset, only for Melville to associate him with a symbolically potent series of plants in distress during the novel's conclusion (*Israel Potter* 12). Meanwhile, in *The Pathfinder* Cooper describes forest succession as combining the sublime revolutionary force of tempests and slower, more gradualist processes. And in *The Redskins* his aristocratic scions call for a *counter*-revolutionary uprooting of the Anti-Rent war activists: "rip it up, root and branch, and cast it aside" (40).

Many more examples could be appended. To dwell briefly on just one author: uprooting is seemingly everywhere in Hawthorne's writings. In "The Old Manse," the renovation crew that arrives to remove the mosses from the eponymous dwelling symbolically re-enacts the terrors of revolution on a diminished scale. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Chillingworth, gatherer of poisonous herbs, dries up like a discarded weed after Dimmesdale's confession. And in his late work *Our Old Home*, Hawthorne stretches roots—and the *metaphor* of uprooting—to its absolute limit, claiming that Americans who immigrated from England before the American Revolution "pulled up many of their roots" but they "were never snapped asunder by the tug of such a lengthening distance" (18). Within the chapters to follow, I dedicate sustained attention to most of these instances. The point of compiling them here is to show how the centrality of plants within an agricultural society made them into metaphoric vehicles not only readily at hand, but also admitting of endless, nuanced variation and intertextual echoes. As Randy Laist suggests, whereas media today is awash in animal imagery and characterization, plants were the truly ubiquitous non-human form of life in the Age of Revolution imaginary (all apologies to Moby-Dick and his mammalian cousins). I consider the place of animals and interspecies communication in Cooper's Leatherstocking tales at length in chapter

three, but plants receive more consistent attention throughout the project. Only by re-foliating our imaginations can we fully grasp the metaphors and political positions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century authors.

In my final chapter on composting (as both farming practice and as a metaphor), in particular, I move from living plants to their transformation into dead, decaying, and digested matter. By focusing on the transition points between processes of digestion, excremental sources of disgust, disintegrating human bodies, and (re)generative soil, I take up Steve Mentz's call to pluralize the colors in the ecocritical palette, incorporating "brown ecology" alongside the verdant abundance of works on greenery. More broadly, the chapter's consideration of permeable, trans-corporeal human and nonhuman bodies reshaping and dissolving into one another registers my effort to merge insights from plant studies and new materialism.[7] In this analysis, I try to build upon other considerations of soil as the site of complex processes and interspecies assemblages. In her slim, but field-shaping monograph *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett includes a chapter on Darwin's study of the way that worms make soil. Suggesting that material processes have no single center, she focuses on ways that "worms contribute to human history and culture [as] the unplanned results of worms acting in conjunction and competition with other (biological, bacterial, chemical, human) agents … worms participate in heterogenous assemblages in which agency has no single locus, no mastermind, but is distributed across a swarm of various and variegated vibrant materialities" (96).

Unlike Bennett, I generally do not *begin* with worms or bacteria or soil chemistry but with human political and agricultural problems. But like Bennett, my goal is to decenter triumphal accounts of human agency. By focusing on moments that human efforts to exert totalizing control over natural systems backfired (i.e., overworking the soil through repeated plantings), I expose how Age of Revolution politicians and creative writers alike came to be humbled by the multiplicity of agential and actantial forces that determine agricultural outcomes. I hope to suggest that nineteenth-century writers' prolonged preoccupation with the processes by which seemingly discrete bodies (including human corpses) disintegrate into and grow out of one another creates a kind of attention that is *often akin to* the critical project that new materialists formalize today. By focusing on compost, writers like Hawthorne, Melville, and Robert Montgomery Bird break down not only dead physical materials, but also outdated ideas about the exclusivity of anthropic agency.

At the same time that I rely heavily on the ecocritical paradigms detailed above, I am also motivated by constructivist criticism (especially feminist theory and queer theory) to critically question what writers mean—and what power regimes they implicitly endorse—when they classify something as "natural" or "unnatural." Though constructivists and early ecocritics often found themselves in disagreement, like most recent critics I feel that the two critical traditions can be placed in productive tension that benefits both modalities. At times, I attempt to do so in a concentrated fashion. Most of chapter four builds upon Lee Edelman and Valerie Rohy's work on queerness, otherization, and temporality. Additionally, *throughout* the project I derive inspiration from constructivists, old and new. Although my section on Mary Wollstonecraft's deconstruction of Edmund Burke's claim that conservatism best encapsulated nature's order is relatively concise, I try to apply her critical objections to normative uses of the term nature throughout the dissertation. In more contemporary terms, I aim to build upon the projects of Peter Coviello and Elizabeth Freeman, who turn to nineteenth-century texts in order to understand a range of ways that queer desire was expressed prior to the codification of homosexuality and heterosexuality as identity categories (beginning in the 1890s with the Oscar Wilde trial). Coviello's central argument is that nineteenth-century modes of imagining, which he approvingly refers to as "extravagant," are

[7] In *Bodily Natures*, Stacy Alaimo asks readers to imagine "human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always inter-meshed with the more-than-human world" and "environment" (2).

characterized by an "earliness" which does not so much anticipate modern forms of sexual liberation as suggest a set of lost possibilities: potential futures that failed to materialize (4).

Transferring the protocols of Coviello and Freeman's temporal turn in queer theory to environmental subject matter, I argue that though Burkean formations often anticipate modern ecological science *and environmentalist politics*, they also diverge from them in certain key ways. At times, such divergences are troubling: it is difficult (though not *entirely* impossible, as my segment on Charles Chesnutt explores) to imagine a conservative form of environmental justice. But not every such divergence from modern ecology or environmentalism needs to be seen as a failure. If the observations and descriptive apparatuses used by nineteenth-century agrarians differ from those employed by modern ecologists, those differences are themselves capable of drawing attention to things our lived frames of reference and disciplinary boundaries teach us to screen out—lost proto-ecological worlds characterized by extravagance, earliness, and productive defamiliarization (Shklovsky's *ostranenie*). What is true of empirical observation may also apply to political possibility. By looking back and seeing the worlds and futures that were forgotten, we can move forward in new ways. Identifying aspects of Burkean ecologies in old texts may enable us to imagine innovative modes of conceptualizing human/nonhuman entanglements: bypassed modalities that our politicized, partisan environmental politics have made not only unachievable, but un-seeable and unthinkable.

To these ends, *States of Nature* has a three-part structure: the first two chapters focus on transatlantic debates over the state of nature within the 1790s; chapters three and four focus on two very different components of Burkean resonances in James Fenimore Cooper's thought; and a long final chapter considers composting as an applied agricultural and political problem and as a particularly potent metaphor. In chapter one, I trace Burke's articulation of an ideal national community as a social ecology: intricately interwoven, yet fragile; anthropocentric, but deeply humbling; holistically totalizing, yet particularistic; harmonic, but open to gradual change: an evolving network that connects past, present, and future generations. I suggest that Burke's conservative emphases on defining acceptable paces of change and setting clear historical benchmarks might contribute to discussions of ecosystem restoration and other hotly contested conservation topics. This chapter uses Burke's contemporary British interlocutors to consider the perils of conflating natural patterns and social norms, drawing attention to Thomas Paine's assertion that revolution, and not tradition, restores nature's true order and Mary Wollstonecraft's prescient warnings that normative appeals to nonhuman forces can naturalize inequality.

In the second chapter, I focus on American writers who rejected Burke's social vision as a poor fit for a revolutionary nation engaged in rapid territorial expansion. Resituating the British pamphlet war over the French Revolution as a transatlantic tangle of love letters and alliances, I read the 1793 novel *The Emigrants* (by Gilbert Imlay, Wollstonecraft's caddish lover) alongside neglected poems, editorials, and diplomatic tracts by Joel Barlow, William Cobbett, and John Quincy Adams. I suggest that Barlow and Imlay set the stage for manifest destiny's environmental imperialism through enlightenment arguments nearly identical to the ones they use to justify the French Revolution. By comparison with Wollstonecraft and Imlay's visions of enlightened frontier utopias built upon new societal structures and revolutionized social manners, Burke's humility in the face of nature's complexity and his belief that cultures should be unplanned, gradual, organic growths emerge in sharp critical relief. Taken together, chapters one and two suggest that even the few Americans who agreed with Burke's response to the French Revolution were initially unable to recognize, absorb, or transfer the *environmental* dimensions of his thought into the domain of American politics.

Following this account of Burke's political marginalization in America, I draw attention to fiction writers' transplantations of Burkean ecologies to American social and natural contexts during

the 1800s. In chapter three, I read Cooper's novel *The Pioneers* (1823)—recently called the first environmentalist novel—as a serio-comic restaging of the Reign of Terror and the Burke/Paine dispute. Departing from previous interpretations of Natty Bumppo as a symbol for human isolation in a pre-social state of nature, I depict Cooper's hunter-hero as a deeply social being who laments the declension from a sustainable Burkean community to a Lockean society where political representation depends upon the commodification of natural objects. I argue that the novel does not passively lament the disappearance of Native Americans in a supposedly virgin wilderness, but instead grounds Burke and Paine's debates about the state of nature in colonial intercultural and multispecies contact zones. The chapter concludes with a discussion of human-animal interactions that asymptotically move towards reciprocal linguistic communication, but never quite arrive.

Chapter four focuses on competing temporal models. There, I propose that Cooper's Leatherstocking novels after *The Pioneers* (1826-1841) contest Burke's belief that only slow change can be natural. Whereas Burke's aversion to the French Revolution caused him to disavow his earlier preference for sublimity, Cooper's forest landscapes present a hybrid mixture of gradualist and catastrophist influences that refuse to naturalize either slow linear temporality or revolutionary rupture. I also interrogate Cooper's pessimistic belief that civilizations rise and fall in predictable stadial cycles. Correlating critical race studies, Lee Edelman's *No Future*, and arguments from the field of queer ecologies, I suggest that Cooper conflates racialized sexuality and environmental determinism, punishing characters he sees as too close to nature by associating their inability to reproduce with the forest's doomed embrace. I argue that Cooper depicts Natives—even villains like Magua usually associated with the threat of rape and racial "amalgamation"—as incapable of social or biological reproduction, while forcing his hero Natty Bumppo to choose between non-procreative eco-eroticism and participation in a regime of reproductive futurity.

In my final chapter, I maintain that political speeches, agricultural periodicals, novels, and poems throughout the Age of Revolution recur to the surprising topic of compost (vegetable, animal, or mineral "manure," in the parlance of the times) in order to posit a dynamic synthesis of Burkean naturalism and revolutionary renewal. As farmers wore out soil nutrients through repeated plantings, forcing them to abandon settlements and move west, the American founders evangelized for the application of compost. For Adams and Madison, soil renewal sustained the intergenerational communities where democratic knowledge circulated and elections were held. These connections between agricultural practice and political communities made the humble stuff of compost a potent symbol upon which antebellum writers grounded their theories about the relationship between American history and the nation's future. Creating parables for the consequences of failures to compost, Hawthorne, Melville, and Robert Montgomery Bird collectively focalize a broader construct that I call a "compostable past." They imply that not only material bodies, but also political structures, are best renewed through a process of regenerative decay that preserves the energy residing in inherited forms, breaking them down before they can calcify into oppressive institutions.

Whereas Hawthorne and Melville draw attention to composting as a means to treat the past as neither relic nor refuse, but reworkable material, the chapter ends with two writers who saw compost through divergent frames: first, as a liberatory triumph, and second, as complicit in making slavery sustainable. In "This Compost" and his poems glorifying the European uprisings of 1848, Whitman depicts plants growing out of martyrs' bodies both as means to perpetuate revolutionary energies across generations and as potent symbols for the spiritualization of material processes. The chapter concludes with a reflection on "The Goophered Grapevine," Charles Chesnutt's 1887 reflection on plantation life. There, Chesnutt not only laments the role that new fertilizer technologies played in sustaining slave-holding agriculture, but also modulates between a quasi-

conservative model of minimal environmental justice and acts of rhetorical resistance that hint at more liberatory possibilities.

In the dissertation's coda, I interpret Cooper's largely unread Littlepage trilogy (1845-1846), a didactic defense of landlords' quasi-aristocratic purview during the Anti-Rent Wars, as foreshadowing the split between conservatism and conservationism since the 1980s. Unlike the proponents of compost who sought a middle ground between conservatism and revolution, Cooper let extreme defenses of property rights eclipse his nascent ecological commitments, foreshadowing conservatives' embrace of free-market fundamentalism and abandonment of Burkean environmental concerns from the Reagan administration onwards. I conclude the dissertation by suggesting that though conservative environmentalism may seem like a lapsed possibility, in our present political moment when traditional conservatives are unmoored from old coalitions and climate change proceeds at a revolutionary pace, the identification of a history shared by ecological and conservative thought may enable previously unlikely political realignments.

Part I: Burke and the Transatlantic Debate over the State of Nature, 1789-1799

Chapter One
Conservative Ecologies: Debating Burke's Social State of Nature

Since the 1950s, critics have written a great deal about Edmund Burke and the natural law tradition, but most have been reluctant to suggest that he has anything important to say about non-human nature.[8] In opposition to most nineteenth-century readers of Burke, who stressed his "liberal and utilitarian" defenses of practice over theory (Kramnick 46), natural law theorists portray Burke's writings as mobilizing eternal principles to counter the "arbitrary tyranny and injustice" of state power (Stanlis 83). To twenty-first century sensibilities, the meaning of the term "nature" within this natural law tradition may be counterintuitive: far from portraying Burke as an environmentalist, these commentators portray Burke's nature as an unchanging moral guide that transcends the actualities of given environments.[9] However, this transcendent "nature" hardly captures the range of meanings that Burke gave to the more-than-human world.

Accordingly, this dissertation takes a different tack, suggesting that Burke's writings anticipate ecological thought. In making this central, deceptively simple claim, I build upon certain precedents: romanticists (who focus on Burke's aesthetic theories, use of organic metaphors, and analysis of the relationship between inherited nature and what Burke called the "second nature" of custom), recent dissenting conservative voices (who read Burke as authorizing an anachronistic form of conservative environmentalism stressing duty between generations and local, non-state action), and constructivists (who have criticized Burke's use of *nature* as a catch-all term designed to silence opposition and obscure the operations of power). However, I also attempt to identify some *new*, previously unacknowledged shades of green in Burke's writings. The first section offers an

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[8] It is important to distinguish natural *law* from eighteenth-century natural *rights*. Whereas natural rights derived from an original state of nature that was lost in the transition to a state of society, natural law theorists tend to suggest that divine principle is legible in an unchanging natural order. Both systems distinguish between civil and natural sources of authority and justification, and the distinction between the two schools of thought is not absolute. The relative influence of natural law and natural rights theory in the work of Hobbes, Locke, and Jefferson is open to debate, while thinkers like Rousseau and Paine are more exclusively identified with the latter. A central tenet of many scholars working in a natural law tradition is that Burke wholeheartedly dismisses the state of nature as a philosophical framing device (see Kirk 50; Stanlis 18, 76).

[9] Russell Kirk's 1953 publication of *The Conservative Mind* is often thought of as beginning the modern Burke revival. Though Kirk linked Burke's conservatism with twentieth-century environmental conservationism, subsequent works on Burke swerved away from a focus on nature (i.e., the nonhuman world) in favor of a focus on natural law. In the following decade, the prominent Catholic intellectuals Peter Stanlis (*Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 1958), and Francis Canavan (*The Political Reason of Edmund Burke,* 1960) situated Burke as hostile to the impermanent materiality of embodied existence, arguing that his thought could best be understood in dialog with the natural law tradition of Aristotle, Cicero, and Thomas Aquinas. Leo Strauss also published an influential reading of Burke's relationship to natural law in *Natural Rights and History*, published in 1953. His take, which is more nuanced and idiosyncratic than Stanlis and Canavan's more focused studies, has been criticized for reading Burke too selectively (Maciag 191). Despite a number of influential readings of Burke as a utilitarian in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Iain Hampsher-Monk's *The Political Philosophy of Edmund* Burke, there has been something of a shift back to the natural law tradition. In 2005 Harvey C. Mansfield and F.P. Lock responded to Hampsher-Monk by portraying Burke as a fundamentally religious thinker who built on the more scholastic branches of the broad natural law tradition. Recently, Christopher Insole has tried to rigorously locate Burke in the copious canon of natural law theory. He argues, however, that Burke somewhat promiscuously invokes various aspects of a contested tradition including "voluntaristic" and "intellectualist" justifications. Some of the inconsistencies in Burke's political positions, Insole claims, can be directly traced to his fuzzy invocations of this body of knowledge (125-127).

ecocritical reading of Burke's dynamic claim that the state of society *is* a state of nature. The second, and most vital, section focuses on Burke's presentation of an ideal society as a proto-ecology in which people are connected across both space and time. The third section tracks Burke's work as a reluctant agricultural reformer and considers Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft's attempts to marshal the rhetorical power of nature as a normative force while also accusing one another of misreading the natural world. In the final section, I consider both limitations to Burke's proto-ecological thought and ways that it might provide ecocritics with new provocations.

This chapter has certain limits: I do not try to propose a *unified* theory of what Burke meant by nature, seek to reveal the "true" Burke, or try to choose between Burke and Paine all over again. Such forms of interpretive closure would oversimplify the complexity and contradictions that characterized Burke's (at times deliberately) inconsistent use of the term "nature." As Raymond Williams observes in *Keywords*, "Nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language," capable even in its broadest terms of signifying three very different things "(i) the essential quality and character *of* something; (ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings" (217). Even more than most writers of his era, Burke often wishes to blur the lines between these senses of the word. When he defends the status quo by claiming something is "natural," he often conflates the first two definitions, suggesting that a particular course of action is appropriate to the essence of the actor *because* it is in accordance with the "inherent force" that underlies all society. At such moments, Burke uses "nature" as a rhetorical figure in order to yoke the local/culturally specific to the universal/morally normative. Yet he also generally maintains a proto-ecological sensibility in which context matters a great deal: supposedly natural propriety depends on environmental situatedness, timeliness, and social embeddedness. Additionally, Burke often tries to justify his claims by appealing to the third sense of the term, invoking specific facets of the "material world" to explain social phenomena.

Bearing in mind these multiple and messy linguistic possibilities, I resist the tendency to read the pamphlet wars over the French Revolution as a reaffirmation of the supposedly intractable gulf between liberalism and conservatism. As the title of conservative writer Yuval Levin's recent book suggests, *The Great Debate* between Burke and Paine has indeed been read as *The Birth of Right and Left*. But at the moment of delivery the respective characters wrought in the faces of those bawling fraternal twins were far from decisively delineated. Their development was not as preordained (or even necessarily predictable) as we sometimes imagine.[10] British responses to the French Revolution were numerous and varied—forming a sort of textual ecosystem—and it is a misnomer to refer to the entire phenomenon as the "Burke-Paine debate." Even when other authors are remembered, the pamphlets are often seen as bilateral brawls featuring Edmund Burke, the conservative champion ensconced in the seat of power, against a series of sequence of revolutionary challengers including Richard Price, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, Joseph Priestley, and James Mackintosh. As chapter two explores, this history leaves out a range of widely read American respondents (John and John Quincy Adams, Joel Barlow, Gilbert Imlay, etc.). More broadly, reading this period's diverse literature as oppositional, two-party duels helps establish clear contrasts and clarify the writers' sense of the political stakes. But it also often requires ignoring what is idiosyncratic in their texts, downplaying the extent to which they share common assumptions, and anachronistically imagining that they shared our fully formed dichotomy between conservatism and liberalism.

[10] In arguing that Burke and his opponents do not stand in total opposition on all issues, it is important not to conflate their positions. A handful of right-wing critics, such as Jeffrey Langan, have done just that, arguing that Wollstonecraft and Burke "present us not with a liberal-conservative divide, but a liberal-liberal divide" (59).

Instead, I focus on aspects of Age of Revolution thought that fit incongruously with our current ideological categories, considering what might be transgressive in Burke or surprisingly conservative in his pro-revolutionary critics. Instead of looking to the French Revolution as a moment that crystallized ideological alliances, I try to consider it as an outbreak of imaginative possibility that *continues* to have the capacity to redefine political categories. Considered through this lens, Burke's resistances to systematization reveal him as a disruptive figure even within the conservative traditions that so often hearken back to him. He bridges gaps not through some passive form of centrism, but by disrupting two long-held assumptions: first, that the political opposition of conservatism and conservationism is inevitable; and second, that nature and culture need to be read as opposites.

Replanting the State of Nature in the Garden of Society

Burke wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as a response to dissenting minister Richard Price's 1789 sermon entitled "A Discourse on the Love of our Country." Price maintained that a "whole duty to country" includes the citizen's right to "liberalize and enlighten it" through either reform or revolution. Price viewed the recent French Revolution as a natural extension of the principles of England's "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and the American Revolution. As his oration culminates, Price presents a fiery and rapturous vision of democratic enlightenment: "Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting AMERICA free, reflected to FRANCE, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates EUROPE!" (Price 32). When Burke published *Reflections* in November of 1790, he attacked most of Price's premises, but took particular umbrage at the idea that the events of 1688 and the events of 1789 had anything in common. While Burke sometimes likened the French Revolution to the English Civil War (1642-1651) that resulted in the execution of Charles I, he tended to stress its radical difference from all prior events. In the most well-known phrase in *Reflections*, Burke claims, "All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world." (10). By presenting the Revolution as an "astonishing" anomaly Burke disputed not only the connections to the Glorious Revolution, but also those who saw congruencies between the defenses of liberty in the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789.

Because Burke had been sympathetic to the plight of American colonists during their revolution (as well as colonized people in Ireland and India), his attacks on France caused his more radical contemporaries to charge him with hypocrisy. Most famously, Jefferson wittily retorted "the revolution in France does not astonish me so much as the revolution in Mr. Burke" (*Papers* 17:671).[11]

[11] Despite Jefferson's witticism, the common contention that Burke actually championed American independence is overstated. During the war, Burke advocated for Parliament to "*admit the people of our colonies into an interest in the constitution*" rather than for political separation ("Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies," *Writings* III:136; emphasis in original). Surprisingly, he had very little to say about the Declaration of Independence. Nonetheless, many readers pointed out the discrepancies between Burke's positions as Whig reformer and devotee of the sublime and his new counterrevolutionary preferences for picturesque inheritances associated with the British landed gentry. Meanwhile, some of the invective animating Paine as he composed *Rights of Man* probably derived from his belief that Burke was not only an ideological opponent, but also a traitor to the cause of liberty. Paine and Burke met in August of 1788, and Paine later wrote that "it was natural that I should consider him a friend to mankind" as their acquaintance started (*Life and Writings* 4:xv).

A massive outpouring of more sustained rebuttals (and a few defenses) followed in the British and American press.[12] Burke's *Reflections* provoked a massive outpouring of both direct topical responses (Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, November 29, 1790; Joseph Priestley's "Letter to Burke", January 1791; Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* Part I, February, 1791; Joel Barlow's "Advice to the Privileged Orders" Part I, February 1792; Part II, September 1793) and systematic treatises on political philosophy (James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae,* May 1791; Paine's *Rights of Man* Part II, February 1792; William Godwin's *Political Justice*, 1793). Authors also chose to contest Burke in novels (Gilbert Imlay's *The Emigrants*, 1793; Godwin's *Caleb Williams,* 1794), poems (Barlow, "The Conspiracy of Kings," 1792), and new modes of critique (Wollstonecraft's influential feminist work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792).

In response to these critics—many of whom vociferously charged Burke with betraying his earlier values—Burke defended his intellectual integrity.[13] In his 1791 "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," he claimed that the "virtue of consistency" was one of the hallmarks of his character.[14] Nonetheless, the question of whether Burke flip-flopped on the matter of revolution has dominated much of modern criticism. Unsurprisingly, most critics who praise Burke as the founder of modern conservatism find consistent strains throughout his writings.[15] Meanwhile leftists have presented Burke's responses to the French Revolution as the ramblings of an embittered reactionary sell-out.

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[12] While there is a great deal of scholarship on Burke's numerous rhetorical opponents, comparatively little attention has been paid to the handful of British writers who publicly supported Burke. Examples include the "Letter to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke" by M. Rosibonne, "Letters to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke on Politics" by Edward Tatham, and Samuel Cooper's "The First Principles of Civil and Ecclesiastical Government Delineated." For more information, see Stuart Andrews, *The British Periodical Press and the French Revolution, 1789-99*. As chapter two explores, other notable writers residing in America (such as John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and William Cobbett) had more ambivalent responses to Burke.

[13] James Mackintosh was an exception to this trend. Instead of charging Burke with hypocrisy, he *faulted* Burke for consistently championing conservative causes: "An abhorrence for abstract politics, a predilection for aristocracy, and a dread of innovation, have ever been among the most sacred articles of his creed" (5).

[14] Sensing that such concerns might dominate his legacy, Burke addressed these charges of flip-flopping in the "Appeal." He delineated differences between the American and French Revolutionary circumstances. Oddly, considering that he claimed a unified persona, he chose to defend himself in the third person: "This is the great gist of the charge against him. It is not so much that he is wrong in his book (that however is alleged also) as that he has therein belyed [sic] his whole life. I believe, if he could venture to value himself upon any thing, it is on the virtue of consistency that he would value himself the most. Strip him of this, and you leave him naked indeed" ("Appeal," *Writings* IV:390-91). Splitting himself into an authorial persona (the "I" who serves as a sort of advocate) and the subject of the essay (the "he" who is the defendant) ironically reinforces a vision of Burke as a consolidated self when the congruence between the two figures is revealed, thereby dissolving the differences between his defense of America and his condemnation of France.

[15] In *The Conservative Mind*, Russell Kirk argues that three terms consistently structure Burke's thought, namely: "Prejudice"—the half intuitive knowledge that enables men to meet the problems of life without logic-chopping; "prescription"—the customary right which grows out of the conventions and compacts of many successive generations; "presumption"—interference in accordance with the common experience of mankind" (42). Tellingly, each of these three categories expresses a favorable disposition towards tradition. By arguing that three sentiments sum up Burke's thought, and then selecting three terms that significantly overlap, Kirk devolves some of Burke's complexities into a decidedly selective vision at the very moment when he claims to encapsulate Burke's multiplicity. Among Burke's conservative defenders, Levin (35) and Kramnick (4) most explicitly argue against the theory that there were "two Burkes." For Levin, when Burke supported American liberty, it was because he "objected to British actions in America as an affront *to the habits and sentiments* of the American" preference for political liberty, not because he favored revolutionary change" (49).

In their most pointed critiques, they suggest that conservative critics' Cold War era defenses of Burke disingenuously tried to fabricate a genealogical link between Jacobinism and Communism. However, both hagiographic treatments from the right and denunciations from the left tend to gloss over the very complexities that make Burke's writing so compelling in the first place.[16]

While the question of Burke's consistency or inconsistency may ultimately be irresolvable, one through line in his thought is his longstanding skeptical engagement with the concept of the "state of nature." Although Hobbes popularized the term over a century earlier during the English Civil War and Locke took it in new directions in his *Second Treatise*, Rousseau's portrait of the state of nature as an abandoned realm of innocence allowed it to take on new life during the Age of Revolution. Perhaps more than any other natural rights thinker, Thomas Paine appealed to the state of nature in order to frame revolution not only as a progressive movement forward or a cataclysmic break with the past, but also as a revival of lost liberties. From *Common Sense* (1776) to his late pamphlet *Agrarian Justice* (1797), Paine portrays the state of nature as a condition free from the corruptions and environmental depredations of society. The American and French Revolutions, Paine argues in *Rights of Man* (1791), will inaugurate a "renovation of the natural order of things" (*Paine Collection* 155-56). For Paine, revolution is a rational attempt to recapture not only direct and pure social bonds, but also an unalienated relationship to the world "of things." He believed that such a political revolution would be as natural as the cyclical revolution of the heavenly spheres.

Despite notable apprehensions, Burke did not entirely reject the construct of the state of nature, as many have claimed.[17] Notably, Burke showed a great deal of interest in the rhetorical figure even before the American Revolution. His first major work, *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), satirized deists like Lord Bolingbroke who appealed to the state of nature in order to criticize political institutions. Burke's *Vindication* demonstrates that such methods can be carried to an absurd extreme: since every modern system departs from a raw state of nature, one can justify overthrowing *all* governments and not only tyrannies. Elsewhere, Burke would articulate situations in which revolution was justified; whereas Jefferson and Paine associated tyranny with the *form* of governments that do not give the people representation, Burke persists in viewing tyranny as the consequence of unjust *actions* of a given government, be it a republic or a monarchy. In these discussions, Burke questions whether a pre-social state forms "a proper criterion for judging the value of political institutions" (Fennessy 70). But the concept of the state of nature still permeates his thought. Even though he sometimes calls into question the comforts available prior to society,

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[16] Some scholars have tried alternative approaches or pursued more moderate arguments. Christopher Insole views the entire opposition as reductive, and instead emphasizes that "the complexity of Burke's work is not unlocked but distorted by using the lens of a single philosophical system" (117). In an influential Freudian reading, Isaac Kramnick argued that Burke was not only "inconsistent" but also "ambivalent" in his relationship to patriarchal authority, torn by "conflicts over identity and motivation" stemming from his personal psycho-sexual life (10). Drew Maciag has more recently maintained that Burke was consistent in his "quest for *balance*." Unlike mere moderation, the pursuit of political equilibrium sometimes required "the shifting of weight from one side of a dangerously unbalanced ship to another" (20). According to Maciag's view, even a consistent Edmund Burke might have a philosophical rationale for supporting different positions at different times.

[17] Among those who interpret Burke as a natural law thinker, Fennessy comes closest to acknowledging Burke's continued use of the figure of the state of nature. Yet even Fennessy argues that Burke "never actually rejected the antithesis between nature and art" (70). This is a hard claim to maintain given Burke's epigrammatic statement than "Art is man's nature," which Fennessy acknowledges but seeks to downplay. Among more recent critics, Yuval Levin is most willing to explore the implications of Burke's analysis of a social "state of nature," arguing that Paine, rather than Burke, relied on the antithesis between nature and art (54-55).

he does not simply echo Hobbes and argue for monarchy because of a belief that life prior to authoritarian control would have been nasty, brutish, and short. Neither does he altogether dismiss the state of nature as a historical fiction (or an inaccurate metaphor) that cannot be proved. Though he argued in *Reflections* that a "sacred veil" *should* be drawn "over the beginnings of all governments," in surprising ways Burke, like Paine, *was* deeply interested in the ways that a state of nature might guide political action (*Writings* VI:316-17). However, he directly disputes Paine's ideas about where we might locate such a state of nature and how we might go about observing it.

For Paine, only reason could unveil the conditions of life in the state of nature. But in "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," Burke's most direct response to the arguments set forth in the first part of *Rights of Man*, he suggests that reason is only a small portion of human nature. Only a revised vision of the "state of nature," he argues, can allow a "natural aristocracy" to thrive:[18]

> The state of civil society which necessarily generates this [natural] aristocracy is a state of nature; and much more truly so than a savage and incoherent mode of life. For man is by nature reasonable; and he is never perfectly in his natural state, but when he is placed where reason may be best cultivated and most predominates. Art is man's nature. We are as much, at least, in a state of nature in formed manhood as in immature and helpless infancy. Men qualified in the manner I have just described, form in nature, as she operates in the common modification of society, the leading, guiding, and governing part. It is the soul to the body, without which the man does not exist. (*Writings* IV:449)

In this passage, far from rejecting the concept of the state of nature, Burke suggests that it is readily observable in everyday life. Far from being abstract, it is deeply contingent and contextualized. The state of nature's very transparency allows us to guide political decisions without recourse to speculation. Rather than portraying artifice as *opposed* to nature, he reinterprets the state of nature as the dynamic *result* of human artifice. Burke at once situates human nature as "reasonable" and suggests that unadulterated reason is insufficient—it only achieves its potential when "cultivated." Tellingly, the language of cultivation derives from an agricultural register, as opposed to the popular imagery of the state of nature as being either situated in the wilderness or a pastoral society (Burke's "savage and incoherent mode of life"; Rousseau's "noble savage"). The problems of governance are portrayed as similar to the problems faced by farmers: namely, encouraging an environment in which natural capacities can flourish more than they would in the wild. The metaphor of development from infant to adult suggests a model by which the state of nature is itself subject to nurture. At other moments, rather than simply suggest that artifice is natural, Burke wants society to follow a "plan of conformity to nature in our artificial institutions"—what we now might call biomimicry (*Reflections* 34). When Burke's recurrences to this theme are read in combination, the relationship between nature and art emerges as a dialectic rather than a dichotomy.

Burke's dialectic between art and nature echoes Polixenes's famous lines from the shepherd's festival in Act IV of *The Winter's Tale*. It isn't clear that Burke meant a specific allusion to Shakespeare's play, but it is also hard to imagine that it did not help inform the formulation of his thought. In either case, the correlation between Burke and Shakespeare's attitudes towards nature,

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[18] Eighteenth-century political thinkers frequently used the term "natural aristocracy," but in different ways. John Adams would define the "five pillars" of natural aristocracy as "Beauty, wealth, birth, genius, and virtues," and suggest that the first three inherited traits tended to trump the last two, which are more characteristic of the individual. Burke is even less clear about whether natural aristocrats are born, shaped, or self-made. Instead, he simply says that natural aristocrats were men elevated "above" the common concerns of the masses and are "thereby amongst the first benefactors of mankind" ("Appeal," *Writings* IV:449).

art, social class, plants, and grafting are uncanny. The scene Shakespeare presents is characteristically filled with disguises and mistaken identities. At the festival, Perdita, who has been raised by shepherds, encounters Polixenes, the King of Bohemia (where they both now reside). Unbeknownst to the King, his son Florizel and Perdita have fallen in love and plan to marry despite the class divide that separates them. None of the characters at the scene realizes that Perdita is actually the daughter of Leontes, the King of Prussia, who exiled her and her mother when she was a baby. Further complicating matters, the supposedly lowborn Perdita wears a costume as "Queen of the Feast", unwittingly betraying the royal status that not even she is aware of.

After Perdita gives Polixenes flowers that seem out of season, they embark on a discussion about grafting that functions as a thinly veiled allusion to marriage outside of class boundaries. Perdita informs Polixenes that she has not given him the "fairest flowers o'th' season" because at that time of year they are "carnations and streaked gillyvors, / Which some call nature's bastards" (*Norton Shakespeare* 4.4.81-83). Perdita views decorative plants which contain mixed colors from multiple "parents" as "bastards" because she believes they are made through grafting, whereby a cutting (or "scion") from one plant is attached to another plant's rootstock. Perdita dislikes grafts because she has "heard it said / There is an art which in their piedness shares / With great creating nature" (4.4.86-88) A purist, she suggests that "art"—in this case grafting—degrades nature because it depends on interventions in (or imitations of) natural processes.[19] Polixenes's response, which directly anticipates Burke's lines on art and nature, suggests that art itself is natural.

> Say there be,
> Yet nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean. So over that art
> Which you say adds to nature is an art
> That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend nature - change it rather; but
> The art is nature itself. (4.4.89-97)

Whereas Burke simply states that "art is man's nature," Polixenes suggests a genealogy: nature first "makes" the means that artists utilize. Here, Polixenes's defense of grafting—and by implication, inter-class marriage—seems to place him in an awkward position when he later learns of Florizel and Perdita's love for one another, which he rebukes. Similarly, Perdita's refusal to accept his logic and plant gillyvors ("I'll not put / The dibble in earth to set one slip of them," 4.4.100) seems self-defeating. Many critics have registered these oddities. Charlotte Scott observes that the terms Polixenes uses ("marry", "conceive") are definitively social, rather than purely agricultural. Scott

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[19] In actuality, carnations and gillyvors attain their dappled color from cross-breeding, not grafting. Unlike grafting, which almost always preserves the genetic integrity of the scion (using the rootstock only for support), cross-breeding creates true genetic hybrids. Although both grafts and cross-breeding can occur without human intervention, the latter is much more common. In 1883, Leo H. Grindon noted Perdita's mistake, as well as noting that Shakespeare himself could have known nothing about cross-fertilization, since proof that plants reproduce sexually was still a century away. Shakespeare's lack of modern botanical knowledge has led to some modern critical confusion as well. In *Green Shakespeare*, Gabriel Egan, knowing that gillyvors are the result of cross pollination, suggests that Perdita's objection is not that they are artificially produced, but that "they *look* like hybrids that result from human interference in nature" (129). This cannot be true, as it was not possible for Shakespeare to know this fact, let alone Perdita. Her objection is to a supposedly unnatural *process*, not an appearance.

convincingly argues that Polixenes tries to justify "sex as a form of nature—a natural impulse" (181). Polixenes backtracks at the end of his speech when he substitutes the value neutral term "change" for "mend." Yet the question still remains as to why he introduces social terms such as "marry" into a discussion about agricultural practices. Meanwhile, for other critics, Polixenes's discourse amounts to a reductive claim that *everything* is natural because people and their artifice are part of nature.

Right-wing thinkers have appropriated the claim that all things are equally natural in order to justify environmental exploitation, and even environmental historians such as William Cronon and Richard White come perilously close to it at times.[20] But that is not the case here—Polixenes's entire metaphor hinges on the specific ways in which grafts work. Neither the root-stock nor the scion is wholly artificial. The graft does not join a piece of artifice with an untainted natural artifact. Instead, it combines two pieces which are both natural growths that have been modified by human agriculture. Both flowers are already nature-culture hybrids before the graft occurs. Grafting, meanwhile, is a common agricultural practice, but also occurs in nature (Mudge 439, 445). When Polixenes refers to an artificial means that nature "makes", he invokes the likelihood that people learned this practice by mimicking nature. Far from arguing that all human actions are wholly natural, Polixenes seeks to correct the implications of Perdita's suggestion: namely, that any human intervention whatsoever renders a thing or process wholly *un*natural. Additionally, despite his use of terms that imply human sexuality, Polixenes is insulated from the cultural implications because he knows that grafts almost never produce true hybrids.[21] The rootstock, often selected because it is from a hardier plant (hence the "wildest stock"), does not actually influence the genetic makeup of the scion's flowers. The "bud" is still "of nobler race" than the less ornamental "bark of baser kind." The "marriage" in question is one of utility, not sexual reproduction, and despite the metaphoric register, grafting cannot cause even symbolic miscegenation. Recently, some literary scholars have even taken to calling grafts "queer bonds", as they resist our standard social narrative of heteronormative biological reproduction.[22] Thus, Polixenes's grafting metaphors initially seem to undermine Perdita's relationship with Florizel, but ultimately help legitimate it, for Perdita herself is a sort of noble blossom grafted onto a lowborn shepherd family. Their hardiness helps her to survive (ironically, the danger is from her father), but does not risk tainting her once her true lineage is revealed. Like the grafted blossom on a hardier stock, she is accepted as legitimate because of biological succession, rather than defined by the circumstances of her upbringing.

Burke uses similar metaphors of grafting to similar ends. Like Shakespeare, he relies on his agricultural knowledge even when he does not stop to explain his metaphors to the readers. In an important passage of "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," Burke argues that revolutionaries attempt to "graft virtues on vices" rather than "grafting the virtues on the stock of natural affections"

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[20] Gabriel Egan criticizes Polixenes on precisely these grounds (129). In "The Trouble with Wilderness", Cronon maintains that a tree in a garden represents "wildness" just as much as a tree in the forest. In the conclusion to *The Organic Machine*, White represents a laser-light show projected on the Grand Coulee Dam as both an "artifact of human technology" and "a product of the vast natural cycles of the planet," suggesting that we ultimately cannot disentangle natural and cultural production (111). While both Cronon and White's arguments have more nuance than this footnote is able to gloss, their framing nonetheless risks lending weight to those who seek to "greenwash" exploitive developments.

[21] Though it has been a matter of debate "since antiquity" whether scions maintain their integrity, "it has been widely accepted as a horticultural truism that grafted plants retain their own genetic identity" (Mudge 479). In actuality, there are some rare instances in which the flowers of grafted plants have elements of both scion and stock, which are called "chimeral hybrids." Scientists still actively debate whether these alterations amount to "genetic changes" (480, 487).

[22] I am indebted for this distinction to Dorri Beam's talk at the 2016 ALA Conference titled "Whitman's Cereal Society."

(*Writings* IX:243). Like Shakespeare, he speaks as someone familiar with the actual practice of grafting, and he is attentive to what makes a graft succeed or fail.[23] When he faults the revolutionaries for attempting to graft "virtues on vices" he relies on the terms as antonyms to suggest that the graft will be untenable, as grafted species must be closely related. Meanwhile, the merger between "natural affections" and "virtues" seems viable, as they share a discernible familial similarity. "Virtues," like a delicate blossom, only flower under particular environmental circumstances; "natural" affections, as universal to all people, make a more durable rootstock. For Burke, grafting virtues onto natural affections means appealing to our "prejudices" (including our "natural" preference for family members and those who share our social class) that have formed over time. Because these prejudices are related to our station in society, we might all be meritorious in Burkean terms and yet have an unequal ability to actualize our "virtuous" intentions.

In this regard and many other ways, Burke's civil state of nature is predicated on a trickle-down theory of privilege. But he views that privilege itself as both an outgrowth of organic processes and the means to understand nature more directly. He traces a lineage whereby "the surplus product of the soil" is transmuted into plants, food, profit, and finally philanthropic institutions.

> Why should the expenditure of a great landed property, which is a dispersion of the surplus product of the soil, appear intolerable to you or to me, when it takes its course through the accumulation of vast libraries, which are the history of the force and weakness of the human mind … through paintings and statues, that, by imitating nature, seem to extend the limits of creation … through collections of the specimens of nature, which become a representative assembly of all the classes and families of the world, that by disposition facilitate, and, by exciting curiosity, open the avenues to science? (*Reflections* 162)

Here, Burke reiterates a suggestion that Polixenes ultimately qualified: namely, that art can improve, or "mend nature"—and follows it to its conclusion. Artistic mimesis becomes not merely reproduction, but a fusion of the natural and the artificial that "seems to extend the limits of creation." Since "art is man's nature," artists can actually "open up new possibilities for imagining what nature is or can be" (Howard 2880).[24] It is important that Burke situates enclosure and the transition to a surplus agricultural economy as the reforms that make society possible. Many of the benefits of privatization he gestures towards ("vast libraries," art museums) are arguably refuges of privilege rather than benefits to the public as a whole. But unlike most conservative thinkers, Burke does not simply praise the world of artificial society and its uneven distribution of benefits. The passage builds towards a revaluation of nature through scientific exploration and "collections of specimens" (elements of the broader enlightenment project). Thus, the chain of events that begins with enclosure and the transformation of nature is ultimately praised both because it enables our creative ability to "extend" nature's limits and because it allows us to see nature more clearly and objectively. Observational and creative powers inspire one another.

In the passage of the *Appeal* following his redefined state of nature, Burke makes it clear that he does not praise inequality for its own sake, but instead for its tendency to promote what he calls a "grand chorus" within society. Those without privilege are not simply the recipients of noblesse

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[23] Burke uses the language of grafting quite sparingly, suggesting that when he does employ the terms, they are chosen deliberately. For an account of Shakespeare as a knowledgeable farmer, see Egan's *Green Shakespeare* or Spier and Anderson's "Shakespeare and Farming."

[24] Another source for the idea that artificial methods can "extend" natural processes rather than depart from them is Francis Bacon, especially in *Sylva Sylvarum* and *The New Atlantis*.

oblige; instead, they have voices whose very difference allows the "harmony" of the whole. He argues that the whole is bound together by what he calls the "discipline of nature," the moral force that segregates "men from their proper chieftains." In Burke's view, the "discipline of nature" means that peasants cannot become "chieftains," yet both can thrive in their places (*Writings* IV:449). This metaphor clearly has oppressive political implications. Like the idea of the Great Chain of Being that structured English political thought for generations, Burke's vision of social harmony is hierarchical and rigidly opposed to social mobility. But by basing his vision on natural systems and stressing harmony, rather than invoking a supernatural divine order, Burke revises the Great Chain of Being to suggest that hierarchal expressions of power are constrained by a web of interdependent relationships: existing higher up the ladder does not allow one to act with impunity.

Despite Burke's intellectual sophistication, his radical revision of the state of nature raises a series of questions he never satisfactorily addresses. Perhaps most importantly, Burke never fully explains how one should discern which forms of social expression deserve praise or censure for being "natural" or "unnatural." Instead, he often confidently labels certain acts of artifice in either category, implicitly relying on the pillars of prejudice, presumption, and prescription to validate his emotional preferences. Burke's equation of the "state of nature" with "the state of civil society" verifies one of Wollstonecraft's central criticisms: namely, that Burke all too conveniently appeals to "nature" in order to validate and preserve social inequity. Indeed, for Burke, the civil state of nature is not intended to produce equality, but instead systematize inequality all while producing an elite who can function as "the first benefactors of mankind" (*Writings* IV:449).

Social Ecologies

Building on the idea of the economy of nature, Burke represents the functioning state not only as a chorus, but also a balanced ecosystem in which the degradation of even the "lower" species has a ripple effect that alters the health of the whole. His well-functioning society is constituted by the totalized sum of habits and institutions that have slowly accreted through human agency until their irreplaceable artifice appears natural. The "social ecology" that he champions is intricately interwoven, yet fragile; anthropocentric but deeply humbling; holistically totalizing, yet particularistic; harmonic but capable of gradual change: an evolving network that connects past, present, and future generations.

Referring to Burke's thought as ecological is deliberately anachronistic. The terms "ecology" and "ecosystem" were not coined until 1866 and were not in popular use until around a century later. Nonetheless, as Donald Worster argues in *The Economy of Nature*, "ecology, even before it had a name, had a history" (x). According to Worster, the early expressions of ecological thought had two divergent forms of expression: the "Imperial" stance associated with Linnaeus, and the "Arcadian" approach associated primarily with Gilbert White. Worster argues that the "Imperial" modality "stripped from nature all spiritual qualities" in order to "promote a view of creation as a mechanical contrivance" subject to "man's dominion." By contrast, the "Arcadian view advocated a simple, humble life for humans with the aim of restoring them to a peaceful coexistence with other organisms" and God's creation. In addition to his famous catalogs, Linnaeus formalized his proto-ecological reflections in the influential 1749 text *The Oeconomy of Nature*. Nature, according to Linnaeus, was "economical" because it maximized life by confining each creature to an "allotted place" and form of nourishment (qtd. in Worster 35). Disruption could only ensue, Linnaeus implicitly suggested, if a given species failed to maintain "limits to its appetites" and thereby attempted to "rob of another kind their aliment" (Worster 35).

The same year that the French Revolution began, Burke's contemporary Gilbert White published *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789) based on his observations less than fifty miles outside London. Though his perspective was usually anthropocentric, White's primary emphasis was that species might live in humble harmony with one another. At one point, after observing how cattle's droppings in ponds supplied food for insects (and they for fish), White enthusiastically exclaimed that "Nature is a great economist" because she "converts the recreation of one animal to the support of another!" (qtd. in Worster 5). Despite White's attention to these economies in nature, Worster describes him as oddly oblivious to "the revolution going on in the politics and economy of man" (12). Meanwhile Burke, writing from his London apartment and country estate at Beaconsfield, responded to the French Revolution in a way that suggests the deep connections between the "oeconomy" of nature and the economy of society.

While Paine argues that particular social corruptions can be remedied by "laying the axe to the root" (*Paine Collection* 81). Burke uses arboreal metaphors to describe the way that even imperfect "institutions" exist in a web of fragile, interdependent relationships. His early ecological mentality is most clearly on display as he deplores the "total abolition" of institutions "where they have cast their roots wide and deep, and where by long habit things more valuable than themselves are so adapted to them, and in a manner interwoven with them, that the one cannot be destroyed, without notably impairing the other" (*Reflections* 157). Although these institutions may have originally been "artificially" introduced, Burke suggests that they come to play a "natural" role over time, somewhat like a shipwreck or an offshore oil platform that eventually supports a marine ecosystem. An attempt to remove the "artificial" elements of society would also destroy the organic "things more valuable than themselves." Thus, for Burke, foundational cultural structures (such as the church) become naturalized *since no immediate human agency could recreate them if they are destroyed*—regardless of whether or not they were originally results of human artifice. In fact, as generations of human endeavor add to these institutions, their very artificiality makes them more "natural," according to Burke's criteria. Burke validates them by focusing on how they transcend synchronic human motivations, taking on romantic values associated with nature's physical alterity and temporal *longue durée*.

Marxist critics such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton situate Burke as the seminal figure in a tradition whereby "culture" comes to mean "the whole way of life" of a people that has evolved through "slow change and adaptation" (Williams, *Culture* 263). Because Burke explains society by invoking both interconnectedness and a sense of longue durée, Williams credits him with establishing the idea of an "organic society" based on "interrelation and continuity" instead of "separation into spheres of interest" (Williams, *Culture* 11).[25] According to Raymond Williams, Burke stands at a moment in time that makes the term "organic" particularly relevant: he is both the progenitor of a new tradition and "the last serious thinker who could find the 'organic' *in an existing society*" (*Culture* 140; emphasis added).[26] Whereas later conservatives nostalgically recall the past and Marxists invoke an unrealized future when they use organicism to critique liberalism, Burke simply

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[25] Williams writes extensively about the slipperiness of the term "organic", noting that it has roots in both "the Greek opyavov" which "first meant 'tool' or 'instrument', and opyavikos" which "was equivalent to our 'mechanical.'" As a result of this history, "Burke used 'organic' and 'organized' as synonyms, but by the middle nineteenth-century they are commonly opposed ('natural' vs. 'planned' society, etc)." Additionally, Williams tracks several other connotations of the term "organic" which developed over time, noting that different political actors invoke different connotations: "Perhaps all societies are organic (i.e. formed wholes)," he concludes, "but some are more organic (agricultural/industrialized/conservative/planned) than others" (*Culture* 263).

[26] According to Williams, Coleridge already felt that the organic society was degrading over time, and therefore proposed a new "class dedicated to the preservation and extension of culture" (*Culture* 63).

looks to a contemporary England that hasn't yet embraced the changes of the French Revolution. He views English culture as an organic form that has been grown rather than made—cultivated, perhaps, by the pruning of elite actors, but more vegetable than mechanical.[27]

Burke's surprising emphasis on the organic demands that we reconsider some of our received notions about him. In the popular view, Burke opposed the French Revolution because its reforms were too totalizing—and at times this is in fact the substance of his critique. But in his more ecological moments, Burke seems most concerned instead about the ripple effects of *piecemeal* change within a complicated system. By viewing culture as an organic system, Burke primarily resists a model of society *as a mechanism* (such as the enlightenment idealization of the clock) in which parts can be cleanly removed and replaced without functional alteration. But he also does not make the leap to viewing society as a unified organism in which any surgical intrusion leads to the death of the whole. Instead, society emerges as a system of interconnected living organisms. Uprooting may cause unforeseen consequences, but that does not mean the system is static. The system pulses with disparate individual desires, and the complicated push, pull, and knitted action between them is the energetic source of the culture that has slowly arisen over time.

For Burke, such a system can only be comprehended or appreciated retrospectively, rather than engineered proactively, but there is still room for limited intervention. In fact, the social system would not have its organic, lifelike quality were it not for the effects of human striving. Williams acknowledges this role for agency within a social network or ecosystem, offering a reminder that "every element in the complicated system is active: the relationships are changing, constantly, and any action—even abstention… affects, even if only slightly, the tensions, the pressures, the very nature of the complication" (*Culture* 109).[28] For Burke, the issue at hand is not disallowing all movement, but identifying what types of movement will have unintended consequences and proceeding cautiously when one is unsure. As Eagleton points out, the complex cultural cohesion that evolves over time can be not only a repressive force, but also a "spur to revolution" in certain circumstances. Eagleton writes that in Burke's worldview "Nothing … is most likely to lead to social upheaval than a high-handed disregard for the time-hallowed customs of a people. Culture and tradition can thus be disruptive forces as well as preservative ones. A case which is conservative when applied to metropolitan nations can be radical in the context of the colonies" (Eagleton 73-74).

As Burke's passage about roots "cast … wide and deep" goes on, Burke justifies social cohesion through metaphors about the destruction of natural forces. Here, Burke says that the institutions he defends are "the instruments of wisdom." But he clarifies that "wisdom cannot create materials; they are the gifts of nature or of chance; her pride is in the use" (*Reflections* 158). The decision to level those institutions, he continues "would be like the attempt to destroy (if it were in our competence to destroy) the expansive force of fixed air in nitre, or the power of steam, or of electricity, or of magnetism." The full folly of such a course of action, Burke argues, may only be revealed later. Many natural forces, he reminds us, seemed "unserviceable" or "noxious … until contemplative ability combining with practic skill, tamed their wild nature, subdued them to use, and rendered them at once the most powerful and the most tractable agents, in subservience to the great views and designs of men" (*Reflections* 159).

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[27] Williams cites Arthur Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* as a source for the idea of organic form. He argues that the growth/making distinction constitutes "the exact terms on which Burke based his whole philosophical criticism of the new politics" (*Culture* 37).

[28] The passage in question is George Eliot's account of society as a "tangled skein" or "tangled web", but the principles are also readily applicable to Burke.

In *Reflections,* Burke usually emphasizes the ways that upheaval disturbs irreplaceable and irreparable systems of interrelated, mutually contingent, complicated parts that have accreted over time. But here, even in a section more generally cited for its focus on the *history* of social institutions, Burke appeals to the future. We have a duty not only to the past, he suggests, but also to subsequent generations. He portrays society as "a contract" and "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born" (*Reflections* 96).[29] That duty, Burke argues, demands that we acknowledge our limited understanding of natural phenomena. By suggesting that we should retain these natural elements for future human use, rather than emphasizing their intrinsic merit, Burke echoes the focus on utilitarian ends that characterizes Linnaeus's "imperial" ecologies. But by forcefully insisting that we acknowledge our limited understanding of natural phenomena, Burke also builds on the humility characteristic of Arcadian ecologies. His position suggests that natural forces, as well as the social institutions they metaphorically stand for, may be valued primarily for their eventual ability to create positive outcomes (or use value); yet nonetheless they are, if not quite sacred, still representative of a higher value because we cannot yet rationally understand them or replace them if they are lost.[30]

While Burke elsewhere claims that natural metaphors should guide our action, here he frames nature as unknowable and complex, reminding us that we cannot rationally predict the ultimate consequences of planned disruptions. By using both a utilitarian and deontological justification for the preservation of such "natural" features, Burke anticipates the positions of both conservationists such as George Perkins Marsh and Gifford Pinchot as well as preservationists such as John Muir. His classical conservatism is closer to the conservationist position, yet his humility suggests that we will likely *never* attain a perfect understanding of nature, instilling a sense of chastened wonder more associated with Muir's High Sierra raptures. Without exerting direct influence, Burke nonetheless calls into being a mode of rhetorical expression that later environmental thinkers would unfold and re-contextualize.

Burke's observations on historical change map particularly well onto *ecological* expression. As the environmental historian B.J. Clapp has noticed, whereas the study of evolution draws attention to change over long periods of time, by emphasizing synchronic or short-term relationships in given systems, early ecological thinkers "fostered a conservative rather than a dynamic outlook" so that "[i]t was no coincidence that some ecologists spoke in accents remarkably like those of Edmund Burke" (6). Aldo Leopold's prose in *A Sand County Almanac* is a particular case in point. The sketch entitled "The Song of the Gavilan" for instance, echoes and elongates Burke's metaphor of a "great chorus" to express the operations of an ecosystem where "the plants, animals, and soils" function as "the instruments of the great orchestra" (Leopold 153). In each case, the musical metaphor is telling, as it suggests that a removal of a single, *seemingly* inessential piece might disrupt the harmonic frequencies of the whole. Leopold's subsequent criticisms of professors who work in the university rather than the field, in turn, sounds strikingly similar to Burke's disdain for those who reason from first principles rather than lived observation.

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[29] Raymond Williams brilliantly observes that "Burke shifts, in this argument, from *society* to *state*, and that the essential reverence for society is not to be confused, as Burke seems to confuse it, with that particular form of society which is the State at any given time. The observation is important, but Burke would not have been impressed by it. In his view, there was nothing in any way accidental about any particular form; the idea of society was only available to men in the form in which they had inherited it" (*Culture* 177).

[30] The complexity of Burke's expression here also hints at why both those who read Burke as a natural law thinker and those who read him as consistently utilitarian present only a partial case. His emphasis on humility and the unknowability of the future disrupt both the moralistic certitude of natural law theory and the ability to make the cost-benefit calculations central to utilitarian theory.

When Burke exposes the folly of destroying the "expansive force of fixed air in nitre" because we do not yet understand it, he anticipates one of Leopold's most quoted phrases: "If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first rule of intelligent tinkering" (190). As Harlan Wilson notes, in such passages Burke comes "very close to what is now called the *precautionary principle*, i.e., that the policy presumption should be in favor of not risking harm, even in the absence of complete consensus on the certainty of harm" (161).[31] Such insights reveal that an anthropocentric framework can still serve as a deeply humbling inspiration for environmental protection.

Normative Nature and the Status of Metaphor

The line connecting Burke's social ecologies to environmentalism is not necessarily a direct one. Burke extrapolates lessons from nature and applies them to society. In turn, a hypothetical Burkean environmentalism must project his insights about society back onto the natural world. Something is inevitably lost in these translations. The movement between them raises crucial questions: *should* nature serve as a guide to human society, and vice versa? And even *if* nature should shape society, *does* Burke interpret it fairly and accurately (or, alternatively, in a manner that anticipates the unintentionally dystopian erstwhile Fox News slogan "Fair and Balanced")? Even as Burke's many contemporary critics tended to share more of his fundamental presumptions that we generally recognize, they pose versions of these questions in their responses to *Reflections*. Many of them accuse Burke of *misreading* nature, instead substituting their own metaphors for how society should work. Meanwhile, Mary Wollstonecraft anticipates constructivist criticism by arguing that appeals to nature as a normative model for human society merely cover up *un*natural (that is, culturally contingent) modes of oppression. Collectively, the pamphlet war participants not only debate the applicability of particular green metaphors but contest whether political life in a time of revolution should be structured by naturalizing metaphors in the first place.

Even beyond the potent figure of the state of nature, metaphors from the physical world played a particularly potent role during the Age of Revolution. In his influential recent book, *The State as a Work of Art*, Eric Slauter argues that during the Early Republic period American discourse moved away from organic metaphors (particularly the stock image of the body politic) in favor of architectural metaphors of building and framing. The opposite is true of the French Revolution, where writers saturated political discourse with images drawn from nature. While James Madison derived the concept of checks and balances at least partly from the emerging idea of the balance of nature, French imagery was dominated by visions of cataclysm. The radical belief that the revolution would renew liberties forsaken in the passage from the state of nature to the state of society unleashed rhetoric about earthquakes, waves, and volcanoes. These images were exemplified in Camille Desmoulins's "*torrent revolutionnaire*"—a cleansing wave that simultaneously *represented* the force of the people and purified (or drowned) them through violent purges. Meanwhile, by substituting names of seasonal cycles associated with harvests for the months and days of the year, the French Revolutionary Calendar "sought to align the temporal lives of republican citizens with the cycles of nature" while the shift to decimal timekeeping linked the calendar to nature in more indirect ways (Miller 2). Critics have suggested that the French emphasis on natural forces and organic imagery evacuated the possibility of individual agency or resistance. In the influential *On*

[31] Aside from this dissertation, Wilson's article constitutes the most sustained effort to consider the proto-environmental dimensions of Burke's thought from a relatively systematic, outsider's perspective.

Revolution, Hannah Arendt suggests that the French Revolution essentially doomed itself to failure the moment it committed to organic imagery. Political questions about rights transformed into obedience to powerful forces—compelled either by external torrents or the collective "hungers" of the body politic. According to Arendt, the image of a unified body "driven by one superhuman, irresistible 'general will'" led to the abandonment of freedom to "the urgency of the life process itself" (50). One simply could not rationally argue with hunger. The body politic would consume everything in its path—including individuals all too conveniently detachable from its fictive corpus.

By contrast, Burke, Paine, Mackintosh, and Wollstonecraft's writings are infused with gentle green imagery that has been largely overlooked, at least compared to the relative outpouring of criticism on the natural sublime in the French Revolution.[32] Yet the British writers noticed—and crucially, interrogated—the operations of green metaphors in one another's texts. In response to the French revolutionaries' invocations of natural cataclysm, Burke qualified his early career preference for the sublime and began to more exclusively stress the moralizing effects of the beautiful. This shift led James Mackintosh to question whether Burke was still capable of reading the landscape or public opinion accurately. In *Vindiciae Gallicae*, he argues that men like Burke "mistake" the shift in public thought for "a mountain torrent that will pass away with the storm that gave it birth" when it is really "the stream of human opinion *in omne volubilis aevum [rolling in its flood forever]*, which the accession of every day will swell" (5).[33]

Given that Burke's competence as an interpreter of nature was called into question early and often, it is worth considering whether he knew what he was talking about. Additionally, it is precisely Burke's overbearing tendency to use elements of the natural world *as rhetorical figures* that has led many critics to insist that Burke has little to say about environmental actualities. According to both Burke's critics and his supporters, the Irishman's metaphors were simply politically useful approximations that reflected neither profound knowledge of nature nor true concern for it. Russell Kirk set the tone by proclaiming that by "nature" Burke meant "human nature, the springs of conduct common to civilized people, not the Romantic's quasi-pantheistic nature" (Kirk 41).[34] Drew Maciag is even more explicit, claiming that Burke "did not care about English oaks because they were oaks, but because they were ideograms for great men, great families, great institutions, or great traditions" (72).

However, these criticisms do not fully grapple with the interconnections between metaphor and actuality in Burke's life and thought. As John Turner has argued, the very inexactitude of metaphoric conjunction gives Burke a way to "show the interconnectedness of all parts of man's social and political life" (47). In so doing, he resists the enlightenment imperative to sort lived experience into discrete and arranged categories. Like his seemingly wandering prose, metaphor is a part of Burke's organizational practice: a resistance to rigid methodology itself. Just as the metaphoric vehicle necessarily exceeds the confinement of the tenor, the suggestive and (seemingly) undisciplined aspects of the text counter the ideology of systematic philosophy. Burke seeks to

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[32] For representative works, see Mary Ashburn Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution*; Wilda Anderson, "Scientific Nomenclature and Revolutionary Rhetoric"; Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* and *On Revolution*; D.G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France*; Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution, 1789-1820;* Martin Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time*; and E.C. Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from the Old Regime to Revolution*.

[33] Like many British writers, Mackintosh changed his opinions on the French Revolution after the terror, eventually moderating his criticisms of Burke.

[34] Levin repeats this doctrinal contention, claiming that Burke does not suggest that French institutions prior to the revolution "were themselves natural" but that Burke depicted the revolutionaries as "warring against human nature" (59).

expose enlightenment ideas *and* forms as rigid, overly rational, and artificial: fundamentally counter to the way the unfiltered human mind processes the complexities of the world.

Additionally, critiques suggesting that Burke only cared about human nature neglect the fact that Burke was fascinated by the nonhuman throughout his life. Far from being unconcerned with natural actualities, Burke was a practiced, curious, and astute observer of the natural world and its processes.[35] At times Burke's fascination was aesthetic, as in the passages on sublime landscapes in the *Philosophical Enquiry*. At other moments, he was interested in nature for its transformational use value. Like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, Burke's interest in agriculture both inspired and reflected his political commitments.[36] His defenses of "rootedness" were deeply connected to his efforts to be "a farmer in good earnest" at his Beaconsfield residence.[37] Though Burke's decision to buy a country estate reflected his effort to establish familial and political legitimacy (transitioning from melon to oak), he also took a deep interest in the details of farm management.

Although it is not clear that Burke personally labored in the fields with regularity, in 1768, he described to a friend how while tending to the farm, "Politicks have almost slipped out of my mind" (*Correspondence* 2:13-14). In his later writings, Burke's remarks on farming seem to echo his valuations of tradition and vision of wisdom as something that accretes over time. Burke is reputed to have "told young Abraham Shackleton that he thought people did well to try experiments in farming, that they might find the old way to be the best" (McCue 164-65). He frequently expressed modesty about his abilities, mentioning that he was a farmer by "inclination" rather than "experience" (*Correspondence* 2:13-14). Building on the sense that experience trumps codified knowledge, he maintained, "Though you were to join in the commission all the directors of the two academies to the directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, one old experienced peasant is worth them all" (*Reflections* 193).

Despite these remarks, Burke actually earned renown for his agricultural experiments. No less a reformer than Arthur Young, the most famous agriculturalist of the era (and a frequent correspondent of Jefferson and Washington), visited Beaconsfield and praised Burke for being more amenable to "improvement" than most of his neighbors (de Bruyn 62). Young's account includes a detailed list of experiments at Beaconsfield. Burke kept meticulous records, especially as he tried to determine what type of compost would work best with the local soil. His methodology was often scientific. For instance, he used control groups in a "comparison" between "pigeon's dung, rabbit's dung, and yard dung" (Young 4:82). He was more than willing to break with tradition in bold ways, especially by plowing his fields twice as deep as other farmers in the region and using oxen rather than horses. Though even Burke's own bailiff "declared that his crops would be utterly ruined" by these unconventional methods, Burke's success eventually caused other farmers to imitate him

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[35] This spirit of observation is especially present in his famous passages that use metaphors with a scientific register. His famous comparison of "the spirit of liberty" to a "wild gas" that has "broke loose" and his evocative comparison of "metaphysic rights" to "rays of light which pierce into a dense medium" and are "refracted from their straight line" bear common similarities. In both, he suggests that a statesman should make decisions from a carefully observant spectator position before making inferences or decisions (*Reflections* 61).

[36] For many thinkers at the time, agriculture, philosophy, and politics were inherently linked. In her attack on the degrading domestic labor women are forced to endure, even Mary Wollstonecraft grouped "gardening, experimental philosophy and literature" as pursuits that would "exercise [women's] understandings" (*Vindications* 147).

[37] After purchasing the estate, Burke wrote the following to a friend: "I have made a push with all I could collect of my own, and the aid of my friends to cast a little root in this Country ... I propose, God willing, to become a farmer in good earnest" (*Correspondence* 1:351). When Burke describes the actual labor on his farm, he tends to use the passive voice, thereby obscuring agency: "It was dunged … they were twice handhoed; I fear not sufficiently" (*Selected Letters* 100).

(Young 4:79). Additionally, Burke was more conservation-minded than many of his neighbors, preserving a hundred acres of the property as woodland—what Arthur Young called "an uncommon number" (qtd. in Lambert 57). Young noted that the woods "have so magnificent an appearance, that one would think every tree planted with a design to ornament" but their function was more than aesthetic: they likely provided habitat for pollinators, a sustainable supply of lumber, and a soil reservoir of fresh loam from falling leaves (4:84). Like Burke's experiments with crop rotation, composting, and feeding carrots grown on site to his hogs, Burke's conservation of woodlands was part of an effort to make his Beaconsfield estate a largely self-sufficient permaculture: an actual ecological system that mirrored his social ecologies.

The experimental methods Burke employed at Beaconsfield suggest a side to his character that is seldom acknowledged. As an informed pioneer in agriculture, Burke seems to have understood that experiment was necessary to produce an estate that would last through generations yet remain maximally fertile. Likewise, his willingness to embrace "improvement" (seen as the positive version of the more radical term "innovation," which had negative connotations in the eighteenth-century) reaffirms that his conservatism was not an absolute defense of the status quo, but instead a dispositional belief that change should be cautious and gradual.[38] Taken together, Burke's early and late remarks on farming suggest that he was willing to embrace improvement but tended to privilege local and experiential knowledge. In fact, he saw the two processes as related: the knowledge of the "old peasant" isn't only passed down, but also gained through a lifetime of practical observation and humble experiments. Finally, it is telling that though Burke engaged in agricultural reform, he did not try to produce prescriptive techniques. Instead, he tried to find what would work best within the environmentally specific conditions of his own estate. As such, something important separates Burke's intention in engaging in the experiments from Arthur Young's publication of their details and encouragement for others to adopt them. Burke may have thought globally when it came to Britain's colonial relations, but in his garden, he both thought and acted locally.

These observations of nature helped to shape Burke's political thought, though his political thought sometimes led him to observe selectively. Even if he is at bottom concerned with human nature, he uses the range of insights from the nonhuman natural world to define it precisely. Additionally, at times he suggests that our habitual modes of interacting with the natural world can bleed into political practice. His counterrevolutionary disposition was in part molded by the fact that he did "not like to see any thing destroyed; any void produced in society; *any ruin on the face of the land*" (*Reflections* 139-140). He also sometimes associated the political dispositions of his opponents with their modes of intervening in nature. Thus, he noted a fundamental similarity between French revolutionaries "clearing away as mere rubbish whatever they found" within society and "their ornamental gardeners, forming every thing into an exact level" (*Reflections* 173). While he does not go so far as to state that gardening practices *cause* political ideologies to emerge, he emphasizes that they establish a habit of mind. In characteristic fashion, he associates the effort to exert absolute control over nature (the geometric French garden) with not only authoritarianism, but also his famous predictions of the revolution's descent into anarchy. However, Burke did not aim at perfect consistency. Throughout *Reflections* Burke tries to portray the French Revolution as misguided by *alternating* between dramatic metaphors that portray it as a natural catastrophe and even more stringent claims that it is altogether unnatural.

Somewhat surprisingly, Burke's use of the term "natural" is more similar to that of his opponents than critics have tended to imagine. Both revolutionaries and conservatives incessantly

[38] See also de Bruyn, 67-69.

appealed to the authority of nature, contesting and attempting to implicitly revise the word, but often without consciously defining their terms or questioning their shared presupposition. If we attend to similarities as well as differences, we can see that Burke and Paine often utilize the word natural in strikingly similar ways. While the differences in their specific metaphors are illuminating, the reality is that both of them, like many thinkers of the time, appeal to nature's normative value in order to bypass logical inconsistencies. At times, this is obviously the case for Burke: defending society's traditions as inherently, essentially, and unalterably natural (and condemning progressive innovation as unnatural) was a foundational rhetorical strategy of conservatives long before (and after) the French Revolution.

Deep roots of this slippage are also observable in the instances when Paine, who claimed to embody enlightenment rationality, conflates the "natural" and the "reasonable." For instance, in *Common Sense*, Paine argued that "There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the continent forgive the murders of Britain" (*Thomas Paine Collection* 32). Here Paine does not produce an empirical inquiry into whether lovers *can* place reason above their feelings, or whether they ever *actually* forgive "ravishers." Instead, he describes an emotional response as justifiable because it is instinctually ingrained, not because it is rationally attained. He never stops to consider whether *culture* has helped produce these jealous patriarchal norms. Instead "nature" itself validates anger: even violent revenge motivated by sexual jealousy. Though Paine critiques Burke's equivalent figures as misreadings of the nature of nature, he falls back on the crutch of equating the "natural" and the "reasonable" at moments when enlightenment reason alone falls short of his political ends.

Similarly, in their writings on America, both Paine and Burke suggest that the colonial relationship is untenable in its present form because of its "unnatural" elements. "Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one, over the other, was never the design of Heaven," Paine argues (*Thomas Paine Collection* 22). Later, he develops the claim by appealing to Newtonian physics: "In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems" (*Thomas Paine Collection* 25). Burke, meanwhile, uses a different set of organic metaphors, comparing the colonists to a "boar" that "will surely turn upon the hunters" "[w]hen you drive him hard" and appealing to the trope of the body politic ("Speech on American Taxation," *Writings* II:458). The American preference for liberty and relative autonomy, he claims, "is not merely mortal, but laid deep in the natural constitution of things. Three thousand miles of ocean lie between you and them … In large bodies the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it" ("Speech on Conciliation with America," *Writings* III:124-25). Both Burke and Paine look to bodies' spatial relationships in order to suggest that Britain's applications of power in America are unnaturally forceful. But whereas Paine characteristically looks to astronomical geometry to suggest that they are fundamentally separate, Burke's circulatory metaphor figures the colonies and Britain as organs within the same organic body. The former suggests that *any* connection is an artificial imposition, while the latter implies that separation will be painful.

These examples hint at a larger pattern. Paine and Burke invoke nature with a similar frequency and give it similar weight in central moments. The term "nature" appears fifty-five times in *Reflections*, "natural" or "naturally" fifty-nine times, and "unnatural" ten times. In *Rights of Man*, Paine uses "nature" sixty-two times, "natural" or "naturally" seventy-seven times, and "unnatural" nine times. Both authors sometimes use the noun "nature" in a merely descriptive manner that is not inherently ideological, while the adjectival and adverbial forms generally appear in more normative contexts. Paine usually uses "natural" to qualify the noun "rights." Having systematically established that rights are inherited from a state of nature (and differentiated natural from civil

rights), Paine is frequently able to invoke "natural rights" without expending energy restating that they carry the normative weight associated with the term. That certain rights are "natural" becomes, as the text progresses, a part of the work's fundamental assumptions, rather than its explicit contention. The term natural is itself "naturalized," its ideological content rendered invisible.

By contrast, in his writings on France, Burke tends to build *towards* a contention of the "naturalness" of his position. Nature is the final note in a crescendo, rather than a first principle. In the famous passage where Burke criticizes the French "revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions," Burke frames the most general and comprehensive justification of his position.

> Why do I feel so differently from Reverend Dr Price, and those of his lay flock, who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his discourse?—For this plain reason—because it is *natural* I should; because we are so made as to be affected at such spectacles with melancholy sentiments upon the unstable conditions of mortal prosperity, and the tremendous uncertainty of human greatness; because in those natural feelings we learn great lessons; because in events like these our passions instruct our reason … we behold such disasters in the moral, as we should behold a miracle in the physical order of things. (*Reflections* 80)

In this passage, Burke makes clear the connection between human nature—those feelings he calls "natural"—and "the physical order of things." He frames the relationship as a simile, not a metaphor, but by treating it as inherent and indissoluble, nature subtly becomes a totalizing synecdoche for all that is beyond rational appeal. It is what renders his reason "plain," just as it makes Paine's sense "common," or Jefferson's truths "self-evident." Whereas for Paine the normative force of nature is taken for granted, Burke frames the performative declaration of the natural as that beyond which there is no recourse or appeal.[39] The rhetorical finality draws attention away from slippery pronoun shifts. After acknowledging that Dr. Price and his followers respond differently, Burke initially situates his response as natural to *him* ("it is natural I should") before slyly shifting over to the royal "we" ("because we are so made"), never explaining why what is natural to the ambiguous, implicitly universal "we" is not also natural to Price's "flock."

Burke's rhetoric also downplays other elisions, such as his assumption that there is a generic "natural" response to "a miracle in the physical order of things"—even though a miracle is necessarily a supererogation of the category of the natural. As the passage continues, Burke argues that in response to such a political "miracle," men of feeling should be "alarmed into reflexion" and "purified by terror and pity." Here, Burke does not so much reject the aesthetics of the sublime as censure the ways that revolutionaries respond to sublimity without being chastened or "purified." He has not abandoned the privileged aesthetic category of his early *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* but instead suggested a new mode of response in which the "terror" essential to sublime experience *exclusively* chastens and purifies rather than thrills and delights. Tellingly, the shift in register corresponds with the movement of the sublime from nature—the cataract, the waterfall—to the realms of both politics and the divine. Oddly, in this passage, Burke ascribes agency not to the French Revolutionaries, but to the "Supreme Director of this great drama" (*Reflections* 80). The "natural" response to sublimity, then, is framed not as a response to nature at all, but to forces which Burke either figures as unnatural (revolution) or supernatural (divine agency).

Both Paine and Burke have been separately criticized for their overreliance on tropes of

[39] Wilson also notes that "Burke invoked nature as a discussion-stopper. To call a theory or practice unnatural was intended to leave no further room for argument" (161).

self-evidence, just as they criticized one another for using excessively dramatized and rhetorical language.[40] But because the criticisms have largely been motivated by partisanship, they have obscured the similarities in Burke and Paine's approaches. Mary Wollstonecraft's devastatingly prescient anticipation of constructivist criticism in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* is a case in point. Throughout her text, Wollstonecraft directly questions Burke's "sophistical arguments" that take "the questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense" (3). Tellingly, Wollstonecraft aims the attack at Burke, while unconsciously suggesting that Paine's preferred mode of justification—namely common sense—suffers from similar fallacies. Later, she goes on to directly critique the normative use of the term natural: "the cultivation of reason is an arduous task, and men of lively fancy, finding it easier to follow the impulse of passion, endeavor to persuade themselves and others that it is most *natural*" (30, emphasis Wollstonecraft's). One of the dangers of appealing to nature's normative force, Wollstonecraft suggests, is that it helps to authorize the patriarchal disenfranchisement of women. Citing the association of the "beautiful" with "*littleness* and *weakness*" in *A Philosophical Inquiry*, Wollstonecraft argues that Burke associates women with this diminished aesthetic category in order to avoid responsibility for his sexism. If Burke were to be criticized, she argues, he could all too "readily exculpate [himself] by turning the charge on Nature" (46). In the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft develops this line of reasoning further, systematically unpacking the numerous "arguments … brought forward with a shew of reason, because supposed to be deduced from nature, that men have used morally and physically, to degrade the sex" (140). Here, Wollstonecraft suggests that normative invocations of nature replace the intellectual process of reason with performative, figurative utterances. As the vehicle will inevitably imperfectly match the tenor, she questions whether rhetorical flights of fancy should be applied to politics at all.

Yet, even Wollstonecraft does not entirely dismiss nature as a moralizing source of appeal, instead arguing that Burke's focus on prescription makes it impossible to hear "the voice of nature … audibly" (*Vindications* 32). In this more tempered criticism, she admits the value of accumulated wisdom of generations, custom and habit, which for Burke constituted the privileged category of "second nature." Equally importantly, she shares Burke's belief that nature is worth listening to. Instead, the problem is that Burke's efforts to listen to his ancestors in order to attend to nature only makes it less audible. Such a process only constitutes "reason at second-hand," an insufficient alternative to the individual's ability to interpret nature directly (30). The "romantic spirit" of Burke's composition, she contends, only "scattered artificial flowers over the most barren heath" (28). Characteristically, she suggests that what Burke figures as natural—both in the specific metaphors and in the choices made in the composition of the text—is in fact contrived. The very invocations that claim to be most free and fertile betray the most affectation.[41]

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[40] In "The Reasonable Style of Thomas Paine" Evelyn Hinz maintains that "Paine's characteristic method is repeatedly to invoke common sense and repeatedly to assert that he is using plain reason… but, generally, that assertion is not demonstration" (231). Likewise, Jim McCue suggests that natural or self-evident language was used by all, but that revolutionaries especially relied on "empty, unspecified terms" (163). Jane Hodson's *Language and Revolution* outlines the ironic similarities in Paine and Burke's criticisms of one another's theatrical language. Her text is especially useful as a rare instance of a scholar focusing on methodological similarities between antagonistic participants in the pamphlet wars. Additionally, she engages in numerical analysis suggesting that Burke and Paine used metaphoric language with similar frequency.

[41] Here, too, Wollstonecraft anticipates common later criticisms of romanticized visions of nature. Hodson tracks how Wollstonecraft's work "On Artificial Taste" suggests that people often do not genuinely enjoy the countryside, but instead adopt rustic poses based on their literary readings. As the poet Robert Hass has said, the pastoral is a genre about rural lives written by and for people in cities. It is worth noting, too, that in *A*

Shifting from a critique of nature as a normalizing force to *Burke's mis*interpretations of nature, Wollstonecraft continues to question the relevance, coherence, and integrity of Burke's metaphors. Wollstonecraft knew she lived in a society where the supposition that nature *should* guide human action was nearly universal. She could critique this supposition (thereby anticipating constructivism), but, like any great debater, she wisely hedges her bets. Burke's politics could not be successfully contested if he provided the most compelling rhetorical figures. As a result, Wollstonecraft not only argued that invocations of nature were inherently arbitrary, but also tried to beat Burke on his own terms.

Wollstonecraft's double strategy can create the illusion of hypocrisy. For instance, Wollstonecraft does not acknowledge the shared assumptions underlying her condemnation of Burke's "artificial flowers" and Burke's sarcastic deployment of aridity and sterility in his attack on Richard Price's "valuable addition of nondescripts to the ample collection of known classes, genera and species, which at present beautify the *hortus siccus* of dissent" (*Reflections* 13). At other moments, she accuses Burke on seemingly incompatible grounds. "What do you mean by inbred sentiments?" she queries at one point. "From whence do they come? How were they bred? Are they the brood of folly, which swarm like the insects on the banks of the Nile, when mud and putrefaction have enriched the languid soil?" (*Vindications* 31).[42] Here, Wollstonecraft crucially inverts the terms she just relied on: now the category of the natural (which she faults Burke for misusing) is not barren or sterile, but dangerously fecund and luxuriant. As a corrective, she claims that reason must provide the "light" that allows for analysis of the natural "passions" which—in Burke's case—produce only "a fructifying heat," a vital sexual warmth with dangerous reproductive potential (40).

Wollstonecraft's decision to critique Burke's invocations of the natural while relying upon her own natural metaphors is less reflective of inconsistency than her use of a strategic—though risky—rhetorical backup plan that modern constructivists have learned to avoid more rigorously. As Terry Eagleton notes in his recent book *Culture*, constructivist theorists (whom he calls "postmodern") avoid relying on the term "natural" because they view culture as "changeable and contingent" and nature as "inevitable and unalterable." Instead, Eagleton follows Slavoj Zizek in suggesting "the problem is not that nature is immutable but that it is all too volatile" (Eagleton 14-15). Taken together, Wollstonecraft's deployment of dynamic natural metaphors and critiques of Burke's excessive usages (as alternately too "barren" or disgustingly fecund) suggest that her quarrel is not with nature itself, but with types of misappropriation that make socially constructed power structures appear eternal and unchanging.

One metaphoric register that leading figures in the debates over nature and revolution almost *universally* took up—and contested—was Burke's focus on plants. Because plants' rootedness signifies both a connection to the past and new growth, the metaphor has a built-in dynamism. Thus, in *Rights of Man* Paine could wish that the "tree of liberty" would establish deep and lasting roots, but also claim that oppressive taxes are the "harvest from wars" (63) that grow from the "seeds of a new inveteracy" (60) and argue that revolutionaries should "Lay then the axe to the root,

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Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Wollstonecraft critiques the metaphor of women as flowers at length, arguing that seemingly flattering comparisons are patriarchal devices. They train women to prize temporary beauty over lasting virtues, fetishizing their own helplessness until they are entrapped in a marriage that effectively removes the one power they had: the power of choice (see *Vindication* 71, 74, 87, 123, 124, and 231). Naomi Jayne Garner argues that Wollstonecraft uses these botanical images to challenge patriarchy from within its own systems of meaning, focusing not on flowers as natural objects, but as emblematic of decorative "physical artifice" (87).

[42] Wollstonecraft's suggestion that putrefaction might *enrich* the soil, rather than corrupt or taint it, places a surprising value on regenerative decay.

and teach governments humanity" (*Thomas Paine Collection* 81). By contrast, Burke includes figurative botanical (and especially arboreal) imagery in order to make explicit his belief that social ecologies *depend upon* hierarchical power structures. His images of oaks as symbols of nobility were particularly influential in this regard. In the "Letter to the Duke of Richmond," he famously compared those (like himself) who achieve much without titles to creeping "melons that are exquisite for size and flavor" yet "are but annual plants that perish with our season." By contrast, he flatters nobles as "great oaks that shade a country, and perpetuate your benefits from generation to generation" (*Correspondence* 2:377). Burke returns to this arboreal imagery in *Reflections* when he memorably envisions how a handful of loud "grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent" (85). The grasshoppers represent disproportionately noisy but insubstantial revolutionary voices; the "great cattle" suggest the stability of the British people, the "British oak" reference the protective function of nobility and tradition, and (one can only assume) the chewed cud suggests the slow and digestive pace of change that Burke prefers. His image suggests that ruminants and rumination are linked on more than etymological levels.

Both Mackintosh and Wollstonecraft sought to expose the corroded structure underlying Burke's scenes of pastoral paradise by directly contesting his imagery of vines and root structures. In response to Burke's claim that gradual reforms of the Ancien Regime could have proceeded "without convulsion" Mackintosh argues "that these institutions would have destroyed LIBERTY, before Liberty had corrected their SPIRIT. Power vegetates with more vigour after these gentle prunings" (25). Here, Mackintosh does more than complement Paine's argument that degraded social growths need to be torn up by the root: his adept rejoinder directly subverts Burke's preference for reform ("gentle prunings") over revolution. He exposes Burke's vaunted celebration of complexity and proto-ecological order (represented through intertwined plant growth) as merely ornamental: "prunings" that not only lend "vigour" to the operation of power, but also *mask* its influence. Thus, Mackintosh implies that Burke characteristically mistakes (or willfully prefers) surface for depth, appearance for endurance. The critique is especially pertinent because Burke self-consciously elevated aesthetics, claiming that "In order for us to love our country, our country ought to be lovely." For Burke, aesthetic curation is always about more than the production of beauty: it is a force that binds communities together. But by portraying "pruning" as at once merely decorative and insidiously harmful, Mackintosh suggests that perhaps Burke's whole career (from *The Sublime and the Beautiful* to *Reflections*) is based on a mistaken presumption that aesthetics (and particularly the category of the "beautiful") can serve as a just basis for social order.[43]

Wollstonecraft achieves something similar when she interrogates Burke's imagery of interwoven arboreal structures: "These are gothic notions of beauty—the ivy is beautiful, but, when it insidiously destroys the trunk from which it receives support, who would not grub it up?" (*Vindications* 8). Like Burke's image of roots "cast … wide and deep" (*Reflections* 157) the logic behind Wollstonecraft's response is ecological. It focuses on relationships rather than inherent essences. Only now, instead of entangling creepers *supporting* something "more valuable than themselves," they corrode it. Interconnection becomes complicity. As a result, Wollstonecraft offers Burke a much-deserved botanical reminder that even proto-ecological relationships can choke off the life of those who are confined within them. Thus, Wollstonecraft—whose justly famed critique of floral imagery helped to show how constructions of beauty are often used to confine women—reimagines Burke's interwoven vines and roots as parasitic rather than symbiotic. The seeming

[43] As Harlan Wilson argues, Burke's "point of view is fundamentally aesthetic: complexity is beautiful. What is missing in this discussion is any notion that social complexity might be deranged" (158).

harmony of ecosystems—or societies—conceals acts of predation and destructive indifference. For Wollstonecraft, Burkean gradualism is no answer in itself: violence (*especially* environmental violence) can be slow as well as fast.

Wollstonecraft's objections to Burke's metaphors prefigure constructivist theorists' suspicions about the project of ecocriticism. For hundreds of years, conservatives have often invoked nature's normative appeal as a pretext to undermine the civil rights of marginalized groups or to imply that their marginalization is inevitable ("only natural") and therefore claim that no intervention is necessary. Because of such a fraught history, twentieth and twenty-first century constructivists have not always been persuaded by environmentalists' general political alignment with other progressive positions. With the emergence of ecocriticism, they pertinently asked whether an interpretive methodology that *begins* by elevating nature might *end* by buttressing the oppression of emergent forms of identity.[44] As a result, constructivists are not unjustified in expressing concern that introducing Burkean traditions into ecocritical communities might intensify the discipline's worst tendencies.[45]

More recent ecocritical modalities—especially in the clusters loosely referred to as environmental justice, ecofeminism, and queer ecologies—seek to integrate constructivist critiques and ecocritical practices. Building upon their work, it is worth preemptively acknowledging some of the ways that Burkean thought falls far short of full solutions to modern interpretive or political challenges. Burke's defense of hierarchical society does not address the question of who gets to speak for nature, or the fact that "nature" includes a wide variety of agential beings with differing interests. Uniting anthropocentrism, sexism, and aristocratic leanings, he assumes that privileged voices will intone more loudly and decisively than less privileged ones—be they human or nonhuman.

Equally importantly, Burke's vision of a "natural" society is based on systemic inequality. His "grand harmony" confines and degrades those who must live their lives as marginalized background singers. Therefore, we should be wary of the way that Burkean ecologies often exist in tension with pressing concerns in the field of environmental justice. Constructivist insights are needed to expose crucial biases and limitations, thereby keeping conservative conservationists honest and equitable. For instance, it is relatively easy to imagine Burkeans doing good out of partiality, perhaps by restoring local ecosystems intertwined with their communities' histories. But "little platoons" of concerned conservative citizens are less likely to prioritize responses to environmental toxins in far-flung, disadvantaged communities or tackle global problems such as climate change without further incitement. In such cases, they are *especially* unlikely to succeed without openness to systemic and institutional solutions that fit uneasily in a Burkean paradigm. Therefore, if Burkean ecological thought is to have value going forward, it must exist in dialog with intersectional ecocritical modalities rather than superseding or replacing them.

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[44] See Oppermann, "Ecocriticism's Phobic Relations with Theory." Dana Phillips (*The Truth of Ecology*) and Timothy Morton (*Ecology Without Nature*) explore tensions between ecocritics and constructivists at length. Morton even suggests that ecocriticism's roots in romanticist thought lead to a hostility towards theory/postmodernism that "is in many ways derived from" Burkean responses to the French Revolution (18-20).

[45] This fear is validated in part by observing how some conservatives attempt to invoke Burke's uses of nature in defense of cultural politics that have little to do with the nonhuman physical world. For example, Jim McCue—neither a theorist nor an ecocritic, but a polemicist—entitles a chapter of *Edmund Burke & Our Present Discontents* "Nature." After briefly suggesting that Burke might motivate a limited, local, non-state environmentalist practice, the chapter quickly devolves into an account of the ways that homosexuality and women's rights are supposedly "unnatural."

Despite the at-times oppressive social dimensions of Burke's green thought that Wollstonecraft began to expose, his conservative ecological insights maintain unique potential to reframe both policy debates about environmental stewardship and discussions within the field of ecocriticism. This section outlines some of the ways Burke's old insights might move modern thought forward, but in order to do so it begins by addressing two recent charges: first, that ecocritics have been *too hasty* to label early thinkers "ecological;" and second, that we have *overvalued* ecological science and ecological thought. In *The Truth of Ecology*, Dana Phillips argues that ecology has been less successful as a scientific practice than literary critics tend to assume, in part because of the uneasy fit between a discipline emphasizing relationships and the scientific method's insistence on isolating variables. Additionally, Philips claims that the meaning of "ecology" has evolved along with scientific understanding. He criticizes both modern literary critics and early ecologists for relying too heavily on analogies between human behavior and ecosystems, and situates "the development of ecology as a struggle to divest itself of analogical, metaphorical, and mythological thinking" (58). Most importantly, he faults literary critics for using an archaic sense of the term that vaguely refers to discredited notions of "balance, harmony, unity, and economy" (42). Philips's useful critique hinges on two contentions: first, that literary critics try to use "ecology" as a term of simplification, suggesting a totalizing organic holism that downplays the diversity within systems and their overlapping boundaries; and second, that literary critics and historians (Philips pointedly criticizes Donald Worster) continue to romanticize ecological systems as unchanging and balanced.

Burke does tend to describe "society" as a unified, holistic entity, and as explored above, he stresses its "harmony" rather than thinking about the unstable boundaries and disruptions that characterize all systems, including natural ones. In this regard, his thought resembles the work of ecologists of the mid-twentieth century more than scientists currently working in the field.[46] Although Burke views society as a harmonized system, he does not necessarily think that harmony implies simplicity. In fact, the opposite is true of Burke's vision of a society in which "the parts of the system do not clash." He imagines that it is necessary that "We compensate, we reconcile, we balance." Achieving an elegant relationship among parts requires an active process that produces "not an excellence in simplicity, but one far superior, an excellence in composition" (*Reflections* 170). Additionally, Burke's theory of society does not produce anything like certainty. Instead, it inculcates a cautious disposition towards change given the inevitability of *un*certainty. In Burke's account, the invocation of natural systems does not always reassure us of our intellectual mastery, instead serving as a humbling reminder of our current intellectual limits.

The contention that ecocritics often misuse ecology to signify perfectly balanced systems (or "climax communities") actually underscores how parts of Burke's thought resonate more with contemporary ecological thought than with hazy older visions. If anything, comparing Burke to Aldo Leopold sells Burke's willingness to accept change short. Despite the emphasis on *future* "tinkering"

[46] At times, Philips suggests that the thought of writers should not be termed "ecological" unless it reflects the current scientific consensus. While Philip's argument is a good counter to those who portray the field of ecology as unchanging, such a position risks being deeply reductive. It implies, for instance, that one should not say that Milton was influenced by physics because his work refers to Galileo rather than particle theory. If there is value to the project of historicism, then it is worth noting that a text mirrors ecological thought at a given point of time or contains elements from different periods. Additionally, Philips presentism does not account for the fact that twenty years from now, certain elements of our current cutting-edge science will appear unscientific. By contrast, Burke's emphasis on what we do not know is much more open to future developments.

in Leopold's famous quote, in his central expression of the land ethic, he claims "a thing is right when it tends to emphasize the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (225). Leopold's absolute emphasis on "integrity" and "stability" seems, like the expressions of many early ecologists, to suggest that an ideal ecosystem should be frozen or static. But on the question of change within an interconnected system, Burke anticipates not only Leopold, but also the later environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott. Callicott updates Leopold's land ethic dictum to reflex the dynamic flux that occurs in ecosystems over time: "A thing is right," he maintains, "when it tends to disturb the biotic community only *at normal spatial and temporal scales*" (104). As the next section will explore, Burke does not argue that societies should remain fixed over time. Instead, his work attempts to theorize what exactly constitutes a *natural* temporal scale for change.

Burke's focus on the proper *pace* of historical change is one of the threads that runs through both his reformist speeches (on America, India, and slavery) and his responses to the revolution in France. Although his attitudes on the subject may have taken an increasingly conservative turn late in his life, he never became a reactionary in the truest sense of the word. In what has been acknowledged as an "extraordinary passage" (Levin 65), Burke compares a given political system to "the great mysterious incorporation of the human race" of which "the whole at one time is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression" (*Reflections* 34). Building on the idea that no system can survive if it remains static, Burke argues in a letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe that "the great law of change" is "the most powerful law of nature, and the means perhaps of its conservation. All that we can do, and that human wisdom can do, is to provide that the change shall proceed by insensible degrees (*Writings* IX:634)." Given this model of "insensible degrees," Burke objected to change that proceeded at rates that might abruptly alter natural systems. When the French revolutionaries invoked cataclysms such as earthquakes, volcanoes, or torrents, Burke was not placated by the fact that such events take place in nature. He rejected their appeals because of their catastrophist vision of history, preferring a gradualist model that would be more in line with understandings of nature later advanced by Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin.[47]

Just as Burke's observations of "the great law of nature" led him to accept some change in political systems, his conservative heirs may have wisdom to share in modern environmental debates about the acceptable rate of change in disrupted ecosystems. In particular, many conservation projects become radically more complicated in application than in theory. The decision to restore a particular parcel of land to a state "prior" to human "corruption" necessitates deciding upon an appropriate benchmark, or goal, which inevitably results in a series of thorny questions. First, what constitutes corruption? Given that ecosystems are always in a state of flux even without human activity, to what period do we wish to restore it? And was the land ever really untouched by human activity? Did indigenous practices, such as planting, burning, or hunting, alter the trophic relationships? Are some forms of intervention acceptable? If one simply fences off the land in question, will it continue to be able to support the fauna and flora of prior times given that both human, plant, and animal actors may not be present in the same numbers or be capable of sustaining

[47] Williams argues that despite Burke's intellectual disposition, he was blind to another revolution occurring in Britain at the time: the unprecedented pace of land transformation that followed enclosure. "Of all English thinkers, Burke should have recognized most clearly the common ownership, through custom and prescription, of these four million acres that Parliament diverted into private hands… The 'organic society', with which Burke's name was to be associated, was being broken up under his eyes by new economic forces, while he protested elsewhere" (*Culture* 12). By contrast, Williams argues that William Cobbett was much more attentive to the revolutionary aspects of these transformations.

old use patterns? These questions have forced most conservationists to recognize that "doing nothing" sometimes allows invasive species to take over more quickly. Moreover, air and water pollution, and especially the emerging global ravages of climate change, mean that humans will continue to influence the land in question in at least some destructive ways. Increasingly, the reality is that maintaining an ecosystem's stability—or restoring it, in a gentle conservationist revolution—means actively intervening in ways that do not look or feel natural (if by "natural" we mean the exclusion of human influence).[48]

Without writing about natural ecosystems directly, Burke and his successors marshal centuries of experience appealing to nature in order to ensure cultural maintenance, restoration, preservation, and stewardship. These issues are directly parallel to the challenges facing modern conservationist projects. Burke's thoughts on how to maintain an acceptable (or natural) degree of continuity while also negotiating the inevitability of change may serve the current environmental moment particularly well. While Burke's suggestion that change should occur "by insensible degrees" is not in itself a sufficient guide, the two and a half centuries of Burkean conservative discourse that follow may offer a more sophisticated vocabulary to identify what degree of change a community is willing to accept and to describe particular forms of intervention to preserve what is valued. This literature is adept at discussing when differences of degrees become differences of kind and discerning between values essential to one's core identity and values that must alter as the world does, especially in situations where one cannot control the scope of change as much as one might wish. Perhaps most importantly, Burkean thought is especially good at making critical decisions about how to establish and defend benchmarks. For Burke, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was the great benchmark. Despite the fact that Burke's choice of 1688 may have disenfranchised many, he rigorously validates and defends that benchmark as a necessary standard by which to compare the state of English liberty over time.

Additionally, in Burke's articulation, nature is never simply something amorphously floating out beyond the city walls. It is inside the gates—inside our very selves—manifest in the very architectural and social arrangements that are at once outgrowths of our history and express a wild force beyond our control. Burke's take anticipates these turns in ecocriticism. Beginning with William Cronon's publication of "The Trouble with Wilderness" in 1995, many ecocritics have contested the idea that nature is simply the totality of the nonhuman world (*Uncommon Ground* 69-90). Yet the idea that nature is everything that is not us continues to inform many political expressions of environmentalism. In the latter view, "pure" nature is spatially or temporally separated from everyday life: either a wilderness devoid of human presence and history (often masking a history of violent cleansing and removal of indigenous cultures) or a lost paradise. In a way that anticipates Cronon's argument, Burke resists such a temporal separation by viewing modern society as a state of nature. Like Cronon, Burke refuses to romanticize a fictional, untouched nature with no imprints of human history. In the wake of what Bill McKibben has recognized as *The End of Nature*, one Burkean insight is certain: we can no more restore an untouched environment than reestablish Paine and Rousseau's state of nature.

[48] For an accessible and insightful development of these concepts, see "The Idea of a Garden" chapter in Michael Pollan's *Second Nature*.

Chapter Two
Transatlantic Entanglements: Radicalism and Interpersonal Ecologies

Positioning himself in opposition to Enlightenment order, Burke was arguably the first political theorist to prioritize entanglement rather than parsimonious clarity or systemic order. Whereas others acknowledged that society was deeply complex, Burke saw complexity as an essential value to be cultivated, not as an obstacle to clear understanding.[49] Accordingly, he avoided representing the social or natural worlds as arithmetically regular, static, systems of separation and instead produced accounts of social and natural enmeshment. However, Burke's more nuanced ideas about the interactions between nature and culture—which he encapsulated through metaphors of entangled roots and vines—did not immediately cross the Atlantic, where American public opinion initially heavily favored the French Revolution. In philosophical terms, both Burke's American opponents (Joel Barlow and Gilbert Imlay) and begrudging descendants (John and John Quincy Adams) based their sense of natural and political order on the Newtonian solar system and the Cartesian grid. These philosophical commitments influenced their efforts to shape land use policies, social structures, and educational programs. Barlow and Imlay, in particular, believed that revolutionary legacies would remain unfulfilled and that the lost liberties of the state of nature would not be fully restored until the frontier had been prized open through technocratic colonization.

Despite the fact that Burke's American contemporaries tended to ignore or suppress the greener implications of his work, American writings of the 1790s exhibit modified versions of Burkean commitments to social tradition and continuity. Even staunch anti-Burkeans worried that new settlements would lose any meaningful connection to the past. To account for these strains, this chapter considers Barlow's romanticized rural society and celebration of folk tradition in "The Hasty-Pudding" alongside Imlay's defense of chivalric manners in an otherwise future-facing frontier community in *The Emigrants*. Their idiosyncratic departures from Enlightenment universalism suggest that even the most fervent French Revolutionary supporters from America appropriated some Burkean concepts even as they rigorously opposed others. By publicly disavowing Burke in public documents yet continuing to imaginatively engage with his central preoccupations within poems and fictions, these authors set a pattern: well into the nineteenth-century, Burkean conservatism played a muted role in American political life but periodically erupted to the surface of literary works.

This chapter also seeks to disrupt the nation-centered framework by which scholars continue to construct the so-called pamphlet war as an exclusively British (or Franco-British) phenomenon. British studies scholars working on the pamphlet wars of the Revolutionary period often overlook Barlow and Imlay because they were Americans, even though Barlow, in particular, was as widely read as many of the more canonical British figures. Meanwhile, Americanists too often ignore Barlow and Imlay because their principal concerns with French affairs makes them uneasy fits for narratives about the consolidation of national identity during the Early Republic period. By contrast, Caribbean studies scholars have done much to decenter the Eurocentric framework that reductively situates the French Revolution as a metropolitan earthquake and the Caribbean revolt as a colonial aftershock. Like the relationship between Haiti and France, American engagements with the French Revolution were characterized by crossings, reciprocity, mutuality, and exchange.

During this period, the Atlantic Ocean was less a divide than a symmetrical conduit. The central figures considered in this chapter were Americans who spent time in both England and France before or during the latter's revolution (John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Thomas

[49] Harlan Wilson also observes that "Burke was one of the first political theorists, if not the first, to appeal explicitly to complexity both as a characterization of order and as a normative standard" (157).

Jefferson, Joel Barlow, Robert Fulton, and Gilbert Imlay), English emigrants to America (Joseph Priestley and William Cobbett), a man who was born in Britain but seemed to be a citizen only of the empire of reason (Thomas Paine), and English citizens intimately affiliated with the foregoing figures by romantic attachment (Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin). Taken together, their ocean-spanning, intimately networked community calls into question the relationships between event and reaction, influence and response, center and periphery. Building upon these social and historical connections, this chapter concludes by registering ironic resemblances between Burke's proto-ecological emphasis on interconnection and the entangled web of rivalries, affairs, business partnerships that formed the substructure of Anglophone revolutionaries' defenses of enlightenment rationalism.

Distributive Justice and Hasty-Pudding as Models of Education

Prior to the Reign of Terror and the Citizen Genet Affair, the vast majority of Americans celebrated the French Revolution. In turn, they either ignored or derided Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Wood 174). None of Burke's transatlantic critics subjected Burke to more sustained, trenchant criticism than Joel Barlow, who may have witnessed more of the French Revolution firsthand than any other American.[50] In a refutation of Burke titled *Advice to the Privileged Orders* (1792-1793), Barlow aimed to restore the lost liberties of the State of Nature through a progressive system of what he called "distributive justice." Less a redistribution of wealth than an educational program, Barlow's distributive justice aimed to compensate for inequality caused by the original appropriation of the commons into private property marking the transition from a state of nature to a state of society. But Barlow's rationalist enlightenment plan clashes with his more idiosyncratic defense of community traditions in "The Hasty-Pudding" (1793), a deceptively slight mock-epic that would become the poet-diplomat's most famous work. There, in the process of assembling a humble dish of mush, a rural community finds the ability to synthesize attention to seasonal cycles with the transmission of folk knowledge, correlating Burkean cultural continuity with "French" freedoms.

Though Barlow is remembered today mainly for "The Hasty-Pudding" and his largely unread national epics *Vision of Columbus* (1787) and *The Columbiad* (1807), he was a major—if unlikely—participant in transatlantic revolutionary affairs. In 1788 he moved to France as a propagandist and speculator for the Scioto Land Company, which tried to entice Europeans to immigrate to the Ohio River Valley by selling fraudulent titles. After the company's deceptions (which Barlow may not have been aware of) were exposed, he made a name for himself as an international man of letters. In 1790, he went to England where he became friends with Thomas Paine, Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, and Mary Wollstonecraft. In the months after Burke's *Reflections* appeared, Barlow published several major responses: *Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe: Resulting from the Necessity and Propriety of a General Revolution in the Principle of Government* (1792; *Part II*, 1793), *The Conspiracy of Kings; A Poem: Addressed to the Inhabitants of Europe, from Another Quarter of the World* (1792), and *A Letter to the National Convention of France, on the Defects in the Constitution of 1791, and the Extent of the Amendments Which Ought to be Applied* (1792). Their later neglect notwithstanding, Barlow's polemics were widely read at the time. They caught the attention of radicals and conservatives alike. In response, the Gallic revolutionaries anointed Barlow as one of only four American honorary citizens of the new French Republic (the others were Hamilton,

[50] For an account of Barlow's intensive participation throughout the French Revolution, see Brown, *The French Revolution and the American Man of Letters*.

Madison, and Washington). He was even was elected to the French Assembly. Meanwhile, Burke responded by satirizing Barlow as "prophet Joel" and accusing him of working "with certain societies in France for the express purpose of altering the constitution of [England]" (qtd. in Buel 158).

Burke's criticisms did not mark the first time that Barlow came under conservative censure. Just as progressives felt abandoned by Burke, American conservatives felt scorned by Barlow, whose bold pro-revolutionary stances in France masked a pattern of ideological idiosyncrasy dating back to his time as a volunteer in the American Revolution while he was a student at Yale. Barlow intended his first lengthy composition, *The Vision of Columbus*, to become the great American epic poem: an ode to the new empire of liberty (Tichi, *Dictionary* 25).[51] Yet during the same period, Barlow co-authored *The Anarchiad*, a poem satirizing the excesses of pure democracy, with the so-called "Connecticut Wits," whose most prominent members included John Trumbull and Timothy Dwight, later stalwart Federalists (Boynton 480). As a result of Barlow's shifting positions, his fellow Connecticut Wits branded Barlow a traitor to their cause, claiming that he exhibited an "ever changing Proteus mind / From preaching Christ to Age of Reason / From writing Psalms to writing Treason" (qtd. in Boynton 498).[52]

These ideological tensions re-emerge as tonal and thematic contrasts between Barlow's poetry and prose during the French Revolution. Though Barlow mocked Burke in the verse satire "The Conspiracy of Kings," in his prose pamphlets from the same period Barlow re-modulates Burke's natural metaphors to suggest that governmental intervention secures, rather than threatens, individual freedom. Along with Paine, Burke, Wollstonecraft, and Adams, Barlow recurs to the trope of "laying the axe at the root of the tree" to eliminate corruption. Like Paine and Wollstonecraft, he laments that governments only "aim their strokes at the branches," using reform to treat the symptoms of social disorders rather than their fundamental causes. By employing such means, governments "attack the moral evils directly by vindictive justice, instead of removing the physical by distributive justice" (*Works* 1:182). Importantly, Barlow swerves away from Paine and Jefferson's idealistic focus on the "moral evils" of monarchy, remedied by "vindictive justice," and suggests that meaningful change must be structural, remedied by "distributive justice."[53] In his telling, the stock image of the corrupted tree draws attention less to a mystically corrupted and essentialized nature than to material conditions: the more pervasive "physical" evils of poverty. In short, Barlow cannily suggests that democratic reforms are insufficient without "distributive justice" that attacks the "root of the tree" *by offering equality of opportunity* through democratic education.

Barlow's distributive justice aims to provide reparations for citizens who were victims of theft even before they were born. In the state of nature, Barlow maintains, each individual was allotted a "birthright" in the land itself. However, when individuals inaugurated a state of society by appropriating the commons, those who claimed more territory stole not only from their neighbors but also from future generations. At subsequent stages of social development when all the land has already been claimed, unpropertied subjects are born without access to their birthright. Therefore, society becomes responsible for providing an alternative: the individual must now "draw on the stock of society, rather than the stock of nature… he is banished from the mother and must cleave

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[51] *Visions of Columbus* was a massive bestseller (for its day) purchased by leaders including George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Ben Franklin, and General Lafayette. However, it has been largely panned by critics ever since for its aesthetic flaws and political bombast.

[52] From *The Political Greenhouse*, a 1799 publication by Richard Alsop, Lemuel Hopkins, and Theodore Dwight.

[53] The movement in Barlow's metaphor is akin to Mackintosh's suggestion that Burke's reforms are merely ornamental "prunings" (see chapter one), though Barlow emphasizes the material more than the metaphorical.

to the nurse."[54] Barlow firmly insists that governments must provide "*instruction* relative to the new arrangement of natural right" by which the state fills the pedagogical role originally occupied by nature.[55] Unlike Burke, who argued that the "state of civil society… *is* a state of nature," Barlow maintained that society must institute civic education to make up the gap separating the form rights take in a state of nature and their manifestation in the modern world.[56]

This educational program not only promises to restore people to their rights, but also to educate them about where rights come from. Prior to society, Barlow sees each individual as a "self-dependent being," a "complete moral agent" and "simple child of nature" who can "receive from nature all the lessons necessary to his condition." But after the social introduction of new rights and duties, "nature can no longer serve him as a guide." Even if "society is a state of nature, as relative to the nation at large," nature has no longer been able to *teach* the "individual member" his rights (*Works* 1:177). Therefore, Barlow argues that society has no right to demand the individual subject's fealty.[57] To replace nature's direct pedagogical function, Barlow argues that the instructional program must include both a civics lesson focusing on both the lineage of natural rights and forms of practical vocational training "in the artificial industry by which [property] is maintained." Using classroom implements as metaphors, Barlow suggests that the state must first utilize the fescule—a pointer used to guide—before it can legitimately deploy the ferule—the rod used to punish (*Works* 1:176).

There are limits to Barlow's demands. He does not outline a system of wealth redistribution for those deprived of their birthright, though he hints that such reforms may be needed by suggesting that "The property belonging to individuals, can only be the surplussage remaining in their hands, after deducting what is necessary to the real wants of society" (*Works* 1.184). In his final work *Agrarian Justice* (1797), Thomas Paine extended Barlow's reasoning further to make a case for an early form of social security. Paine argues that all appropriation of land denies opportunity to others. People cannot properly own the land itself, but only "the value of the improvement" they make on it. Thus, those who monopolize the land have a duty to provide an income for those who are deprived of access to it. Paine stresses that such reparations are a "right, not a charity" (*Collected Writings* 398-99).

Even though Barlow does not go as far as Paine with regards to property compensation, his claims were quite radical on two fronts. First, Barlow maintains that if the state fails to deliver reparative instruction, it engages in not only the "omission of a duty, but the commission of a

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[54] As pioneering ecofeminists Annette Kolodny (*The Lay of the Land*, 1975) and Carolyn Merchant (*The Death of Nature*, 1980) established, there is a long enlightenment tradition of treating nature as female in order to justify male exploitation of resources. Kolodny notes that men often vacillate between metaphors of nature as either mother/nurse or lover. While Barlow produces instances of these tropes at times, in this passage he breaks down the expected binary by which nature is figured as female and culture as male. Instead, he presents *both* as women, while only the *individualized* and universalized subject is designated as male.

[55] Thomas Jefferson also intuited the deep connection between education and the unjust applications of laws. As a result, he grouped the two topics in Query XIV of *Notes on the State of Virginia*. The connection is often eclipsed by Jefferson's much more famous remarks on race in the same chapter.

[56] Though Barlow sometimes lazily claims that his arguments were inherently "natural" and that his opponents' positions were "unnatural," like Wollstonecraft he was attentive to the consequences of overusing the terms. In *Advice to the Privileged Orders* he skeptically cautioned that "it is almost impossible to decide, among moral propensities, which of them belong to nature, and which are the offspring of habit; how many of our vices are chargeable on the permanent qualities of man, and how many result from the mutable energies of state" (*Works* 1:171).

[57] In the astute terms of Gregg Camfield, Barlow "flirts with a model of progress based on a dialectic between the relative truths of culture and the absolute truths of natural law" (132).

crime." Because individuals never actively consented to live under a given regime, the negligent state "sins against the man, before man could sin against society" (*Works* 1:179). In other words, if society does not teach its citizens about the existence and origin of their natural rights, the social contract is effectually invalidated. Thus, Barlow's doctrine slyly offers an alternative justification for revolution: as no society has yet provided a properly reparative education, citizens *cannot* "sin against society" even in overthrowing the socio-political order. Second, Barlow departs from most other natural rights thinkers in drawing an absolute distinction between education in a state of nature and education in a state of society. For Barlow, social education does not organically extend the principles of natural education. Nor does it supplement it with slight variations. Instead education from society entirely supplants the education freely given from nature (or more precisely, from a particular *relationship* to land held-in-common that is inaccessible after property is privatized). Though they achieve similar end results, for Barlow social and natural education differ in kind, not degree. The child who is metaphorically "banished from the mother and must cleave to the nurse" no longer has access to nature (*Works* 1:179). Forcibly cleaved *from* the mother (nature), she has no choice but to cleave *to* the nurse who represents social relationships, planned progress, and enlightenment. Thus, though Barlow derides the injustice of the original theft of land, he optimistically suggests that programmatic education might be every bit as democratically nutritive as the mother's milk it has replaced. He suggests that the enforced alienation of people from nature was wrong—but also that people do not necessarily *need* a direct relationship to nature. Thus, his educational utopia comes at a cost: accepting that natural and cultural education are completely disparate phenomena in a state of society. Nonetheless, Barlow's educational program powerfully does more than justify a political separation: it suggests that a post-revolutionary society that guarantees democratic freedom is incomplete without socio-economic justice.

However, in his comedic poem "The Hasty-Pudding," (published just a year after his arguments about distributive justice), Barlow presents a world in which natural and social education are intertwined, after all. Like "Advice to the Privileged Orders," "The Hasty-Pudding" is about pedagogy: the transfer of knowledge to new generations. But instead of proposing a formal educational program centered around vocational training and natural rights, the poem simply teaches the reader how to prepare the eponymous dish, a humble bowl of corn-meal mush. Mixing ironic appeals to muses, accounts of farming practices, and attention to granular detail, the poem is part mock-epic, part Georgic, part ethnography, and part recipe. The tone is lighthearted throughout, and the content seems entirely apolitical. But in addition to amusing, the poem dramatizes how rural communities achieve both Burkean continuity and democratic freedom through an ad-hoc pedagogy that enjoins oral folkways, Native American traditions, British customs, and mimicry of natural cycles.

Barlow composed the poem in January of 1793, the month Louis XVI was executed. But it begins with a disavowal of French themes in favor of the pleasures of the pudding:

> Ye Alps audacious, thro' the Heavens that rise,
> To cramp the day and hide me from the skies;
> Ye Gallic flags, that o'er their heights unfurl'd,
> Bear death to kings, and freedom to the world,
> I sing not you. A softer theme I chuse,
> A virgin theme, unconscious of the Muse,
> But fruitful, rich, well suited to inspire
> The purest frenzy of poetic fire. (lines 1-8; *Works* 2.87)

Because the speaker consciously shifts the focus from "Gallic flags" to rural American communities and customs, many critics interpret the poem as a "diversion" or "retreat" from the French Revolution, and perhaps from politics itself.[58] After swearing off European topics in the opening passage, it takes almost a hundred lines before the speaker focuses on the production of hasty-pudding in a particular American community. In the interim, the speaker wanders through "devious paths," forlornly seeking a bowl of warm sustenance in "Paris, that corrupted town." He only narrows his focus after finding variants of the pudding in foreign lands and far-flung American regions:

> Thee the soft nations round the warm Levant
> *Palanta* call, the French of course *Polante;*
> E'en in thy native regions, how I blush
> To hear the Pennsylvanians call thee *Mush!*
> On Hudson's banks, while men of Belgic spawn
> Insult and eat thee by the name *suppawn.*
> All spurious appellations, void of truth:
> I've better known thee from my earliest youth,
> Thy name is *Hasty-Pudding!* Thus our sires
> Were wont to greet thee fuming from their fires; (lines 85-94)

In these lines, like in the mock-invocation of the muse, the speaker strategically reveals his knowledge of romance languages and literary culture at the same time that he disavows their importance. Unlike the rude "Belgic spawn" or Pennsylvanian bumpkins who use the ignoble title "Mush," Barlow's speaker legitimates himself through Latinate diction. He praises common-sense rural understanding over cosmopolitan knowledge at the same time that he goes to lengths to show that his partiality does not proceed from mere ignorance.[59]

These authorizing gestures allow the speaker to confidently dwell upon local techniques for harvesting corn and preparing hasty-pudding. His informed nostalgia allows him to compare customs he has personally observed and declare the primacy of American eating practices. As in his more serious epics, Barlow invests heavily in establishing an American cultural history that predates European conquest. He stresses that the pudding's lineage stretches back to a nameless Native American progenitor: "Some tawny Ceres." His emphasis on continuity between Native and white practices suggests the importance of interracial partnership, but it also places Native influences firmly in the past and whitewashes a genocidal history, naturalizing Native disappearance. Hardly pausing, Barlow seamlessly transitions to lengthy descriptions of harvesting and cooking practices transmitted across many generations of white settlers. He reminds the reader that European derivations of the pudding (such as the seemingly more cultured "*Polante*," or polenta) are pale, mis-monikered imitations of an originally American foodstuff.[60] In the process, he applies two very

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[58] Early critics, in particular, tended to view the poem as consciously apolitical. More recently, Buel notes that "Barlow didn't write to Ruth about "The Hasty-Pudding," perhaps because he regarded it as a frivolous diversion ... it was hardly Barlow's intention that a personal diversion from the pressures of revolutionary politics should become his principal claim to poetic fame" (162).

[59] See Lemay for more on the ways that the speaker puts on a rustic mask but takes pains to establish his cosmopolitanism.

[60] While Barlow establishes that *the pudding* has American roots, he fails to mention that two of his likely inspirations for the poem came from the British Isles: the English poet William King's "The Art of Making Puddings" and Robert Burns' "Ode to a Haggis." Both adopted a mock-heroic tone, and King's poem has particularly striking similarities to Barlow's. Rafia Zafar has explored these connections at length, concluding

different standards: white American appropriations of Native foodways are seen as honoring (and verifying the existence of) American traditions, while European adoption of American foodways are presented as thefts, forgeries, or knock-offs.

Even while the poem intertextually mocks epic conventions, the speaker treats oral folk traditions as coequal with elevated forms of written discourse, particularly in the passages where the poem recurs to scenes of intergenerational transmission: "So taught our sires, and what they taught is true" (line 98). The American "sires" are figured as learning by carefully observing and mimicking natural rhythms. Though "nature scorns not all the aids of art" (line 179) when it comes to preparing the pudding, one only knows when to sow, weed, and reap by directly observing seasonal phenomena. In the poem "man is happy insofar as he conforms the order of his life to the harmony of nature;" thus, the recurrence of seasonal cycles mimics the unbroken model of generational aging and the passage of knowledge to new generations (Arner 85). In turn, Barlow stages a mocking history of the epic as form, returning it to roots in orality, storytelling, repetition, and human encounters with the natural world.

Even though "Hasty-Pudding" promises to avoid "Gallic" themes, images from the French Revolution insistently haunt the poem. A scarecrow serves as "A frightful image, such as schoolboys bring / When met to burn the pope, or hang the king" (lines 210-211). Additionally, scholars have noted a subtle jibe at Burke, who infamously called commoners the "swinish multitude." Barlow plays with the association of people and swine, only to reconfigure the arrangement:

> There are who strive to stamp with disrepute
> The luscious food, because it feeds the brute;
> In tropes of high-strain'd wit, while gaudy prigs
> Compare thy nursling man to pamper'd pigs;
> With sovereign scorn I treat the vulgar jest,
> Nor fear to share thy bounties with the beast. (lines 111-116)

As Leo Lemay observes, Barlow does more than refute the connection between plebeian men and porcine creatures: he instead connects upper-class "prigs" and "pigs" through rhyme and inverted syntax (Lemay 7). Perhaps most importantly, the poem concludes by invoking the French Revolution once again—a reference that few (if any) critics have considered at length. As the speaker instructs the reader how to consume the pudding, he encourages us to:

> Fear not to slaver; 'tis no deadly sin,
> Like the free Frenchman, from your joyous chin
> Suspend the ready napkin; or, like me,
> Poise with one hand your bowl upon your knee;
> Just in the zenith your wise head project,
> Your full spoon, rising in a line direct.
> Bold as a bucket, heeds no drops that fall,
> The wide-mouth'd bowl will surely catch them all. (lines 363-366)

The comparison of the American rustic to the "free Frenchman" is not accidental; it unites the beginning and ending of the poem with gestures towards France during the very month of Louis XVI's execution. The recurrence implies that the poem is not at all a dismissal of (or an escape from) the French Revolution: instead it demonstrates that liberty may be achieved by other means and in other contexts. In France, words must be put to paper in order to secure the "Rights of Man

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that the near-plagiarism of British texts and the conveniently vanishing Native Americans combine to make the poem "an act of gastronomic imperialism."

and the Citizen." But in this rural community, adherence to unwritten customs and traditions allow the speaker, poised like Rodin's "Thinker" with bowl and spoon in hand, to achieve coequal status with the urban revolutionary.[61]

Despite these comical links between American gastronomic independence and French liberties, the wide gap separating the educational models in "The Hasty-Pudding" and *Advice to the Privileged Orders* suggests that Barlow was capable of meeting Burke halfway. Even as "The Hasty-Pudding" mocks Burke's elitism in the passage on prigs and pigs, it ultimately hints that Burkean valuations of tradition can be repurposed to serve the cause of liberty if a community is humble and if its cultural forms are closely connected to nature.[62] Through these intertwined invocations of nature, revolution, and community, Barlow unwittingly produces a minor key version of Burke's urban social ecologies in a more working class, agrarian community.

Revolution and Technocratic Utopianism

Burke's American interlocutors did not confine themselves to topics of political representation or models of education: they also touched directly on environmental issues. Joel Barlow, Robert Fulton, and Gilbert Imlay believed that land molded to fit regular geometric patterns would best sustain rational progressivism and social equality. They elevated the Cartesian grid and Newtonian gravitational revolutions, the square and the circle as exemplars of nature's mathematical order that were best embodied in levelled and geometrically regular French gardens. By contrast, Burke championed sinuous curves, irregularities, and interwoven vegetation that were best embodied in the English country estates landscaped to heighten and aestheticize nature's given complexity. As covered in the previous chapter, Burke's political corollary for the English country estate was a complex social ecology that compelled cautious, slow interventions. Meanwhile, Imlay, Barlow, and Fulton imagined that revolutionary (and millennial) promises would only be fulfilled if the American frontier was rapidly transformed into a technocratic utopia that used canals to connect carefully planned communities. Each portrayed the other side as misrepresenting nature. For Burke, Enlightenment "arithmetic reason" imposed an imaginary order on the complex interactions within human and nonhuman systems. But for Barlow and company, Burke's interwoven proto-ecologies were not natural at all, but greenwashing obfuscations of artificial systems of power. In their opinion, the aesthetic behind the English country estate was especially insidious because it presented a fantasy of untouched pastoral paradise, obscuring the history of human intervention and control.

To express these foundational differences, Barlow and Imlay directly contrasted their visions of natural and social order with Burke's. In *The Conspiracy of Kings*, a long 1792 poem that constitutes Barlow's most merciless takedown of Burke, the poet presents the Irish parliamentarian as a demonic disturber of Newtonian order. He elevates Burke to heavenly heights only to cast him into hellish darkness. A grand figure run amok, Burke has a "genius wild," but his opposition to equality

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[61] As the French Revolution descended into the Terror, American editors made efforts to re-patriate Barlow's poetic gestures abroad. An engraving by A. Doolittle in an early printing of "The Hasty-Pudding" casts the triumphal act of eating not as a transatlantic reference to France, but as a fulfillment of the American Revolution (reprinted in *Works* 2:99). As the rural individual lifts a spoonful of the pudding to his mouth, a long-barrel rifle reposes on the wall above the hearth and a banner with the words "Old .76" unites the scene.

[62] By tying together "freedom" and an act of consumption, the poem invokes another claim of many French Revolutionaries: namely, that governments have a duty to feed their citizens. Hannah Arendt argued that governmental efforts to solve what she termed such "social questions" proved to be the revolution's undoing, as well as one of the main factors that differentiated it from the American Revolution.

reduces him from "the sordid sovereign of the lettered world" to the "degenerate slave" of monarchs. "Burke's mad foam" and "thoughts that bewilder" seductively attempt to justify a bloody war to reestablish tyranny throughout Europe. As the poem shifts between metaphors, Burke is alternately portrayed as a Satanic tempter, an arch-nemesis to the regime of reason, and an inept fool. These seemingly incompatible representations abruptly coalesce in an epic simile that compares Burke to Phaeton, the son of Phoebus (Apollo).

> Like Phoebus' son, we see thee wing thy way,
> Snatch the loose reins, and mount the car of day,
> To earth now plunging plough thy wasting course
> The great Sublime of weakness and of force. (*Works* 2:76)

The passage hits Burke on his own terms, ironically reducing the esteemed author of *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* into a pitiable subject precisely because he is unable to strike the properly "Sublime" balance of "weakness and of force." Like Lucifer, Phoebus is an errant light bringer. He thinks himself able to pilot the sun, source of reason and light, but his inability to steer that vessel represents the irrational swerving of a mind wielding an "infuriate quill."

Additionally, the vision of a heavenly body piloted outside its standard orbit powerfully disturbs the iconic Newtonian universe that underpinned the Age of Revolution. The solar system has long epitomized natural order. But in one of the more consequential metaphoric flips in human history, Paine and his supporters succeeded in rebranding planetary orbits as a justification for upheaval rather than conformity with existing structures. Instead of the planets and the sun representing untouchably separate spheres—and therefore, the impossibility of class mobility—for Enlightenment radicals the most salient factor was *motion* rather than concentricity. Because the planets moved in regular orbits, movement represented not instability, but a necessary stage in a natural process of recurrence. In other words, *revolution* best encapsulated the universe's underlying order. In turn, the American and French conflicts against monarchical authorities could be framed not as rebellious breaks with the past, but as revolutionary *restorations* of the liberties that constituted the best parts of the State of Nature.

Barlow portrays Burke as both anti-revolution (in the sense of geometrical circularity) and counter revolutionary (in the political sense) by comparing him to Phaeton. In the elitist gesture of snatching the reins of the chariot, Burke tries to return the sun to its former status as a representation of the separate spheres. Barlow details the devastating consequences of Burke's failure—the scorched-earth wages of conservative retrenchment. The poem reveals Burke not as the promised restorer of light, but as the possessor of a "soul" that exists in "all the blackness of its native day" and seeks to plunge the earth into a dismal war. The passage ends with Miltonic imagery and ironic reversals. The would-be pilot of light is "from earth's glad surface hurl'd" into "seas of dark oblivion" where he will be eternally tormented by the very blades that "kindred knaves" in the service of monarchy wield against innocent citizens of republics (*Works* 2:76-77). True order is restored; the revolutions of heavenly and political bodies can continue.

However, in Barlow's catalog of ironies, a central incongruity lingers unacknowledged. In his desire to imbue the conflict with mythic stakes, Barlow has seemingly unintentionally defended Enlightenment scientific order through a pre-Copernican story about the sun revolving around the Earth. The disjunctive fusion of scientific rationality and pre-modern religiosity is characteristic rather than idiosyncratic. In works such as *The Columbiad* and the unpublished "Canal" fragment, Barlow legitimates the imperial and technocratic conquest of the frontier with frequent recourse to scientific language. But his efforts to mix science and myth, business interests and disinterested rationality, form a somewhat bizarre medley.

In a pioneering ecocritical analysis, Cecelia Tichi tried to make sense of these contradictions by situating Barlow not as a pure Enlightenment thinker, but as an influential advocate of American millenarianism.[63] According to this radical gospel, America would establish a thousand years of peace and harmony by "reforming" the landscape. "Aggressive topographical change" would enable "moral regeneration" of the people and nature alike (Tichi, *New World* viii). Tichi argues that for Barlow, "As long as there existed nature unsubdued—that is, a natural environment unreformed by human design—there could be no millennium" (*New World* 115).[64] Despite the Burkean elements in "Hasty-pudding," Barlow's millenarianism led him to fervently embrace expansionist schemes totally at odds with Burke's emphasis on conserving local traditions and regulating the pace of change. (Barlow's inclinations motivated Burke to dismiss him as "Prophet Joel"). In practice, Barlow's millennial vision maintained two priorities: first, populating the frontier as rapidly as possible, and second, establishing a vast transportation and communication network that could literally and figuratively restructure nature's irregular topography.

Barlow's millennial ambitions simultaneously inspired theoretical projections, religious musings, and practical projects. Barlow and his business partner Gilbert Imlay conjoined personal gain with their goal of rapid settlement by selling vast tracts of American wilderness to somewhat naïve French settlers through the shady Scioto Land Company deals.[65] In addition to causing them legal complications, the Scioto venture caused Barlow and Imlay to distort their depictions of America, portraying the new world as a Utopia in the making in order to attract settlers. In Imlay's novel *The Emigrants*, the characters emphasize that Native Americans pose no real threat to the frontier villages—a contention that gives way to cognitive dissonance when the novelist later indulges in a brief captivity narrative from which the white protagonist emerges without physical injury (26). Similarly, to promote sales, Barlow translated a travel narrative set in America by the French author Brissot de Warville but strategically cut the passages that depicted the Western frontier in a critical light (Verhoeven, *Gilbert Imlay* 167).

More pervasively, Barlow and Imlay's writings suggest that America is not only superior to Europe due to the land's natural fertility, but because of its *peculiar amenability to landscape transformation*, especially through the construction of bridges and canals (Tichi, *New World* 127-28). In a diary entry in 1788, Barlow lamented that Europeans had missed their chance to rationally order and connect their continent, thereby prolonging the long-awaited millennium: "They might have intersected every league with canals… They might have leveled mountains and prepared the way of the lord" (qtd. in Tichi, *New World* 121). Barlow expected more religious fervor from America. In his hybrid worldview, rationality enables national salvation. God was not expected to move mountains with miracles; instead, God would reward humanity's scientific miracles with a triumphant and mystical millennium of prosperity.

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[63] Camfield also evaluates Barlow's Millenarian thought (140).

[64] Tichi tracks these millennial themes from Barlow's earliest works (such as his collegiate graduation poem "The Prospect of Peace") to his final epic, *The Columbiad*. In order to stress Barlow's focus on the nation and on broad networks of change, she argues that he entirely dismisses the parochial, noting that "the word 'local' is his epithet of greatest repugnance" (132). While Barlow most often concerned himself with affairs of state and enlightenment universalism, Tichi's claim sidelines works like "The Hasty-Pudding" that connect local happenings to broader historical events.

[65] According to Tise, "Barlow negotiated deals to supply France with raw materials from Scandinavia and America; Imlay scheduled, coordinated, and oversaw shipments and deliveries" (146). Tise also argues that Barlow and Imlay helped orchestrate Citizen Genet's effort to establish a "Revolutionary Legion of America," which precipitated a major American backlash against the French Revolution.

Barlow's obsession with waterworks inspired his art, his politics, and even his household dynamics. Bent on promoting canals, he befriended the renowned engineer Robert Fulton in 1797. Fulton had published *A Treatise on the Improvement of Canal Navigation* the prior year, and then moved to France to offer his services to the revolutionary regime. There, he attempted to build a "Mechanical Nautilus"—a powerful submarine that could single-handedly win any naval battle. Fulton felt that such a device would act as an immutable deterrent to conflict, a doomsday device for the Age of Revolution. In Fulton's view, technological innovation was the most likely means to achieve world peace—not diplomacy or the spread of democratic liberties. Barlow was less techno-*centric* than Fulton, instead believing that new scientific discoveries and democratic advancement would reciprocally propel one another. But he found Fulton's techno*cratic* approach at least pragmatically seductive, offering him friendship, housing, and financial support. According to some researchers, Barlow's attraction to Fulton (and his scientific abilities) may have provided him and his wife with liberated *sexual* possibilities, as well (Tise 155-60).[66]

Though Fulton's submarine never achieved the desired results, Barlow and Fulton tried to consummate their intellectual partnership through a jointly authored poem titled "The Canal: A Poem on the Application of Physical Science to Political Economy: In Four Books." The poem was begun in 1802, but unfinished and unpublished.[67] In "The Canal" Barlow and Fulton posited indissoluble links between science, reform, mythology, and revolution. Their work was inspired by experimentalist supporters of revolution such as Joseph Priestley, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin (the last of whom "The Canal" specifically mentions). Elsewhere, Barlow suggested that Burkean thinkers' reliance on stale traditions kept them from observing either politics or nature with any accuracy: "Mention to a Mussulman the Copernican system, and you might as well speak to Burke about the rights of man; they will both call you an atheist" (*Writings* 1:122). For Barlow's audience, the xenophobic comparison of Burke to a "Mussulman" would suggest that the Irishman's righteousness was both heretical and unscientific. In "The Canal," Barlow goes farther, claiming that *all* modern religions impede progress because of their fundamental misreadings of nature. At the same time, he revalidates older mythologies, figuring them as metaphoric representations of empirically observed natural facts.

Barlow's speaker begins the poem by endeavoring to promote an illuminated form of scientific discourse:

> Yes my dear Fulton, let us seize the lyre,
> And give to science all the Muse's fire,
> Mount on the boat, and as it glides along,
> We'll cheer the canal with useful song,

The emphasis on "useful" arts continues as the poem emphasizes that science, political power, and the poet's art might jointly "raise, improve, & harmonize mankind." Linking the utilitarian to the eschatological, the fragment suggests that scientific practices of land transformation will construct a new, more organic and authentic religion.

The poem was heavily influenced by Constantin Volney's *The Ruins; or Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires* (often referred to simply as *The Ruins of Empires*), which Jefferson and Barlow

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[66] Tise follows Cynthia Phillip in suggesting that in addition to establishing a close friendship, Fulton, Joel Barlow, and Ruth Barlow may have engaged in an extended "ménage a trois." "The content and the tone of letters among the three contain ample references to their mutual sexual interest, suggests they probably shared a fulfilling sex life together" (158). See also Phillip, *Robert Fulton* (85-88, 102-18).

[67] Ball's article "Joel Barlow's 'Canal'" offers a full reprint of the manuscript, which is housed in Yale University's special collections.

jointly translated. Like Volney, Barlow contends that many instances of religious knowledge are symbolic readings of the natural world distorted over time into abstractions. [68] In seeking a sort of Ur-religion, the poem both invokes and interrogates Zodiac symbols, noting how the ancient Egyptians designated the ascension of particular constellations in order to demarcate the times of the year when the Nile would flood. In Barlow's telling, the mysterious figure "Thaut"

> Groups the scattered orbs, and leads on high
> His living colonies, to stock the sky;
> Birds, beasts & fishes crowd siderial space,
> And constellations ape the reasoning race.

Though Barlow suggests that Thaut positions the constellations of the zodiac in the sky, the poem still emphasizes the role of human reason. The constellations do not determine human destiny. They are merely markers of the Nile's seasonal patterns that the Egyptians observed, alerting them when to plant crops and expect floods or pestilence. Thus, the Zodiac is not the source of mystical significance, but a practical calendar—a derivative and imitative "ape" of empirical observations.

As the fragment reaches its climax, Barlow argues that the insights of the Zodiac, though originally a testament to humanity's rational capacity, have degenerated into dogma. The "prime sketches" that the Egyptians "wrote in the eternal sky" have been "treasured there too long, / Misread, perverted, always copied wrong" (266-270) until they produce false "Cosmogonies & gods and creeds and crimes / Benight all ages and contrist all climes:--" (273-4). Tellingly, Barlow suggests that human minds and the natural world have both been constricted: neither "creeds" nor "climes" are as productive as they might be. The calendar meant to enhance agricultural fertility based on knowledge of a river's flow has become a fetid pool, symptomatic proof of a degraded mental and physical environment.

As the fragment concludes, Barlow expresses his hopes that modern readers will stop trusting poor translations of nature. Instead, he urges his contemporaries to observe the skies directly in order to "helm our course, correct our chart" on this "Ocean of ages, shoreless, dark and drear / Where all our wretched fathers, whirl'd and tost / Have wrecked their reason, and their labors lost." Since the poem is fragmentary, Barlow never wrote the three books that would move us from the Nile to the eponymous canal. But the implications are nonetheless legible. New scientific surveys that allow for straight and efficient canals would tame American Niles. Canals would straighten nature's snaking streams, allowing pioneers to navigate safely. In this vision, canal building manuals like Fulton's would function as the new Zodiacs: empirical gospels that would let us travel the safe, straight, and narrow path to national salvation. [69]

Barlow promoted the careful observation of nature precisely because it would enable land to be reshaped on an industrial scale. He imagined that the map would be remade in our own image: not mimicking the complex form of the human body, but projecting the Cartesian grid, an icon of

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[68] Ball first proposed Volney as a major influence on "The Canal" and tracked the ways that the poem revises the Zodiac to reconstruct a "natural religion" that avoids reconstituting the dogmas of received religion. Though Ball did not explicitly connect the fluidity of the Nile to the project of canal building, I have been particularly influenced by his analysis *throughout* this section that focuses on "The Canal."

[69] Barlow and Fulton were far from alone in exalting canals as the keys to American progress. In *Notions of the Americans*, written thirty years after the "canal mania" of the 1790s, James Fenimore Cooper would portray "canals, that put to shame all similar works everywhere else" as the principle proof of American commercial ingenuity (*American Democrat* 256).

the enlightened *mind*, onto the continent.[70] For a number of Barlow's fellow revolutionaries, imposing the grid on the land was a means of achieving not only control over nature, but also revolutionary equality. Most famously, Thomas Jefferson envisioned that his nation of yeoman farmers would overturn the English common law practice of marking property lines via metes and bounds, or local landmarks. By proposing land surveys that would divide the nation into one-mile square parcels, Jefferson suggested that abstract reason could be equally applied regardless of local topographies. In theory (though seldom in practice), the mathematically rigorous apportionment of land parcels would correspond to the fair apportionment of democratic votes.

Burke also understood the significance of these links between enlightenment land management and revolutionary politics. He saved some of his harshest invective for what he called "the spirit of geometric distribution" that governed French political redistricting. His concerns were both political and aesthetic. As Sunil M. Agnani has recently observed, Burke connected the arbitrary imposition of "arithmetic reason" with the so-called "tyranny of the majority" (Agnani 89-90). Burke imagined land use as so essential to inherited British identity that he worried the Cartesian grid might supplant the British constitution itself, asking "Is every land-mark of the country to be done away in favour of a geometrical and arithmetical constitution? Is the house of lords to be useless?" (*Writings* VIII:105).

Burke's objections largely went unheeded in America. Although most seaboard American communities evolved along idiosyncratic Burkean lines, the Land Ordinance of 1785 adopted Jefferson's grid. A few years later, Barlow's business partner Gilbert Imlay made the Cartesian land-grid a central feature of ideal American communities in *The Emigrants*, his under-studied epistolary novel published in 1793. Critics have situated *The Emigrants* as America's only Jacobin novel, noting how it categorically interrogates the "conventional social institutions" like marriage that Richardsonian novels (such as Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*) tried to reinforce (Seelye 205). Heavily influenced by Rousseau, Paine, Godwin, and Barlow, Imlay's novel does more than question established forms: it provides an alternative blueprint for a Utopian frontier society.[71] As the novel draws to a close, after all the travails of class, marriage, and captivity have been negotiated, the protagonists Capt. Arl—ton and his wife Caroline announce plans to found a carefully designed settlement, called Bellefont, on the Kentucky frontier. Several features characterize Arl—ton's vision. He plans to divide the land into 256 parcels, each exactly one-mile square. The regular number (two to the eighth power) suggests symmetry and containment more than the mathematical sublime. It limits the size of the settlement, allowing the community to assemble each Sunday for legislative meetings without any residents having to travel more than a few miles. By having meetings on the Sabbath, Arl—ton intends to supplant the influence of religion. He plans to populate his settlement primarily with veterans like himself, suggesting that the true culmination of the American Revolution is the establishment of rationally organized, democratic communities of equal freehold farmers.

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[70] Barlow's vision of transformed waterways was not shared by all of his contemporaries. Staunch conservative and one-time fellow "Connecticut Wit" Timothy Dwight, for instance, anticipated environmentalist concerns by fretting that dams might devastate the fisheries (Tichi, *New World* 90).

[71] In *Gilbert Imlay: Citizen of the World*, Wil Verhoeven situates the significance of Imlay's frontier narratives, including both *The Emigrants* and *A Topographical Description* as responses not only to "American travel writing and topography per se" but also the British "print wars" of the 1790s. He depicts Imlay's frontier depictions as "instrumental in the shift—which was both semantic and paradigmatic—from 'wilderness' into 'territory' and from the West as trans-Alleghenian 'land' into the West as the space for the establishment of an alternative, Jacobin-American 'empire'" (95).

By establishing democratic institutions, putting checks on the executive office and containing religious sources of authority, Arl—ton imitates the framers of the United States Constitution, ensuring that the rotation of office-holders will prevent concentrations of power dangerous to democracy.[72] He does not try to establish a paternalistic, top-down power structure for Bellefont, but he also does not exhibit faith that a functioning society will evolve on its own. Instead, Arl—ton's settlement attempts to achieve perpetual peace and prosperity through an initial act of deliberate political and spatial engineering. The logic is reminiscent of Fulton's attempt to establish world peace through the Nautilus. Like the more optimistic advocates of American Constitutional ratification, Arl—ton compares his new society to a deistic engine: a clockwork mechanism that will run regularly after "framing the particular instructions immediately necessary to give order and motion to the machine" (*Emigrants* 234).

However, Arl—ton intends for his mechanistic society to empower, rather than instrumentalize, individuals. He attempts to correct old systems in which "the bulk of mankind have been the mere machines of the states" (*Emigrants* 235). Rather than viewing the governmental machine as tyrannical, Imlay portrays it as a labor-saving tool subordinate to the democratic decisions of the collective. Nonetheless, the invocation of machinery unwittingly foreshadows the transformation of agrarianism from a family subsistence economy to industrialized modernity. The plan to engineer the frontier evokes Leo Marx's famous image of the "machine in the garden," Carolyn Merchant's contention that the shift from subsistence to mechanized farming practices conjoined manifest destiny rhetoric and "a modern philosophy that saw the world as a vast machine to be thematically described, predicted, and controlled," (*Ecological Revolutions* 199) and John Kasson's argument that reformers often portrayed new technology as "not merely the agent of material progress and prosperity, but the defender of liberty and instrument of republican virtue" (8).[73] Although Barlow, Fulton, and Imlay could hardly have anticipated a twenty-first century nation filled with factory farms and fracking installations, their works nonetheless serve as prescient exemplars of Americans' incompatible desires to simultaneously idealize rural agrarianism and create modes of technocratic imperialism that would eventually render Jeffersonian communities unrecognizable.

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[72] Despite the clear influence of the Constitutional debate of 1787 on Arl—ton's social framing, Bellefont occupies an ambiguous position within the expanding American republic. Several critics, noting that Kentucky was not yet incorporated into America at the time of the novel's composition, argue that Arl—ton intends for Bellefont to be a separatist or secessionist society with a governmental structure that is parallel to but in competition with the United States Federal government. Imlay biographer Wil Verhoeven notes that the character General W—, who secretly sends Arl—ton on a frontier scouting mission, is based on General James Wilkinson, Imlay's associate who notoriously colluded with Spain to try to establish Kentucky as a Spanish colony (105). Though Verhoeven makes a fairly compelling case that Imlay was "entirely sympathetic" with efforts to keep Kentucky from joining the United States, *within the novel* there is no substantial proof that Arl—ton intends Bellefont to be a secessionist instrument for Spain. Indeed, the emphasis on local democratic structures and the constituency of Revolutionary War veterans suggests an autonomous society that would not take kindly to the imposition of any overarching sovereign (regardless of ways that the community charter might be at odds with the federalist divisions of powers proposed by the new national Constitution).

[73] Kasson goes on to describe industrial reformers' doctrine of "divine utilitarianism: they insisted that manufactures, as well as agriculture, harnessed natural resources and fulfilled nature's purpose; and that in the face of such potentialities, agrarian critics were less vigilant shepherds than carping aesthetes, melancholy Jacques in the industrial Arden" (20).

Conservatism without Ecology

It is difficult to find glowing reviews of *Reflections* by Burke's American contemporaries. Given the initial popularity of the French Revolution, even the handful of Burke's American enthusiasts seemed to understand that the time was not right to declare their support. Meanwhile, the rare overt responses by Americans whose principles significantly overlapped with Burke's suggest that some aspects of the Irishman's philosophy crossed the Atlantic more effectively than others. Even more partisan Federalists (such as John and John Quincy Adams) and pro-British writers (notably William Cobbett) voiced early skepticism about the French Revolution more by attacking revolutionary proponents such as Paine and Joseph Priestley than by stressing their similarities with Burke. John and John Quincy Adams exhibited concerns about the French Revolution, but they demonstrated little of Burke's attunement to proto-ecological interconnectedness (either within society or in mixed human/nonhuman environments). In fact, even though John Adams shared Burke's concern with social cohesion, he relied upon nearly the same figures for a geometrical, orderly universe as Imlay and Barlow.
Conversely the British contrarian Cobbett (who sojourned in America during the core years of the French Revolution) reframed Burke's skepticism of arithmetical reason as a lampoon of experiment and abstraction but undercut Burke's concerns with social cohesion and gentle manners through a biting satirical tone.

Years after the transatlantic pamphlet war, former Federalist Senator George Cabot recalled the mood in America: "I… remind you of Burke's *Reflections*, which were reprobated almost universally when they first appeared—even those who approved the Sentiments thought the avowal of them imprudent and the publication of them untimely" (qtd. in Hamilton 25:248).[74] The reaction of Alexander Graydon, a largely forgotten figure, typifies the way that even Americans who found Burke's arguments persuasive repressed their responses. In *Memoirs of a Life*, Graydon recalls being given copies of Burke's *Reflections* and Paine's *Rights of Man* shortly after serving as a delegate at the Pennsylvania State Constitutional Convention in 1790. Even decades later, he portrayed his appreciation for Burke as a matter of some scandal:

> I was apprised of the delight I should receive from the perusal of Paine's pamphlet. As to Burke, I was told it was heavy and tedious, but that it was necessary to condemn myself to wading through it first, for the sake of better understanding and relishing Paine's, which was in answer to it. I read them; but to my great misfortune, and contrary to all expectation, I became so firm an adherent to Burke, that his opponent made not the smallest impression. I have already made confessions which cautious men may start at. But this is worse than all. (Graydon 375-76)

Graydon's shame at sympathizing with Burke testifies to Burke's evident unpopularity. It also suggests that his American supporters tended to internalize his positions rather than express them in print, implying the possible existence of a Burkean silent minority. But if Graydon and Cabot's accounts are representative, even the French Revolution's more violent phases did not initially lead to a *public* revaluation of Burke's predictions. In these early stages of the American republic, Graydon deemed consensus-building more important than partisan ideology: "Nor, although events proved me right" in my preference for Burke over Paine, Graydon continues, "is that of any consequence … It is the essence of sound civism to think with one's fellow-citizens, on no account

[74] George Cabot, Letter to Alexander Hamilton, November 29, 1800. Maciag notes that Burke's defense of English monarchy was especially ill-timed since it came "just a few years after the US Constitution consecrated the founding powers of Revolution" (31).

to anticipate them; and I ought to have thought wrong, because it was the fashion" (376). By suggesting that his fellow citizens "thought wrong" but nonetheless ironically reproaching himself for his lack of "sound civism," Graydon's account backhandedly suggests that however untimely expressions of enthusiasm for Burke may have been in 1791, other Americans would eventually progress backwards, moonwalking from revolution towards conservatism.

Despite his role in the American Revolution, John Adams has been called "an American Burke."[75] Famously querulous, he had fewer scruples about voicing unpopular opinions than Graydon. Though Adams certainly read *Reflections*, he did not respond to it at length. In fact, rather than acknowledge Burke's influence, in an 1814 letter Adams maintained that his own *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* inspired Burke to write *Reflections*—likely a facetious claim, but one that nonetheless suggests a kind of jealously guarded kinship (Ellis 146). Moreover, as several scholars have noted, there were crucial differences between Adams's and Burke's philosophies. Where Burke believed that class privilege and existing institutions could not be disentangled, Adams wanted to build a government that would walk the line between protecting privileges and democratic liberties. Both believed that human nature was governed more by emotion than reason, but they had starkly opposed plans to regulate the public expression of passions. While Burke maintained that the weight of traditional institutions would dampen explosive outbursts, Adams argued for a new constitution and new governmental forms to achieve similar ends.[76]

Rather than adopt Burke's position that a mature society *was* a state of nature, Adams argued in *Discourses on Davila* that "government is intended to set bounds to passions *which nature has not limited*" (qtd. in Tise 408). Nonetheless, like Burke, Adams invoked the "natural" order to defend his later, more conservative drift.[77] But Adams's vision of natural order was more static than Burke's. In *Discourses on Davila*, Adams's oblique response to the French Revolution, he relies on the stock Enlightenment trope of the planets in their fixed orbits in order to justify inequality:

> The Heaven's themselves, the Planets and this centre,
> Observe degree, priority and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, all in line of order.

Adams goes on to show how violations of this order lead to natural disasters such as "plagues" and "portents," "raging of sea!" "Shaking of earth!" and other "Frights, changes, horrors" that

> Divert and crack, rend and deracinate,

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[75] For the references to Adams as an "American Burke," see Tise, 398-405. Tise claims that Burke and Adams "were almost identical in their analyses of the French Revolution, of the condition of humanity, and of the principles they enunciated for the future of both liberty and order" (404). Nonetheless, it is primarily Adams's caveats which reveal that he read *Reflections*; namely, criticisms of Burke's sentimental depiction of Marie Antoinette and use of the term "swinish multitude" to describe the common populace. For Adams's criticism of the term "swinish multitude", see Letter No. 23 to John Taylor, April 15, 1814 (*Works* 6:496). For his remarks on Marie Antoinette, see *Works* 3:172.

[76] See Maciag (56) and Tise (408-410) for more on this topic.

[77] For instance, Adams's *A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States* begins with an epigraph from Pope's "Essay on Man": "All Nature's Difference Keeps All Nature's Peace." Pope's lines claim that though "Heav'n" is "impartial" to the unequal distribution of human happiness "mutual wants this happiness increase" as a whole. Here, "mutual wants" do not signify people pursuing the same thing; the wants are "mutually" satisfying because "nature's difference" leads to differing desires. Happiness is increased because individuals can exchange objects that they value differently. Thus, as in Burke's writings, the "economy of nature" maintains social order.

The unity and married calm of States. (Qtd. in Tise 405)

Adams's comparison of certain kinds of revolutionary upheaval to natural cataclysms—particularly earthquakes—sounds much like Burke, indeed. But his "racinated" social structure is organized around strict spatial separation, hearkening back to the "separate spheres" of concentric orbit and foreshadowing the language of racial segregation. Here, Adams relies upon the same outdated model of natural order that Barlow inappropriately accused Burke of both upholding and subverting in the Phoebus passage of *The Conspiracy of Kings*. The solar system trope lacks Burke's sense for the messy "interwoven" way that "roots wide and deep" entangle with other species. While both Burke and Adams use metaphors to naturalize social inequality, Adams's astronomical metaphors posit a system of cold interactions by bodies fixed in "degree, priority, and place." By contrast, Burke's living system allows at least the possibility of commingled growth and symbiotic relationships. Adams's vision of fixed divisions and his belief that human nature was consistently selfish led to his support for checks and balances, while Burke believed social ecosystems are durable enough to preserve balance precisely because of their profound and preexisting complexity.

Adams and Burke's contrasting responses to the organic metaphors favored by French revolutionaries throw these differences into sharp relief. When Burke was confronted with Paine's language of weeding out or "uprooting" corrupt institutions, he voiced concerns about the beneficial plants that might be inadvertently harmed in the process and offered a proto-ecological defense of the "interwoven" roots of social forms (see chapter one). Adams encountered the same rhetorical figure in Wollstonecraft's *An Historical Moral View of the French Revolution*, the most heavily annotated text in his personal library. There, Wollstonecraft argued that revolution could "root out" all the "deleterious plants" destroying society. Rather than suggest that such plants weren't so bad after all, or claim (like Burke) that they might be beneficial to other more essential growths, Adams's marginal note pointedly questions whether revolutionary activity can weed as systematically as it claims: "Are these plants *all* rooted out? Are not fresh ones sown?" (qtd. in O'Neill 462). His emphasis is not on the social complexity of the past, but on the post-revolutionary future. He doesn't question whether old corruptions are worth undoing—he only fears that revolutionary violence might scatter the seeds it seeks to remove, leading to chaos or monarchical backlash. Thus, Adams's concern is not that something might be lost, but that revolution might not clear the ground thoroughly enough for a new, carefully managed crop to grow unobstructed.

Though John Adams only commented obliquely on the Burke-Paine debate, his son John Quincy inaugurated his career in letters by weighing in directly on the topic. In fact, he addressed the differences between the American and French Revolutions (and a prospective British revolution) much more explicitly than Burke.[78] Between June 8 and July 27 of 1791, he published a series of largely forgotten letters in the *Columbian Centinel* under the pen name "Publicola." The letters indignantly dispute Jefferson's endorsement of Paine's writings on France. In a preface to the American publication of *Rights of Man*, Jefferson had praised Paine's pamphlet as a corrective to "'the *political heresies* which have sprung up amongst us.'" Adams felt that Jefferson's designation of certain political beliefs as "heresies" constituted a dangerous affront to American "freedom of opinion upon all subjects, civil as well as religious" (JQ Adams 68). In turn, Jefferson was stung by the accusation that he was suppressing fundamental American liberties.

[78] While Burke has left scholars to puzzle for centuries about whether his defense of the American colonists was consistent with his disapproval of the French Revolution, John Quincy Adams not only outlines the differences he perceived between the conflicts in the "Publicola" letters, but also translated Friedrich Von Gentz's book on the subject (*The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution, Compared with the Origin and Principles of the French Revolution*).

Though the letters proved profoundly divisive, John Quincy Adams initially framed them as a moderate corrective to the rhetorical excesses of both Paine and Burke. Burke, he argued, offered a "severe and indiscriminating censure upon almost all" the "transactions" of the French National Assembly. Meanwhile Paine "approv[ed] everything they have done, with applause as undistinguishing as is the censure of Mr. Burke" (74). In his effort to produce a more "discriminating" analysis, Adams argued that Paine's work lacked a "single guiding principle" but also claimed "it is not my intention to defend the principles of Mr. Burke" (69-70). Despite his claims to moderation, in practice Adams systematically challenged Paine's claims while implicitly championing Burkean positions. While he did not entirely condemn the revolution in France, he vehemently argued that England should not follow its example. One of his central tenets was that Britain's accumulated traditions made its situation fundamentally different from America's prior to 1775. He disputed Paine's contention that the British Constitution was fictional simply because it was unwritten, calling it a "Constitution of principles, not of articles." In turn, he argued that the British had not exhausted the possibilities of constitutional reform.

"Publicola" invoked nature much less frequently than Burke, but when he employed organic or scientific metaphors, he used them to denounce the working classes in more reactionary terms. In Adams's view, the "mob" was not only "a tremendous power" but one "which is competent *only* to the purposes of destruction, and *totally incapable either to create or preserve*," (emphasis added).[79] In these pages, French commoners emerge as an "inert mass" or "electric fluid" that was more easily set in motion by "the eccentric vivacity of a madman" than "the sober coolness of phlegmatic reason" (JQ Adams 82-83). The American Revolution only succeeded in building a new social order, Adams argued, because America had little poverty and no mob. For Adams, the American system of democratic representation worked because it "was founded upon an equality already existing among [the populace], and not upon the metaphysical speculations of fanciful politicians, vainly contending against the unalterable course of events, and the established order of nature" (98).

When Adams refers to "the established order of nature," he does not mean "universal nature"—indeed, he represents "nature" as having different "orders" in America and in England. The quote reveals that for the younger Adams (as for Burke), cultural inheritances *become natural* as they accrete over time. Inequality is a historically determined phenomenon, but in Adams's conservative imagination, certain conditions make it irresistible, part of the "unalterable course of events" that constitute national identity. In this view, the viability of democracy depends on a historically contingent and historically produced environment, not universally applicable scientific laws.

The "Letters of Publicola" probably represent the closest approach to Burke's *Reflections* by a statesman in the Early Republic. At only 23 years of age, the younger Adams became "the precocious spokesman for a new American conservatism" (East 132). Like his father, John Quincy Adams followed Burke in using the idea of the "natural" to legitimize inequality. But both father and son lacked Burke's sense for the possibilities of social ecology. Each Adams believed that social stratification was intractable. The elder John Adams thought that the poor and the rich simply existed in different planetary orbits or spheres. For John Quincy Adams, the homogenous "inert mass" of the poor could only impinge upon broader society as a destructive, invasive force. By

[79] In a 1793 Fourth of July Oration, Adams also claimed that the French had destroyed Europe's natural fertility: they "poured the torrent of destruction over the fair harvests of European fertility; have unbound the pinions of desolation and sent her forth to scatter pestilence and death among the nations" (qtd. in Cleves 82).

contrast, while Burke had profound class prejudices, he still imagined differing classes interacting in a complicated and interdependent system.

Though the Publicola Letters contributed in some small way to the retrenchment of conservative principles that culminated with John Adams's election in 1796, they appeared and disappeared within a brief discursive moment. Still untimely, they were not widely circulated enough to cause a lasting Burkean movement in American politics. In contrast to the Adams's ambivalent Burkeanism, the Burkean writer most widely published in America during the 1790s was the ocean crisscrossing Englishman William Cobbett.[80] Like Burke, Cobbett had a complicated, seemingly contradictory public career. As a young man, he was deeply influenced by Paine's *Common Sense*. After serving in the British army for seven years, in 1792 he published *The Soldier's Friend*, an expose of the poor treatment and pay received by low-ranking military men. As a result, he was accused of sedition, leading him to emigrate to France in March of 1792, and then to the United States six months later. He quickly became disillusioned with both American and French democracy (or at least with the gap between the ideals and the reality). Throughout the 1790s, Cobbett adopted a Tory position as he reported on the supposed excesses of democratic fervor, including the explosive popularity of pro-France "democratic-republican societies," the Whiskey Rebellion, the Citizen Genet Affair, and the XYZ Affair of 1798. He attributed all of these phenomena to a transatlantic Jacobin plot, calling American supporters of France "flesh flies, that naturally settle on the excremental and corrupted parts of the body politic" ("History of the American Jacobins," *Peter Porcupine* 185).[81] Cobbett returned to England in 1800. Though he had been rabidly pro-British in American publications, Cobbett was once again disappointed with his country and spent the rest of his career emphasizing rural virtues and pushing for reform.

Like John Quincy Adams, Cobbett adopted Burkean points of view while only occasionally citing Burke's influence directly.[82] In fact, like John Adams, Cobbett would later defend the originality of his own position in part by attacking Burke's ideas as derivative.[83] But in notoriously vitriolic publications, Cobbett attacked anyone he associated with French principles. Though he stayed in America less than a decade, he helped inaugurate an anti-Jacobin prose style made up of equal parts gothic exaggeration and satiric invective.[84] He saved his most barbed invectives for fellow English emigrants directly associated with the revolutionary effort. His first major publication in this vein was his "Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley." There, Cobbett follows Burke in challenging the presumption that natural philosophy and scientific rationalism

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[80] According to David A. Wilson, Cobbett was in fact "the most widely read political writer in the United States during the French revolution" (2).

[81] Cobbett's "flesh flies" directly recall Burke's notable passage in *Reflections* describing how "grasshoppers under a fern" that "make the field ring with their importunate chink" as they attempt to disturb the imperturbable British cattle (85).

[82] "History of the American Jacobins" is a prominent exception: it begins with an epigraph from Burke.

[83] In an 1816 article in *The Political Register*, Cobbett had the following to say: "How amusing it is to hear the world disputing and wrangling about the motives, the principles, and opinions of Burke! He had no notions, no principles, no opinions of his own, when he wrote his famous work ... He was a poor, needy dependant of a Boroughmonger, to serve whom, and please whom, he wrote; and for no other purpose whatever ... And yet, how many people read this man's writings as if they had flowed from his own mind" (qtd. in Williams, *Culture and Society* 20). Burke likely would have found the closing phrases less damning than Cobbett intended them, as he felt that channeling the wisdom of ages was far more important than originality.

[84] Cleves tracks the long legacy of Anti-Jacobin discursive style in American letters, concluding that an initially "Counterrevolutionary ideology served as a critical lens that focused American awareness of violence and inspired a new opposition to the bloodshed caused by slavery, war, and ignorance" (9).

justify revolution. However, he writes in a decidedly ribald, incendiary, un-Burkean, un-mannerly manner.

On July 14, 1791, a group of protestors attacked and burned the Birmingham house of the eminent clergyman, scientist, and revolutionary enthusiast Joseph Priestley. Along with Priestley's residence, the crowd destroyed his valuable laboratory filled with glass vials for measuring compressed air. Though Priestley did not move to Pennsylvania until 1794, he cited the earlier incident as justification. In response to this well-publicized emigration, Cobbett argued that the natural philosopher had no grounds for complaint. His revolutionary opinions had incited the riot and members of the mob had paid restitution. Moreover, Cobbett claimed that Priestley's scientific apparatus had no real value to begin with. To Cobbett, Priestley was just another overreaching intellectual who justified revolution by improperly conjoining politics with insights derived from the systematic study of nature. When pursuing this theme, Cobbett inverts the language of enlightenment rationality, claiming that "System mongers [such as Priestley] are an *unreasonable* species of mortals: time, place, climate, nature itself, must give way" to their universalizing methods (66). Like Burke, Cobbett believed that nature could be studied only in its localized, contextual expressions. His writings suggest that generalizations and systematic theories lead inexorably to utopian hubris, political upheaval, and revolutionary terror.[85]

Cobbett's condemnation ends with a seemingly transparent allegory: "The Short but Comprehensive Story of a Farmer's Bull." Here we encounter a serene bull in a fertile farmyard filled with life and abundance—a Burkean scene if there ever was one. The bull—named "John," of course—is peacefully slumbering on the 14th of July when a human interloper repeatedly kicks it and harasses it with a burning stick. After many provocations, the bull goes on a rampage: "he even got into private houses, and in one place threw down whole baskets full of bottles and chemical glasses, crucibles and gun-barrels" (85). The farmer stops the bull, and the town pays for the damages. Undeterred, the unprincipled interloper goes to the next parish to arouse a lynch mob to attack the bull. They march on the farm, only to discover that "poor *Old John* was quiet at home, grazing in the meadow, up to his eyes in clover, and bluebells, and daffodils, and cows-lips, and primroses, as contented as a lamb." Meanwhile, a bull from the neighboring parish gets loose in their absence and does far more damage there than Old John. As a crowning example of his impudence, the Priestley figure who incited the bull's rage contrives a new source of income: he "set to work bottling up his own f-rts and selling them for the superfine inflammable air, and what's still worse, had the impudence to want a patent for the *discovery*" (86).

Cobbett's political fairy tale reveals Burkean strains in its association of rural scenes with traditional stability and virtue, in the use of torpid but powerful cattle to embody English-ness, and in the suggestion that revolutionaries have started a cascading cycle of violence they can't ultimately control. Additionally, Cobbett's vision delineates between two competing ways to approach nature. On the one hand, he presents the kind of nature associated with rural habituation, tradition, and—if not common *sense*—common platitude: let sleeping bulls lie; stop and smell the flower-catalogue. On the other hand, Cobbett presents Priestley as a sort of mad empiricist who tests out what might happen if natural forces are compressed, superheated, and "unnaturally" isolated from their environments. In Cobbett's rendering, John the Bull's response is not just justified—it is only natural. It is predictable to everyone but the scientist and the (allegorical) Frenchmen in the neighboring parish.

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[85] David A. Wilson identifies Cobbett's skepticism of "abstract theories" as one of his most characteristically Burkean beliefs, along with a shared contention that "democracy would culminate in the tyranny of the majority" (25).

The reference to bottled farts can be read as a personal attack in dubious taste. But the airy scatological humor also poses a meaningful criticism. It exposes the rarified air of intellectual speculation as nothing but a personal excrescence. Like almost all scatological humor, the joke reminds the reader that we inhabit flawed, fleshy shells, thereby indicting pure reason and mental abstraction as hypocritical absurdities. In his telling, the supposedly objective findings of scientific experiment turn out to be debased, irrepressible emissions of the body. How can we claim to control nature—or engineer a rational society—Cobbett seems to ask, if we cannot even control our own selves? Thus, he reveals "Discovery" as both delusion and deception, calling into doubt the progressive formulations that follow from it. All that is left is the flammable gas of revolution.

One of the most telling differences between Cobbett and Burke is that upon encountering such a flammable gas, Cobbett (ever the incendiary) lights a match, while Burke would surely turn away in disgust. It is simply impossible to imagine Burke telling even a bowdlerized "f-rt" joke, regardless of how satirically astute it might be. The distinction is at once political, philosophical, and tonal. Burke's prose is hardly a paragon of sober control; in fact, he was often mocked for the emotional excesses of his gothic outrage (a tone that Cobbett sometimes echoed). But Burke's rhetoric becomes most emotionally supercharged—even histrionic—at the very moments that he defends chivalry and promotes manners as the foundation of European civilization.[86] By contrast, Cobbett revels in ribaldry and rabble-rousing. Cobbett's allegory portrays John the Bull as initially placid and blameless enough that it is easy to forget that he represents a real-world mob, the gang of political incendiaries who attacked Priestley. Though they acted in a counter-revolutionary cause, it is unlikely that Burke would have seconded Cobbett's approval of their methods. Meanwhile, in Cobbett's rendering, actual violence and rhetorical violence switch places: the lynch mob *within* the allegory represents those in the press who later criticized Priestley's harassers.

A Revolution in Frontier Manners

For Burke (unlike Cobbett), manners were the foundation of social order. When Burke tallied up the crimes and consequences of revolution, he mentioned the loss of political freedoms, the rule of violence, and the construction of false majorities: "the terror of the bayonet, and the lamp-post, and the torch… assassination, massacre, and confiscation" (*Reflections* 68). But when he describes "The worst of these politics of revolution" he surprisingly shifts his focus away from violence. He concludes that "the most important of all revolutions" has been the "revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions" (*Reflections* 80). In a late letter Burke concluded that chivalric manners, in particular, were "of more importance than laws" (*Miscellaneous Writings* 3:105). Therefore, after the revolutionaries' invasion of Marie Antoinette's bedchamber in October 1789, Burke infamously lamented that "the age of chivalry is gone." By disordering society's gender relations, revolution was tearing off "all the decent drapery of life" and exposing it to the "new conquering empire of light and reason." With the seismic shift in manners, that "which has given its character to modern Europe" and "distinguished it under all its forms of government" was lost forever (*Reflections* 76).

Imlay—who seemingly disagreed with Burke about everything—nonetheless shared Burke's fixations on manners. He believed that a nation could be fundamentally "distinguished" through manners that (in Burke's terms) would "beautify and soften" a society's more obdurate edges. Like Burke, Imlay elevates chivalry to a position of central importance. But for Imlay, sincere manners

[86] Cleves also notes that Cobbett's *The Bloody Buoy* (1796) builds on Burke's gothic description of the revolutionary storming of Versailles in October of 1789.

depend upon geographical separation from European decadence. And instead of relying on ancient codes of behavior, Imlay constructs American chivalry as a marriage between enlightenment rationality and wild nature (as well as between male and female). On the one hand, Arl—ton patronizingly tries to compensate for feminine passivity and physical weakness. However, his masculinity, which is associated with both physical strength and cultured rationalism, must necessarily be chastened and moderated by women's seemingly more direct connection to landscapes that are at once romanticized and unyieldingly wild. In other words, while Imlay and Burke would agree with the dubious claim that chivalric manners are "natural," for Imlay, good manners are actually created *through* experiences of the natural world.

In both *The Emigrants* and Imlay's widely disseminated travel narrative entitled *A Topographical Description of North America*, the Alleghany Mountain range forms "not so much a physical as a moral watershed" (Verhoeven 102). In the introduction to *A Topographical Description*, Imlay takes "the greatest pleasure" in contrasting "the simple manners and rational life of the Americans, in these back settlements, with the distorted and unnatural habits of the Europeans" which he ascribes to "bad laws" and "blending religion with politics" (1). In *The Emigrants*, the geographical divisions are even more pronounced. Although Imlay portrays the Allegheny Mountains as easy to cross, he imagines that they effectively insulate frontier emigrants from the artifice and effeminacy not only of England, but also of the coastal Atlantic States.[87] As one critic has observed, "the emphasis of [*The Emigrants*] is not on the salutary influence of eastern manners on western society; it is on the influence of the western landscape on eastern mores, conceived entirely as beneficial" (Seelye 206).

Imlay's heroine Caroline, in particular, derives insights directly from the landscape rather than her interactions with fellow settlers. After insisting that she scale the mountain passes on foot rather than in a carriage, Caroline first encounters her future husband Arl—ton. In this pivotal meet-cute scene, Caroline regales the soldier with socially charged interpretations of the rugged landscape. She contrasts the sublime wilderness with the stultifying social geography of English strolls, where "shady groves" and "the promenades of London" either produce "ennui" through a lack of variation or are excessively crowded. "But here is a continual feast for the mind," she remarks. "Every rock, every tree, every moss, from their novelty afford subject for contemplation and amusement." Caroline delights in the particulars of the American material world, but also responds imaginatively to its alterity. In the shapes of rocks and trees, she imagines "the ruins of a great city" and "the form and figure of a superb mosque" (*Emigrants* 25).

Both characters in the novel and critics have tried to dismiss Caroline's interactions with the world around her as figural projections. Her brother George sneers that "he never knew before, that the Aborigines of America had been Mahometans, for that mosque was a Turkish temple" (*Emigrants* 28). Critic Matthew Wynn Sivils argues that Caroline's visions represent the "most stereotypical of romantic landscapes, a pastoral wonderland" and claims that "the great liberating beauty Caroline finds in the wilds of frontier America actually resides within her, the symptom of a long-held sexist portrayal of women as overly given to flights of fancy" (*American Environmental Fiction* 53). Additionally, several critics have suggested that Caroline's inability to see nature unmediated by art puts her in danger during a later scene when Native Americans take Caroline captive. They provocatively link Caroline's inattention at the moment of her capture to her tendency to carry a "glass" with her on such excursions. Verhoeven and Gilroy maintain that Caroline's "glass" was "probably a 'Claude glass': a "slightly convex blackened mirror, popular in the eighteenth-century as a device to view landscapes" because it made them appear reminiscent of the

[87] For passages in *The Emigrants* directly contrasting English artificiality with supposedly more natural American sentiments, see 101, 145, 213, 219-223.

popular paintings of Claude Gelee (Gilroy and Verhoeven 290). The Claude glass causes one to appreciate nature indirectly, mediated not only by technology, but also by a particular set of artistic conventions.[88] Sivils argues that "Imlay, by stressing that Caroline was holding this device in the moments before she was kidnapped, demonstrates the danger women face when they turn their back upon reality in preference to a romanticized view" (*American* 58).

These demystifications of Caroline's hazy, "romanticized view" seem quite compelling—the Claude glass is such an interpretively dense artifact that one cannot help but want the reading to stick—yet they reveal more about modern critical presumptions than Imlay's *skepticism* about romanticism or misogynistic marginalization of Caroline. There is no direct textual evidence that Caroline's "glass" is actually a Claude glass. The term "glass" could equally refer to field glasses or a telescope, instruments designed to allow the viewer to see nature *more* clearly than the unmediated eye. Additionally, in the effort to castigate Caroline for her lack of observational rigor, readers have mistakenly overlooked the fact that Imlay's text clearly indicates that the glass had been "left by accident" in town (*Emigrants* 192-93). In fact, Caroline is only alone in the woods because her maid went back to town to search for it). She could not have been distracted by the glass at the moment of capture; in fact, any visual prosthesis might have offered angles of insight that would have supplemented her perceptions.[89]

These slight misreadings are important because at the very moment they condemn the projection of anthropocentric and artistic attitudes onto the non-human world, they project the *category* of anthropocentrism back in time. Imlay does not criticize romanticized visions of nature; we do. In fact, the novel consistently presents a Rousseauvian vision of untrammeled nature as morally and politically transformative. George, who accuses Caroline of romantic projections (which are not quite the same thing as anthropocentrism), is one of the text's villains: a lazy, prodigal son who gambles away not only his own funds, but also those intended to support his entire family. His moral status and vision are also compromised: if Caroline sees more than is actually in the hills, George reductively sees less. When George insists that "it was not possible for her to have seen any thing but bears and wild animals" he bypasses Imlay's larger points about wilderness's politically and morally regenerative dimensions (28).[90]

For Imlay, Caroline's romantic imagination represents not a debased or inaccurate view of nature, but an alternate mode of perception: a necessary corrective to Arl—ton's technocratic imperialism. Ultimately, the community of Bellefont's promise depends upon the marriage of Arl—ton's Enlightenment rationality to Caroline's romantically picturesque conservationism. Because of

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[88] Elisa Tamarkin observes that "the Claude mirror suggests that the image it creates for us is not a transcription of nature, say, but a metaphor for it; some go so far as to suggest that the image in a Claude mirror, and, by extension the painting that derives from it, are more like an ekphrasis (a verbal description of a picture) than a picture" (183).

[89] As Tamarkin notes, the Claude glass might offer a distorted and darkened mirror of nature, but it also allowed prolonged gazes at otherwise unobservable natural phenomena, namely the sun (183).

[90] As Sivils observes in *American Environmental Fiction*, even when Caroline only observes animals in the wilderness, she expresses "surprisingly sophisticated curiosity" about natural history that points toward "an advanced environmental consciousness on the part of Imlay himself" (53). Sivils refers to a letter in which Caroline notices that quail tend to appear after white settlement and then wonders how they "existed when America was altogether a wild." Although her observations erase the history of land transformation by Natives, they allow her (like Judith Sargent Murray) to criticize society's restriction of women's education "into the region of science and nature." Additionally, after she notes that American animals are as large as their European equivalents, she demurely suggests that such topics "should be left to the sublime Buffon, *or the more accurate Pennant*" (*Emigrants* 70; emphasis added). The modesty topos subtly highlights her own acuity and slyly implies that Buffon's theories of degeneration are entertainingly "sublime," but hardly empirical.

Caroline's influence, the carefully planned utopia does not extend its wholesale regulation of the environment outside its boundaries. Caroline celebrates the way that "the country on the opposite shore" of the river is "overhung with woods," allowing "the charms of cultivation" to be "contrasted by the beauties of wildness" (*Emigrants* 246). The wildness is "yet uninhabited," but rather than look forward to its settlement, Caroline celebrates the balance between nature and civilization.[91] Caroline's formulation stresses the aesthetic sublimity of the wild, but her statement also helps culminate one of the major arguments of the novel: namely, that we can best renew our vision of an ideal state of society while in untrammeled nature. She and Arl—ton now dwell "in these almost uninhabited wilds, *where the mind begins to look more into the nature of society, than when the objects which present themselves, are mostly artificial*" (155; emphasis added). Thus, regardless of whether her romanticism allows her to see nature unmediated, Caroline imagines it providing the contrast with society that allows for foundational political reflection and reform.[92]

Through the merger between Arl—ton's technocratic imperialism and Caroline's attunement to wilderness, Imlay presents a blithely utopian reaffirmation of the age-old essentialism that reads femininity as natural and masculinity as cultural. If anything, the fact that both masculine culture and feminine nature are equally necessary to Bellefont enables Imlay's sexist construction of Caroline as a passive body and Arl—ton as a heroically active agent. After Arl—ton rescues Caroline, male characters reaffirm her body's status as an inert erotic spectacle by merging her form into the landscape. As Arl—ton's friend Il—ray describes his voyage across the frontier after viewing Caroline in her renovated post-captivity condition:

> Everything seemed to be enchantment as we passed the extensive plains of the Illinois country. The zephyrs which had gathered on their way the fragrance of the flowery riches which bespangle the earth, poured such a torrent of voluptuous sweets upon the enraptured senses, that my animation was almost overpowered with their delicious and aromatic odours… it brought to my imagination, the charms of old ocean, when she receives into her bosom the luminary by which we live, as if to renovate in her prolific element his exhausted powers. But when the scene was embellished by an image so fair and beauteous as that of Caroline's we seemed to have regained Paradise, while all the golden fruits of autumn hung pending from their shrubs, and seemed to invite the taste, as though they were jealous of each others delicious sweets. (*Emigrants* 204)

Far from debasing or corrupting Caroline, the time spent in Native captivity seems to have intensified her connection to the natural world. The passage abounds in sensual fertility that borders

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[91] Earlier in the novel, the Allegheny River near Pittsburgh demarcates "the line between civilization and barbarism" (*Emigrants* 53). Its own "wildness" and "impetuous" cascades are moderated when it joins the Monongahela River (a "broad" and "gentle" flow) near Pittsburgh—once again posing a merger between civilization and wildness. The landscape takes on sexual valences that reveal the characters' subjectivity and expose gender binaries: in a letter, the older Il—ray tells the virile young Arl—ton, who pines for Caroline, that the "impetuosity of your passion… must have been influenced by the current of that rapid river, which seems to be hurrying, to intermingle its waters with the more gentle Monongahela" (164).

[92] The novel makes clear that among its other functions, Caroline's enthusiastic observations of the land provide her with social capital. As her mentor Mrs. W.— observes, an encounter with a sublime scene "naturally tends to expand the heart and the intellect, and ultimately produces a comprehension of ideas which renders the mind competent to engage in the most brilliant and copious conversations; and what makes such acquisitions more estimable, is that colloquial talents are the most desirable accomplishments a woman of fashion can possess" (24). Although Caroline hardly ends the novel as a "woman of fashion," the passage hints at the future social commodification of romantic outlooks.

on fecundity. It almost instantaneously transports the reader from the flowers of spring to the autumn's luscious harvest. Despite the undeniable flowery eroticism, Caroline still refers to the lush frontier scenes as "regions of innocence, where there is no art to beguile and rob us of that felicity, which flows from mutual sincerity" (170). Her language transforms the wilderness into a new Eden, where human sexuality has the same pre-lapsarian purity as the fertilization of flowers.[93] As Seelye notes, the "distinctly erotic coloration" is "a prelude not to sexual exploitation, however, but to marriage and utopian community" (210). Far from revealing the dangerous aspects of wild sublimity, Caroline's captivity turns nature into an unthreatening erotic playground that enables her final union with Arl—ton, thereby offering an implicit promise that the frontier settlement will reproduce luxuriantly.

Instead of allowing Caroline's romantic mentality to become a liability, Imlay disperses it throughout the environment and transfers it to other characters. Caroline's sexualized passivity transforms Arl—ton from a representation of pure masculine rationality to a properly balanced individual. The sight of her "half naked" body causes him to precipitately snuff out a candle, stating that "I was obliged to extinguish the light, to preserve my reason" (*Emigrants* 200). As Gilroy and Verhoeven note, Arl—ton's articulation produces a "playful reversal of Enlightenment rhetoric" (xxxix). The moment also stages a playful rejoinder to Burke's lament that the "new conquering empire of light and reason" would tear away "all the decent drapery of life." With Caroline's "decent drapery" ripped asunder, Arl—ton's enlightenment proves self-regulating rather than imperial: he is able to temporarily extinguish a candle in order to "preserve" his "reason," his emotional equilibrium, and his chivalric integrity. The moment is nonetheless transformative: it causes Arl—ton to fly into an uncharacteristic (and heavily clichéd) poetic rapture, and ultimately inspires him to incorporate more of Caroline's feminine qualities into his own character.

This is far from the only moment that Imlay directly contrasts enlightened frontier chivalry with the tradition-bound chivalry that Burke prized.[94] In letters sent from Europe, Arl—ton's friend Il—ray suggests a link between monarchy and degraded social manners: "tyranny has laid the foundation of European depravity," he opines, while reassuring his interlocutor that "men will regain their pristine sincerity" when "the rights of man can be clearly ascertained, and equality established" (*Emigrants* 221-22). Il—ray bewails the lack of rights not just for their own sake, but because their absence makes people treat one another rudely. Poor manners are both cause and symptom of undemocratic rule. By building towards the point and lamenting it at length, he hints that social "depravity" may even be more important than the loss of liberty or material suffering.

By situating degraded manners as the ultimate peril of a particular political system, Il—ray both echoes and reverses Burke's contention that "the most important of all revolutions" was the "revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions." Where Burke argues that the decline in manners results from the loss of social refinement, Imlay criticizes the hypocrisy and artificiality of refinement itself. For Burke, traditional institutions—especially those that reinforced class difference—were the bulwark of the chivalric system. He argued that the leveling effects of revolution would not cause men and women to be equal. Instead, degenerated manners would lead

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[93] Although Imlay only suggestively hints at the sexual dalliance between Caroline and Arl—ton, his verbiage strikingly recalls Milton's imagination of Adam and Eve's relatively explicit yet innocent conjugal relations before the fall in *Paradise Lost*.

[94] Gilroy and Verhoeven also briefly note the congruence between Imlay and Burke's defenses of chivalry (xxxviii). There are, of course, similarities as well as differences between Burke and Imlay's versions of chivalry, including Imlay's depiction of women as fragile beings needing male protection. As an idealized representative of femininity, Caroline is not only modest and chaste, but also frequently swoons or faints, which, in turn, gives Arl—ton opportunities to rescue her.

to a total removal of all barriers, creating social anarchy that would allow the powerful to victimize the most disadvantaged members of society, including women. When the mystical and gendered significance of nobility were removed "a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order" (*Reflections* 77). By contrast, *The Emigrants* portrays women as always already oppressed by the same corrupt institutions and traditions that Burke cited as bulwarks against exploitation.[95]

In *The Emigrants*, old-world marriage is the most debased practice of all. In order to make a case for liberalizing divorce laws, Imlay dwells at great length on two exploitative English marriages. In the most shocking case study, Caroline's brother-in-law attempts to prostitute his wife to pay off his gambling debts. His debauchery reinforces Imlay's contention that sexual degradation was the result of the patriarchal system, not the (supposed) slippage between liberality and libertinism that Burke attributed to revolution. Although Imlay's male characters try to exercise control over female sexuality, they also advocate for women to have the right to easily petition for divorces if they feel entrapped in a relationship. Thus, whereas Burke imagined that leveling would degrade women, Imlay argues that they should be granted equal legal protections. Burke's version of chivalry envisioned women retreating from the public sphere into the protection of matrimonial relations, while Imlay's chivalry benevolently but patronizingly presents legal rights as a gift, allowing women to use public forums to escape matrimony.

Perhaps sensing that his defense of chivalry might be misconstrued as conservative, Imlay stages two debates in which his characters take explicitly Burkean and anti-Burkean positions.[96] In the first of these exchanges, Caroline's uncle P.P. describes how his future wife was abused by her first husband. His use of natural law theory to argue for easing divorce laws deliberately echoes Jefferson's justifications for revolution in the Declaration of Independence: "It is when laws or customs interfere with the duty we owe to GOD or to our fellow creatures, that we are constrained, from a principle of honour, to resist their influence" and protect the "absolute rights" which men "were invested at the creation" (*Emigrants* 105-6). The heroine Caroline is Imlay's somewhat unlikely choice to voice the conservative response. She begins by invoking the initial social contract to suggest that no rights are absolute: "when men entered into society, they *gave up part of their liberty*, the more effectually to secure their more important rights" and thereby agreed to conform to society's rules. She proceeds to claim that social cohesion trumps abstract rights: "However repugnant the laws respecting matrimony may be to the codes of nature, is of no consequence, compared with the tranquility, safety and happiness of society." Directly echoing Burke's metaphors, she argues that P.P.'s principles "*strike at the root* of domestic quiet," and triumphantly concludes that following his suggestions would "destroy all that *harmony* and that *beautiful system*, which has been *productive of so much decorum and blandishment to manners*" (*Emigrants* 110-11; emphasis added). Caroline concedes that the "laws respecting matrimony" may violate the "codes of nature"—something Burke never agreed to. But as the italicized phrases emphasize, Caroline's argument is not so much vaguely Burkean as a direct synthesis and summary of his contentions in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. By having

[95] Even when Il—ray complains that certain women are sexually forward or promiscuous, he says that "such unnatural folly" is not an individual failing, but an inevitable consequence of the "depravity… in our institutions" (*Emigrants* 31).

[96] Though the events of the story are set in the 1780s, in the introduction that appeared alongside the novel upon its first publication in 1793, Imlay states that his main purpose "is to prompt many readers to turn their thoughts toward the important political questions now agitated throughout Europe" (1).

Caroline ventriloquize Burke's arguments, Imlay elevates case studies about divorce into a referendum on gender relations and revolutionary separation writ large.[97]

Imlay recurs to the topic of divorce in a dialog between Il—ray and Mary, Caroline's sister. Where Caroline echoed Burke's positions, the flightier Mary pushes them beyond their logical limits, unwittingly revealing their tension and presumptions. She commences by saying that the rights of man are "abstract," echoing Burke's preference for actualities over abstractions, contextual idiosyncrasy over first principles. When Il—ray responds that no concept as parsimonious as the rights of man could possibly be abstract, Mary answers "I do not know what is meant by the rights of man, and therefore the subject must be abstract… it is only realities that can give me pleasure and happiness, and every person has a right to obtain them by every means in their power." Her flippant retort implies that the dismissal of abstractions is the last resort of an inferior mind. Her defense of "realities" and the "right to obtain them" exposes Burke's belief that property rights are the foundation of social order as a bare justification for selfish acquisition; for grasping at whatever gives the individual "pleasure and happiness" regardless of the social consequences for others.

Mary goes on to defend nobility while inadvertently evacuating it of moral content. She tells a self-defeating story about a man who *pretends* to be noble in order to swindle others who defer to him. When Il—ray points out that such behavior is hardly admirable, Mary responds with a diatribe against not only political revolution, but enlightenment as a whole. "Was the veil to be removed" and humanity "enlightened," she argues

> everything that is ornamental to the grandeur of empires would decay, and that blandishment which the subordination of our hearts owes to distinction and power, would be changed into a rebellious candor, which would at once tarnish the luster of that polish, which our glorious and immortal ancestors achieved with such infinite pains and labour. (*Emigrants* 225)

Once again, Mary's language is lifted from Burke (especially the elevation of the veil, the respect for "glorious and immortal ancestors," and the sense that ruptures imperil manners). Whereas Burke defends manners because they correlate with social cohesion, Mary sees primarily surfaces. She values "ornament," "luster," and "polish" for their own sake, rather than their ability to reflect a functioning social sphere. She believes in "the subordination of our hearts" to those above us not because she views them as "our" moral betters or keepers of order, but because they emanate beauty.

In narrative context, Mary's defense of conservative ideals is clearly meant to discredit Burke. Like George, Mary is a villain who interferes with her family's happiness in selfish ways, jealously trying to thwart Arl—ton and Caroline's budding relationship. But the fact that the virtuous Caroline is not quickly persuaded by P.P.'s natural rights rhetoric is more puzzling. When P.P. justifies himself with political philosophy, Caroline reprimands him in response. Instead, Caroline's initially sentimental and unsympathetic response to other women's entrapment in abusive marriages gradually mellows as the narrative proceeds. P.P.'s story causes Caroline to partially relent, stating that women have a duty to intervene to relieve one another's suffering. She more thoroughly alters her approach after hearing of her sister's monstrous English husband. Thus, the text concludes with Burkean women capitulating to feminist positions advocated by progressive American men.

The doctrines espoused by these marriage-protesting mansplainers carried costs as well as liberatory possibilities. Sharing Burke's bottom line belief that enlightened chivalry existed to protect

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[97] In *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority*, Jay Fliegelman explores the broader connections between liberal divorce laws and revolutionary principles in the late 1700s.

women because of their weakness, Caroline's uncle P.P. capitalizes on her concession that "laws respecting matrimony" might be "unnatural." He maintains that divorce, not durable matrimonial union, is the best means to protect "that elegant softness, with which nature has so exquisitely formed the female heart" (*Emigrants* 115). But in an age of pervasive patriarchy, men often chose neither to shield women's supposed "softness" from the world nor to give them true freedom of choice, instead citing liberal attitudes towards divorce to authorize their own indiscretions and failures to take responsibility. Conversely (in keeping with many of his other social stances) Burke's critique of the revolution in manners gave ammunition to oppressive forces in the long run. But Burke's defense of traditional chivalry likely appeared oddly prescient in 1794, when, amidst the Terror, Gilbert Imlay abandoned Mary Wollstonecraft in Paris to raise their newborn daughter Fanny without his support.

Love and Politics in the Transatlantic Republic of Letters

Imlay has paid a price in posterity for his caddish behavior: for two centuries he has been better known for his mistreatment of Wollstonecraft than for his own literary endeavors. Many scholars actively cultivate his neglect; at times by criticizing his writings on aesthetic grounds, but more often by dismissing them out of hand as revenge for his wrongs against Wollstonecraft.[98] Indeed, the mixture of the political and the personal that characterized Imlay and Wollstonecraft's textually mediated relationship seems to demand that one take a side (even more so than the charged conflicts between Burke and Paine or Burke and Wollstonecraft). Almost no one has taken Imlay's side, and it is not my intention to do so here. He behaved abhorrently. However, his *work* deserves more attention. Attending to his writings need not distract from or diminish Wollstonecraft's justly lionized corpus. In fact, the imperative to take sides risks making scholars *recreate* a pattern of vexed partiality that was active within the 1790s republic of letters. By creating critical distance, we can more clearly observe and describe the deep entanglements of the personal, the romantic, the political, and the philosophical that foundationally shaped the transatlantic response to the French Revolution. In order to better understand this peculiarly interconnected community of thinkers, we must attend to the ways that messy relationships shaped textual expressions *and* the reverse: the ways that texts shaped relationships, often with profound consequences for both literary legacies and political history.

Of all the figures involved in the transatlantic debates over the French revolution, no one was more aptly situated to protest Imlay's sexist assumptions about female incapacity and the necessity of chivalry than Wollstonecraft. But she bypassed such opportunities while in love. In fact, she was initially attracted not just by Imlay's roguish charm, but also by his expose of abusive marriages and defense of divorce in *The Emigrants*. Once abandoned by Imlay, Wollstonecraft constructed a narrative that inflated the proto-feminism of Imlay's *textually* expressed positions while totally dismissing his commitment to them in reality: "Reading what you have written relative to the desertion of women, I have often wondered how theory and practice could be so different, till I recollected, that the sentiments of passion, and the resolves of reason, are very distinct" (*Collected Letters* 283).[99] The clear-cut distinctions that Wollstonecraft proposes between theory and practice,

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[98] See, for instance, Andrew Cayton's claim that *The Emigrants* "would achieve a well-deserved obscurity" (1). In *Love in a Time of Revolution*, the only monograph-length scholarly work centrally focused on Wollstonecraft and Imlay, Cayton spends just a few pages on *The Emigrants* and only mentions *A Topographical Description* in passing.

[99] Wollstonecraft to Imlay, 10 February 1795.

passion and reason, bely the complexity of Imlay's novel. Wollstonecraft renders tensions as binaries, while in *The Emigrants* the same men are both chivalric *and* patronizing, caring *and* presumptive.

Wollstonecraft may be correct to note that Imlay possessed a cynical, self-serving side. His arguments for liberalized marriage laws likely *were* motivated by a desire for a life free from consequences *as well as by* impartial political beliefs. However, in her desire to contrast between Imlay's former and present positions, Wollstonecraft cites Imlay's hypocrisy rather than exposing a more crippling flaw *within* his thinking; namely, his reliance on the ideological category of "the natural" to portray women as feeble creatures.[100] She could have chosen to reveal the intra-textual connections between Imlay's defenses of divorce, insistence on chivalric manners, and treatment of women as lesser, naturalized bodies in need of culturally empowered male saviors. In other words, she could have extended the same critiques of the normative natural that she levied against Burke in *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* and against a patriarchal society as a whole in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. But choosing a different direction, she confesses to having underestimated Imlay's capacity for duplicity rather than admitting that her love for Imlay made her overlook ideals she found objectionable elsewhere.

Her interpretation has caused Imlay to be remembered as insincere, and hence, not worth reading, rather than complex and problematic, and hence, worth subjecting to continued critical scrutiny.

If Wollstonecraft is unable or unwilling to fault Imlay for the stability of his patriarchal presumptions as well as hypocritical strains, by claiming that "the sentiments of passion, and the resolves of reason, are very distinct," she implies something important about the nature of consistency itself. Here, Wollstonecraft endeavors to drive a wedge between passion and reason. Imlay's "distinct" division between feelings and intellect results in the inconsistency between "theory and practice." But passion and reason pull the *same* person in opposite directions. Far from being inherently separable, the coexistent push and pull within the individual emerges as the root cause of intellectual inconsistency. By implication, Imlay's inability to exist as a purely passionate or purely rational creature causes an initially straightforward relationship to devolve into a messy interpersonal entanglement. In the context of the transatlantic pamphlet war, Wollstonecraft's statement of this paradoxical relationship between reason and passion carries broader significance because *all* of the revolutionary proponents considered in this chapter—including Wollstonecraft and Imlay—at times claimed the mantle of enlightened reason and empiricist detachment. They promoted the belief that the capacity for abstract, disinterested thought could revolutionize social existence. But as Wollstonecraft belatedly discovered about Imlay, the rationalist expressions of this geographically dispersed cohort tended to be *particularly* conditioned by unruly passions—especially about one another.

A verbal map of their relationships to one another might help to unravel, or at least trace, some of the affective threads that bound this community together even at the moments they tried to separate themselves from one another. It is hard to know who the central figure in such a map should be. Perhaps Paine? Barlow? Each could be justified on the ground of their key role in émigré intellectual circles. But to illustrate the role of feeling, Imlay and Wollstonecraft's intense affective arc functions as a paradigmatic starting point rather than exceptional outlier. Imlay's abandonment of Wollstonecraft indubitably played a large role in shaping her later works (such as *The Wrongs of Women, or Maria*). Meanwhile, Wollstonecraft's later husband, William Godwin, not only authored an influential response to Burke (*An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, a foundational work of political philosophy in its own right) but also curated both Wollstonecraft's and Imlay's posthumous legacies

[100] In *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt faulted the French revolutionaries for being more upset by hypocrisy than by wickedness. Wollstonecraft seems to apply such standards to Imlay.

by publishing a widely-read account of their relationship (which is largely fair, but also quite one-sided as Imlay's letters did not survive). The dynamics of the Godwin family household continued to be shaped by Imlay's presence after Mary Wollstonecraft's death in childbirth in 1797 thanks to the lingering presence of Fanny , Imlay and Wollstonecraft's daughter. Fanny's suicide in 1816 had a profound effect on her half sister Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who published her novel *Frankenstein* 14 months later.

Returning to happier times, we might recall that Imlay and Wollstonecraft first met in the émigré circle frequented by Joel and Ruth Barlow, who may even have introduced the ill-fated lovers. In turn, the Barlow's (likely) three-way romantic relationship with their young boarder Robert Fulton make it difficult to parse the causes impelling Joel's religious, scientific, and romantic passion for a technologically-induced millennium. Meanwhile, Barlow and Imlay's efforts to construct the American frontier as a blank slate amenable to the fulfillment of enlightenment revolutionary ideals indistinguishably intersect with their business partnership's blank-check sale of Western lands. Their various commitments make it hard to know where business propaganda ends and where literature begins.

In addition to romantic, business, and intellectual partnerships, hurt feelings and antagonism also played key roles. As covered in chapter one, the emotional aspects of Paine's *Rights of Man* were animated by a sense that Burke had betrayed his earlier commitments to the cause of revolution. Cobbett's disgust with Priestley was as much a matter of personal aversion as political ambition. Like Cobbett, John Adams seemed to harbor a sense of jealousy towards Burke and tried to claim the priority of influence. And while personal feelings often determined the terms of political engagement, at times what began as textual disputes led to frayed relationships with lasting political consequences. A case of mistaken identity involving John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and Thomas Jefferson is the most notable instance. After the publication of the Publicola letters (written by John Quincy Adams), many observers, including Jefferson (then Washington's Secretary of State) assumed that "Publicola" was the elder John Adams (the vice-president).[101] The letters marked a decisive fracture point in both Adams and Jefferson's friendship and their partisan allegiance, thereby helping to reify the emerging split between Federalists and Republicans that determined so much of the later 1790s.[102]

Taken as a whole, in this transatlantic tangle, the personal was political, and the political was not just personal, but communal and *inter*personal. The intellectual was intimate. Political and aesthetic expressions were simultaneously personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal. Even the nations themselves (England, France, the United States, and Haiti) were busy renegotiating their symbolic status as allies and enemies, parents and children, brothers and sisters. As much as radicals promoted the autonomy of the reasoning mind, in practice they formed something like a globetrotting version of Burke's local "little platoons." They were purposive, empowered, and capable of changing the world, but also messy, complex, implicated, and ensnared in circumstances both of and beyond their own making. Their textual affiliations recall T.S. Eliot's spatial imagination of works within the canon, where any addition fundamentally alters the perception of the whole. Yet, taken collectively, these writers do not reinforce canonicity. Instead, their formally heterogenous conversations, pamphlets, love letters, poems, and treatises contest narrow definitions of the literary as well as our oft-repudiated, still-latent tendency to evaluate individual authors as the fundamental unit of meaning. In turn, their extensive travels and multiple citizenships complicate

[101] On August 30, 1791, Jefferson wrote John Adams a letter citing "Publicola for all the unfortunate publicity that had arisen to make a breach between them" (qtd. in East).
[102] See Nagel (74); East (132-145).

our continuing use of nation-states and national literatures as the primary basis for disciplinary divisions.

As a result of these many crossings and communal constructions of meaning, the texts written by the friends, lovers, and rivals of this chapter do more than allude or respond to one another: they co-produce meaning by virtue of their shifting arrangement. Taken from a certain angle, the transatlantic radical community looks like a literary ecosystem in which the actions of any one individual have ripple effects that rearrange the relationships between all the others: trauma transforms behavior patterns, hunters are at times vulnerable, mutualistic attachments become oppressively parasitic over time, and acts of violence scatter seeds of renewal. In such a system, movement between positions or political categories does not necessarily mean surrendering one's ground or capitulating to hypocrisy. Instead, it enables survival and the possibility of new relationships. Ultimately, there is no single center to this map of shifting coordinates—not Paine, not Barlow, not Burke, and not even the event of the French Revolution. The writers' relationships exist in something like "the mesh," which Timothy Morton describes in *The Ecological Thought* as "a vast sprawling" system in which "each point is both the center and edge to a system of points" (8). According to Morton, the mesh is full of "radical intimacy, coexistence" (29). It is a fit figure for a transatlantic literary ecology that constantly challenged the concept of borders, of periphery and center, of intimacy and critical distance. Ironically enough, these apostles of enlightenment lived and wrote while entangled in just such a canon-challenging Burkean mesh, and their critiques of Burkean conservatism are both richer and more complicated as a result.

Part II: Revolutionary Environments in The Leatherstocking Tales, 1823-1841

Preamble: Transplanting Burkean Conservatism to Cooperstown

Though James Fenimore Cooper did more to promote Burkean conservatism than any other nineteenth-century American, he forcefully maintained that Americans should reject servile worship of Burke himself. In his 1834 political tract, *A Letter to His Countrymen*, Cooper—then living in Europe—excoriated the American tendency to appeal to Burke as a source of authority capable of silencing debate. "Any objection to the course taken by our government," Cooper lamented, "is usually met by some precedent derived from the usages of England. He who points to the constitution is answered by a saying of Mr. Burke, or a decision of my Lord Mansfield!" (*American Democrat and Political Writings* 324). Cooper's defiant tone seems to anticipate Emerson's call for individual and cultural autonomy four years later in "The American Scholar." But as Cooper goes on, he clarifies his position: he is not rejecting tradition as such and thereby symbolically re-enacting the American Revolution. Instead, he argues that America should respect the home-grown legal and social customs that were the *end product* of revolution. "Before we are Burked out of our constitutional existence, let us at least make an attempt to try some of the expedients of our own system," he thunders (336), before eventually declaring that "Here, the democrat is the conservative, and, thank God, he has something worth preserving" (343).

Cooper's claim that "the democrat is the conservative" seems to be a rote example of how both conservatives and reformers in the antebellum period affirmed community belonging through "rites of assent" that glorified the overthrow of British tyranny.[103] But ironically, at the very moment that Cooper invokes this consensus and insists Americans will not be "Burked out" of their revolutionary inheritance, his logic is profoundly Burkean. The central through-line connecting Burke's anti-colonial advocacy of Ireland and India, defense of American equality and autonomy, and opposition to the French Revolution was his belief that the cultural traditions developed over time in a particular place should not be hastily abrogated, either from within or without. Similarly, Cooper's resistance to Burke—who was not only a defender of British common law but also argued that Americans should protect their cultural autonomy—aims to establish what one critic called a "natural, common law indigenous to America" (McWilliams, *Political Justice* 139). In other words, Cooper's declaration of American moral, cultural, and intellectual independence disguises a transatlantic subtext. Over-performing the rejection of Burke makes it politically acceptable to promote Burkean aims. Just as only Nixon could go to China, only an overt Burke-basher such as Cooper could import Burke's model of conservatism to antebellum America.

Cooper's argument against Burke's influence on Burke's own terms epitomizes the contradictory—and largely submerged—presence of Burke in Cooper's texts. *A Letter to His Countrymen* represents one of the rare instances that Cooper directly invokes Burke, and we have no clear records of which Burke texts Cooper read at particular points in his career. As an influence, Burke looms, but is disavowed; meanwhile Burke*an* ideals are omnipresent but unattributed. In response to this ambivalent relationship, these chapters aim at neither an exhaustive comparison between Burke and Cooper nor a straightforward argument about literary influence, but instead use Burke and Cooper's texts as representative examples to describe broader transformations of conservative thought across Atlantic divides.

Despite attracting cult-like devotion among a subset of scholars, Burke is particularly suited to a treatment that questions the singularity and particularity of authorship. Disdaining the very concept of originality, Burke made no claims to have invented what was then called *modern* conservatism (as differentiated from monarchism or feudalism), and which we now often call *classical* conservatism (to differentiate it, at least in American politics, from neo-conservatism, right-wing

[103] See Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* and *Rites of Assent*.

evangelism, free market fundamentalism, or ethnic nationalism). Instead, he gathered together and gave the most influential expression to a tradition that theorized tradition itself. To say that Cooper is Burkean, then, is not to say that Cooper was a disciple or scholar of Burke, but to notice that Cooper persistently engages with (and helps develop) a particular strand of political thought for which Burke continues to be neither the alpha nor the omega, but instead a common touchstone.

Nonetheless, Cooper's replication of Burkean themes seems more than coincidental. In fact, Cooper's writings narratively unfurl and test out nearly every major preoccupation of Burke's late writings on France, including tensions between revolution and reform; the state of nature and the state of society; gender, sexuality, manners, and chivalry; the origin and extent of property rights; aesthetics of the sublime and beautiful; imperialism and autonomy; ecology and the environment; the nature of metaphor and metaphors of nature; violence and gothic representation; and distinctions between American, British, and French conceptions of liberty. At times, the correlations between Cooper's points and Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* could not be clearer. In *The American Democrat*, for instance, Cooper claims that efforts to "frame the institutions of a country, on the pure principles of abstract justice… know little of human nature" and that "great principles seldom escape working injustice in particular things" (*American Democrat* 396). Such sentiments seem to directly echo Burke's contention that "Abstract Liberty, like other mere abstractions, is not to be found" as well as his later predictions that the French insistence on rationalist application of universal principles would cause great human suffering ("Speech on Conciliation with America," *Writings* III:120).

In addition to noting many instances when Cooper echoed Burke's thought, I also evaluate ways that Cooper reshaped and contested certain Burkean traditions. Chapter three, titled "Revolution and Ecology: Extending the Social State of Nature" focuses on ways that Cooper tests out the applicability of Burkean social ecologies to multicultural and multispecies contact zones in *The Pioneers* (1823). By locating the presence of Burke's inherited state of society in frontier environments usually imagined as having no past, this chapter calls into question the nearly universally held belief that Cooper's uses Native characters and the white frontiersman Natty Bumppo to represent life in a simplistic, pre-social state of nature. Chapter four, titled "Sublimity, Temporality, and Race: Beyond Reproductive Futurity," explores sharper divergences between the two writers, arguing that Cooper's observations of forest ecology and intertwined beliefs about racial disappearance and sexual anachronism caused him to contextualize and complicate the classical conservative preference for gradualist change.

Because these chapters engage with all five of Cooper's Leatherstocking tales, some background is in order. Each novel in the series chronicles white hunter Natty Bumppo's engagements with Natives and other white settlers. The books do not proceed chronologically (see Figure One, below). Chapter three of this work focuses primarily on *The Pioneers*, which Cooper published in 1823. Cooper's third novel overall (and the first of the Leatherstocking series), *The Pioneers* introduces readers to Natty Bumppo and his Mohican life-partner Chingachgook at a point late in their lives. The aged hunters reside near Templeton, a thinly fictionalized version of Cooper's own childhood residence in Cooperstown, New York. The novel focuses broadly on the efforts of Judge Temple (a stand-in for Cooper's father William) to build a just and ordered society in the wilderness from 1793-1794. The central plot crises emerge from Temple's efforts to impose hunting restrictions and from Natty's resistance to the new laws. By the end of the narrative, Chingachgook has died in a forest fire, Temple's society is thriving, and Natty, after being arrested and escaping, lights out for the territories as "the foremost in that band of Pioneers, who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent" (*Pioneers* 456). Finding that his rougher edges have no place in the society he helped trail-blaze, Natty's disappearance sets a pattern for the many later Western heroes who ride off into the sunset.

Chapter four considers moments from Cooper's four subsequent Leatherstocking novels, devoting the most extended attention to *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). This second novel moves back in time to 1757 and tracks Natty and Chingachgook as they fight for the British during the French and Indian War. The narrative focuses on their efforts to thwart Magua, a Huron warrior allied with the French who attempts to take revenge for corporeal punishment by kidnapping Cora and Alice Munro, daughters of the British colonel who ordered him whipped. During repeated flights through the forest and dramatic action scenes, the novel reinforces the racist, archetypal figures of the "good" and "bad" Indian, all while moving towards an influential conclusion that treats Native death and disappearance as lamentable but inevitable. Published just a year later, *The Prairie* (1827) is the only novel in the series that does not take place primarily in upstate New York. Set west of the Mississippi in 1805, the novel tracks the now-ancient Natty Bumppo as he confronts outlaw settler Ishmael Bush and his clan of gargantuan offspring. At the end of the novel, Natty, who has transformed from an opponent of legal restrictions into an ambivalent spokesperson for the necessity of law and order, finally dies.

Though Cooper intended for *The Prairie* to be the last of the Leatherstocking novels (even foreswearing fiction for a time), in the early 1840s he resurrected Natty and returned with two volumes set early in the hunter's life. *The Pathfinder*, published in 1840 but set in 1759, portrays Natty Bumppo amidst an earlier, equally deadly conflict. Once again tasked with shepherding a young maiden through a dangerous frontier, Natty—who was presented as largely asexual in the first three novels—falls in love with his charge (Mabel Dunham) only to have his affections rebuffed. The fifth and final novel, *The Deerslayer* (published in 1841, set in 1745) functions as a true prequel. Subtitled *The First Warpath*, the work depicts Natty's initial experience with combat on Otsego Lake, a body of water bordering the land that will later become the site of Cooperstown/Templeton. Here, Cooper turns *The Pathfinder's* structural relationships of pursuer and pursued on their head, but nonetheless reinforces the message that Natty is unfit for sexual coupling. This time, Judith Hutter, a young woman who lives with her family on a floating cabin on Otsego Lake, falls in love with Natty only for him to reject her affections and claim that his true "sweetheart" is nature itself.

Leatherstocking Chronology and Setting

Novel	**Publication Date**	**Events of the Novel**	**Setting**
The Pioneers	1823 (1st)	1793-1794 (4th)	Cooperstown/Otsego Lake
The Last of the Mohicans	1826 (2nd)	1757 (2nd)	Lake George/Adirondacks
The Prairie	1827 (3rd)	1805 (5th)	West of the Mississippi
The Pathfinder	1840 (4th)	1759 (3rd)	West New York/Lake Ontario
The Deerslayer	1841 (5th)	1745 (1st)	Otsego Lake

For the sake of terminological clarity, it is important to say a prefatory word about Cooper's taxonomy of Native tribes. Cooper based his conception on the often-haphazard accounts of missionary John Heckewelder, who argued that Northeastern Natives descended from "two stocks": the Lenape (Algonquian language speakers) and the Iroquois. Cooper uses Lenape as an umbrella term to refer to the Delawares and the Mohicans. Cooper's Mohicans, in turn, represent a conflation of two disparate tribes: the Mohegans and the Mahicans. In Cooper's allegorical conception, the Lenape/Delawares/Mohicans are noble savages: morally pure hunters and warriors who ally with Natty at every turn, but whose days are tragically numbered by the inexorable march of white

society. By contrast, Cooper portrays the Iroquois as both innately depraved and prone to further corruption by contact with white civilization. Cooper's characters interchangeably refer to them as Iroquois or "Mingoes." The latter, derogatory slur marginalizes the Iroquois as the monolithic villains of each novel (except *The Prairie*, which replicates the good/bad Indian dichotomy with Great Plains tribes). However, Cooper does acknowledge that the Iroquois contained many tribes, and the most recurrent Iroquois bands to appear in his novels are those he refers to as Hurons (largely Senecas and especially Wyandots).[104]

While I avoid Natty's favored slur "Mingo" (except in direct quotation), I generally replicate Cooper's delineations by referring to either Iroquois (for the larger confederacy) or Hurons (for the tribe), on the one hand, and Delawares (both as an inclusive term for the larger confederacy and sometimes to designate those Lenape who are *not* Mohicans) or Mohicans (to represent Chingachgook and Uncas's diminished tribe), on the other. My intent in following Cooper's terms is not to efface a complicated history, and especially not to endorse Cooper's essentialist moral allegory. Instead, I replicate Cooper's terms precisely to emphasize the fact that he does *not* present accurate ethnographic descriptions of real political and cultural groups, but instead constructs fictionalized representations only loosely based in a historical archive.

Finally, Cooper's present unpopularity necessitates comment. Why include two long Cooper chapters in a critical climate that increasingly views Cooper as an antiquated relic (or worse)? In response, it is worth historicizing our own critical moment.[105] Aside from courses on captivity narratives that include *The Last of the Mohicans* or environmental literature courses with excerpts from *The Pioneers*, it is rare to find Cooper taught in English departments (although some long-ignored texts, such as *The Crater*, seem to be gaining popularity). In recent publications, his works attract two main strands of critical attention: symptomatic denunciations of Cooper's settler colonialism and recuperative ecocritical readings. Both modes have great value as well as limitations. While Cooper's treatment of nonwhite subjects deserves continued censure, the hegemonic centrality of such critiques may be reaching a point of diminishing returns where our collective (often reflexive) dislike for Cooper occludes our ability to see any but the ugliest aspects of his influential work.[106] By contrast, recuperative ecocritical treatments that situate *The Pioneers* as precursors to the environmentalism of George Perkins Marsh too often bypass matters of race, gender, and imperialism, risking re-naturalizing Cooper's conservative cultural politics.[107] As a result we now

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[104] For this consolidated account of tribal groupings and Cooper's (mis)representations, I have closely followed Mark Rifkin's *When Did Indians Become Straight*, 87-88.

[105] Cooper's unfashionableness is not new. After being both widely read and critically celebrated through most of his own century, Cooper's reputational decline began in earnest with "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," an 1895 lampoon by Mark Twain.

[106] Cooper's widely dispersed cultural influence—especially on the way that Native Americans were viewed—extended to literary writers who continue to receive ample critical attention today. While Twain's famous account of Cooper's "literary offenses" may be most memorable, Melville and Joseph Conrad particularly looked up to Cooper and claimed to have been influenced by his writing.

[107] The ecocritical effort to recuperate Cooper as an environmental writer has been underway for some time. While acknowledging ways that Cooper's exposure of environmental crises fails to produce tenable solutions, Matthew Wyn Sivils laments the "perplexing resistance by some scholars to accept" *The Pioneers* "as a key early environmental text" (*American Environmental* 113). More provocatively, in *Environmental Evasion*, Lloyd Willis argues that our tendency to form the canon around transcendentalists "who investigate the wonder and complexity of the natural world" has led to a corresponding neglect of writers like Cooper "who express anxiety about the consequences of the nation's environmental destructiveness" (4). Sivils follows a similar line of thought by positioning Cooper in a lineage of writers concerned with environmental actualities and limits rather than transcendentalist philosophy or aesthetics.

have two seemingly incompatible perspectives on Cooper: the detritus dredged-up by symptomatic screens and an artificially purified, and therefore seemingly untouched, stream that catches the ecocritic's eye after the work of filtering has been performed by constructivists.[108] Whereas symptomatic readers often denounce Cooper's conservatism as irredeemable, many recuperative critics try to reclaim Cooper as progressive (or even radical) rather than dealing with the implications of the conservative tradition he writes within.

In response, this chapter aims to be ecological in approach as well as taking ecology as its theme. Because of the ways that Cooper—even more than Burke—inveterately entangles his fraught descriptions of human politics with nonhuman actors and systems, our insights into Cooper might be more holistic, more varied, and—ironically enough—clearer if we intentionally re-muddy the filtered stream that has separated Cooper's human and environmental visions. At times, the results of such inquiry can be quite surprising. For instance, chapter four combines critical race theory, ecocriticism, and queer theory in order to re-present Cooper as a writer at once culpable for "queering" Natives in order to "disappear" them *and* capable of creating a protagonist whose ecosexual orientation contains irrepressible liberatory energy. I argue that these seemingly opposite modalities stem not *only* from Cooper's inconsistent racial conceptions, but *also* proceed from his consistently applied belief that human identity formations are constructed through overdetermined relationships with the natural world. Through such explorations, I aim to move beyond the false choice between reading Cooper as an inspiring environmentalist or a deplorable colonialist, instead suggesting that reading Cooper ecocritically necessarily means reading Cooper intersectionally.

[108] To avoid overstating the case: symptomatic readers have certainly acknowledged environmental themes in Cooper's work, and ecocritics have acknowledged the politically problematic insensitivities of Cooper's racial and gendered politics. However, such factors are typically expressed as qualifications or asides rather than taking on equal weight in any given work.

Chapter Three
Revolution and Ecology: Extending the Social State of Nature

Game Laws and the Terror in Templeton

James Fenimore Cooper's 1823 novel *The Pioneers* masquerades as a strictly provincial, American affair, but its debates about hunting practices slyly restage and recast elements of the French Revolution. Along the way, Cooper re-litigates the so-called transatlantic "pamphlet war" that pitted Edmund Burke against Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joel Barlow, and other Anglophone proponents of the French Revolution. Through Natty Bumppo and Judge Marmaduke Temple's debates, Cooper revives and revises questions about the proper pace of historical change, the shifting status of natural rights and natural law, the basis of community and/or state authority, the transition from use rights to property rights, and the proper aesthetic genre for revolutionary representation. While the next section will maintain that Natty Bumppo is as much a Burkean conservative as an avatar of primitivism or a Jacobin rebel, this section argues that Cooper plausibly tempts readers into associating Natty with French radicals by constructing parallels between their shared opposition to game laws. In the process, Cooper grounds the abstract philosophical arguments which inspired the French Revolution in transatlantic political and legal discourse, cultural history, and applied land-use practices.

The novel's timeframe—stretching from late 1793 to August 1794—closely mirrors the Reign of Terror in France. The Terror began on September 17, 1793 when the convention passed the "Law of Suspects" allowing streamlined arrests and trials of those opposing the revolution and ended with the execution of Maximilian Robespierre on July 28, 1794. Correspondingly, *The Pioneers* is framed around the immediate aftermath of two deer hunts: the first of which takes place in December of 1793, and the second of which occurs during the same week in July of 1794 that Robespierre was imprisoned. In the opening scene of the novel (December 1793), the rustic squatter Natty Bumppo and the large-scale landowner Judge Temple (a fictionalized representation of James's father William) argue over which of them fired the bullet that killed a deer. As the novel progresses, this seemingly straightforward dispute cascades into a confrontation over central philosophical contentions that motivated the Age of Revolution. Eventually, Natty uses the dead deer as a pretext to query whether liberty and justice are possible in a system that distributes property, wealth, and political power unequally. He implies, through both suggestion and example, that people are more inclined to behave morally when close to nature than when living in fixed settlements governed by written laws. These disputes reach a crescendo when Natty Bumppo kills a second deer shortly after the close of hunting season. Once again, a seemingly minor infraction takes on far reaching consequences as Natty questions whether the state should have a monopoly on violence, turns his rifle on agents of the government, and is imprisoned during the very days that the Reign of Terror came to its chilling conclusion.

In addition to these temporal and thematic resonances, the French Revolution and their Caribbean corollaries *directly* intrude into the affairs of Templeton both as a subject of explicit discussion and through the presence of Monsieur Le Quoi. "Certain hints" (*Pioneers* 96) suggest that Le Quoi may have had a dark past as a sugar-plantation owner on a Caribbean island, most likely Martinique (447).[109] Cooper's narrator suggests that Le Quoi's presence in upstate New York is

[109] Le Quoi's mysterious past covers up narrative and historical irregularities. While Cooper suggests that Le Quoi was forced to flee Martinique because of slave uprisings triggered after the start of the French Revolution, he is described as being present during a famine in Templeton "no more than five years" before

essential to understanding the period and place, declaring that "no picture of that country would be faithful without some such character" (447). Like the other multinational, multiracial, and religiously pluralistic denizens of Templeton, Le Quoi's presence serves as a reminder that even remote rural communities were connected to a larger transatlantic political milieu. However, the narrative largely elides the harsh realities of Caribbean slavery. Le Quoi discourses on the process of "sucre-boosh" (sugar cane) production without even mentioning the role of slave labor (223). In Cooper's comic treatment, neither the cause of Afro-Caribbean revolutionaries nor Le Quoi's plight as a white refugee is treated with sympathy or gravity.[110] Unlike many white planters who fled the Caribbean uprisings and revolutions, Monsieur Le Quoi thrives in his United States refuge. As a "man of breeding," he leverages his Francophone accent to peddle gentility to the settlers in the form of luxury cloths, thereby exchanging his life in Martinique for a comfortable position in Templeton as pliably as he exchanges commodities and currency.

In *Reflections*, Burke objected to the French Revolution not only for political reasons, but also on aesthetic grounds. In particular, Burke denounced mixed genres as unfit for revolutionary representation. He attacked the theatricality of the French revolutionaries in broad terms, but particularly excoriated what he saw as their "strange chaos of levity and ferocity." For Burke, such intermixture constitutes a "monstrous tragic-comic scene."[111] By contrast, through characters such as Le Quoi, Cooper demonstrates an almost Shakespearean enthusiasm for interweaving philosophically charged, violent scenes of "ferocity" with moments of "levity." The tragedy of the French Revolution at times devolves into a farce in Templeton.[112] Thus, Le Quoi—a refugee from Caribbean climes—is once described as an "incarcerated Gaul," but only because he is briefly stranded in a snowbank after a near fatal, but ultimately comic sleigh accident (*Pioneers* 52). By playing a scene that strands a French-Caribbean character in upstate New York's icy environs for laughs, Cooper participates in the widespread historical marginalization of Caribbean revolutions at

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Temple's narration of the event in early 1794 (*Pioneers* 233). Yet the French Legislative Assembly did not extend citizenship to men of color until April of 1792, and Martinique's first slave uprising of the period was in 1793. Even if Le Quoi fled Haiti rather than Martinique, it is unlikely he would have been forced to leave prior to 1791 at the earliest.

[110] Though Cooper makes Native American characters central to his tales, the flippant treatment of Le Quoi's Caribbean connections parallels the comedic marginalization of black characters such as Temple's coach driver Aggy. As Joe Lockard astutely observes in "Talking Guns, Talking Turkey," Aggy's status *as* property remains largely unnoted even when he is present during debates on the origins and limits of property rights. In fact, Temple only mentions Aggy's enslavement to symbolically deny him (and his daughter Elizabeth) the franchise, even though they would presumably "vote" in the Judge's favor.

[111] This fear of mixing represents a real shift from Burke's earlier writing, where he privileged the sublime over the beautiful precisely because it created a combination of terror and wonder. But in *Reflections*, he denigrates the way that the "miscellaneous sermon" of his opponent Richard Price is "mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections" (10). See chapter four for more on Burke's abandonment of the sublime.

[112] As a result of the comic incidents in *The Pioneers*, the freighted philosophical and political stakes often seem wildly out of proportion to the narrative circumstances. This is often the case in Cooper's fiction, as the shifts in register befit Cooper's characteristic mode of portraying small scale, local disputes as symbols of broader political, philosophical, and historical issues. As John P. McWilliams notes, at such moments many readers can't help but feel "a disparity between the small scale of Cooper's narrative and the ponderous uses to which he puts it" (*Political Justice in a Republic* 11).

the same time that he differentiates his account of generic representation from Burke's critique in *Reflections*.[113]

Le Quoi's comedic role does not interfere with his function as a mnemonic device reminding both readers and the novel's characters of the serious events concurrently occurring in France during the winter of 1793-1794.[114] Around a fire, Temple, Monsieur Le Quoi, Richard, and others argue that the Terror constitutes a "change in character" for the formerly refined French populace. Though Judge Temple has fond memories of the French soldiers who aided American Revolutionaries as "men of great humanity and goodness of heart," he portrays the Jacobins as being moved by limitless "licentiousness." When Le Quoi hears of Marie Antoinette's execution, he labels the rebels "Les monstres." In this chain of dehumanizing rhetoric, the Judge ultimately declares that the Jacobins are "bloodthirsty as dogs" (*Pioneers* 160-161).

By using Le Quoi to establish that the events in Templeton are intimately connected to the French Revolution early in the novel, Cooper's later discussions of natural rights, game laws, and even aesthetic genre are able to gesture towards France more obliquely, and therefore, less heavy-handedly. The less directly delineated connections between Templeton and the Terror become even more compelling as the narrative hurtles towards its conclusion. Paralleling the Judge's suggestion that Jacobins become "bloodthirsty as dogs," the novel builds toward a series of scenes depicting human characters devolving into primal, predatory behavior. Elsewhere, Richard exultingly massacres pigeons with a cannon, the Judge cites his exhilaration at hearing Natty's hound as an excuse for mistakenly shooting Oliver during a hunt, Oliver participates in the pigeon shoot, and even Elizabeth Temple—usually the voice of moderation and conciliation—enjoys the spectacle of the fish being taken in giant seines. Natty criticizes each excess, only to eventually be overpowered by the same blood lust. Thus, on July 21, 1794, Natty Bumppo follows his hounds in a spontaneous chase and kills a buck out of season. This sets up the central irony of the novel: that Natty, who functions as one of early American literature's most profound environmental consciences, is the one punished for his comparatively minor hunting excesses. While the animalistic transgressions of other characters are forgiven as natural lapses, the authority figures read Natty's violation as a dangerous precedent because of its illegality. He becomes, at least in the view of vindictive figures like Sheriff Richard Jones and the corrupt surveyor Hiram Doolittle, "an example of rebellion to the laws": combustible as a Jacobin, as bloodthirsty as the hounds that always accompany him (*Pioneers* 355). Though the hunting violation only necessitates a minor fine, the act unleashes a sequence of disproportionate reprisals by state agents and, in response, increasingly anarchic behavior on Natty's part. During the following week—the crisis of the novel which overlaps with the arrest and execution of Robespierre—Natty is fined, agents of the state serve him with an arbitrary warrant to

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[113] This pattern extends more broadly in the novel. Unlike *The Last of the Mohicans*, where the violence is lasting and brutal, in *The Pioneers*, few are seriously injured (with the exception of Chingachgook's tragic suicide). Though the *symbolic* stakes of the narrative include subsistence, equality, racial difference and assimilation, environmental sustainability, American cultural independence from England, and "the rights of men," the consequences are limited in scope. The man Natty shoots is Hiram Doolittle—a speculator and recently deputized buffoon motivated by self-interest more than principle. Only his rear end and his dignity are wounded—both deservedly. Natty's imprisonment is brief. No one is guillotined, executed, or murdered.

[114] If Le Quoi's presence in Templeton indicates the violence of uprisings in France and the Caribbean, his return to France at the end of the novel signals the transition to the later stages of the French Revolution. As the novel concludes in October of 1794, we are told that Le Quoi not only returns to Paris, but "afterwards issued yearly bulletins of his happiness" (*Pioneers* 447). His ability to thrive during the rule of the Directory, the Consulate, and Napoleon's reign suggests that Cooper viewed The Terror as the defining crisis of the French Revolutionary period—not the overthrow of monarchy and the establishment of the Republic that preceded it, nor the retraction of liberties, conservative retrenchment, and dictatorship that followed it.

search his cabin, he refuses to allow access to his property, he shoots a state functionary, and he is finally imprisoned.

Natty's status as a sort of American Jacobin depends not only on the overlapping timing that links him to Robespierre, but also on his skepticism about private property rights and opposition to game laws. On both sides of the Atlantic, what we might now be inclined to dismiss as parochial disputes over poaching occasioned weighty responses by both politicians and philosophers. In fact, the abolition of game laws was one of the first orders of business of the French revolutionaries. Game laws in Europe often protected the exclusive rights of nobles to kill certain animals, thereby making hunting a popular signifier of aristocratic purview and privilege. While the underlying motive for game laws may have been the establishment of a selfish monopoly, in practice they created preserves that kept overhunting from entirely wiping out many indigenous species. Nonetheless, by forbidding peasants to hunt protein-rich animals (even when the animals grazed on the peasants' subsistence gardens), hunting restrictions activated strong feelings (and revealed what we would now refer to as tensions between environmental preservation and environmental justice). In response, on August 4, 1789, when the National Constituent Assembly issued the August Decrees, they immediately sought to overturn the game laws. Article One declared the abolition of feudalism as a system and serfdom in particular. The remaining eighteen articles enumerated the steps to modernize the system. Tellingly, the earliest articles containing specific provisions (two and three) concerned game laws. Article two allowed for widespread pigeon hunting and restricted the right of nobles to allow domestic pigeons free grazing ranges. Article three democratized hunting rights more generally and pardoned all those imprisoned for poaching under the old regime of game laws. In the order of the articles, it was not accidental that hunting laws came first: among the many injustices of feudalism, they had the most direct relationship to basic subsistence needs of the rural poor.

The result of such loosened restrictions was a wave of violence against all huntable game, but especially the "depredators" of agricultural crops (Kropotkin 133). As Edmund Burke likely would have predicted, correcting even a gross injustice with a single, sweeping legislative gesture (thereby overturning a convoluted network of gradually accreted, local, common law regulations) resulted in violence against nature that proved hard to remedy. The ironies were especially profound given that the revolutionaries imagined that their new order would directly attune citizens to pastoral rhythms. Famously, they even replaced Catholic saints' name days with the names of plants, animals, and farming implements. However, the state of nature reconstituted by revolution quickly turned into an environmental disaster.

Similar denunciations of game laws appear frequently in the famous Anglophone debates over the French Revolution. They have seldom been commented upon, perhaps because to modern readers they appear as anachronistic tangents rather than central ideological issues. Yet according to at least one historian of hunting, many in England "took attacks on the game laws to be the signal for, rather than just a symptom of, revolution" (Munsche 125-27). In her response to Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft repeatedly cites the capital punishments for killing the deer on game reserves as one of the chief instances of feudal tyranny. Wollstonecraft argues that a hunter's need to kill for sustenance is far more "natural" than the hunting restrictions that accreted in patchwork fashion over time, and suggests that putting either noble or animal rights ahead of the hunter's needs is entirely inimical to the "rights of men" (*Vindications* 11, 14). She also notes that deer could harm nearby agriculture if there was no way for farmers to control their numbers.

Wollstonecraft's logic is similar to that put forth by Richard Jones (Temple's cousin) to justify the infamous pigeon massacre in *The Pioneers*: namely that killing the grazing birds is an act of self-preservation on the part of the farmers. However, for Wollstonecraft the ultimate indignity is not that an animal will be fattened, but that the table of the rich will be glutted while the poor

farmer's family starves. By shifting the focus from subsistence to environmental justice, Wollstonecraft attacks Burke's rhetorical and legislative silence on the matter of game laws as a preference for "rank" rather than "the common feelings of humanity" (16).[115] Similarly, William Godwin—who would later become Wollstonecraft's husband and the father of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley—revealed hunting laws culpability within broader patterns of power in his Jacobin novel *Caleb Williams*. There, the villain Tryell uses the so-called "Black Laws," which put limits on the use of the commons, as a pretext for arresting Hawkins the younger, unleashing a spiraling cycle of tyrannical abuses of power.

By contrast with Wollstonecraft and Godwin, John Quincy Adams, whose Publicola letters led him to be labeled "The American Burke" (see chapter two), noted that while game laws were often "carried too far" in Europe, he also puckishly remarked that "it is equally certain that where there are none, there is no game" (*Writings* 1:99). Here, Adams offers a fair-minded observation that an absence of regulation might result in environmental disaster, but he bases his logic upon an unexamined assumption that the poor should sacrifice rather than the rich. Thus, if Adams's and Burke's conservative positions suggest a forward-thinking, ecological side to the Sheriff Nottingham's position in these revised Robin Hood tales, they also replicate the legal functionary's capricious cruelty and defense of aristocratic prerogatives.

The vexed tensions between environmental justice and environmental preservation that Wollstonecraft and Godwin called attention to in England were even more intractably complicated in the Early Republic. In America, white settlers alternately rejected and appropriated Native American hunting practices and codes. Meanwhile, rural American revolutionaries attempted to enshrine gun culture as a symbol of their rejection of feudal forms and fantasies of self-reliance. Native usufruct (use) rights that did not imply property ownership were gradually superseded (often through violence) by small squatter claims, then by large land grants, and finally through state control of territory and establishment of game laws. But as time went on, Native and white interests were not always opposed. For many Natives stripped of their traditional territory and white settlers occupying small claims, the question of hunting rights on land patents owned by rich speculators became a matter of basic subsistence. During the period in which *The Pioneers* is set, New York witnessed a particularly dense flurry of game law legislation. In 1785, Suffolk County (on Long Island) limited the deer hunting season to September through December. Just three years later the state legislature disallowed hunting between January and July, and set a fine of three pounds on violations, largely "to secure the rights of landowners" (Valtiala 89).

Even after the Revolution, the consolidation of large frontier properties through patents and the imposition of hunting restrictions hearkened back to memories of English and European game laws. In his influential *Commentaries*, even William Blackstone—a staunch defender of property, common law tradition, and certainly not a radical—acknowledged that while authorities often justified game laws by arguing that they were necessary to thwart overhunting, the strictures actually functioned as a means of social control. According to Blackstone, such oppressive traditions obscured the fact that "by the law of nature every man from the prince to the peasant, has an equal right" to "all such creatures as are *ferae naturae* [wild and untamable] and therefore the property of nobody" (*Commentaries* 2:411). Blackstone praised the fact that the old Forest Laws, which reserved many game species as the sole dominion of the monarch, had "grown entirely obsolete" in America.

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[115] As Seeber observes, Wollstonecraft's protests against the game laws are an exception, as "her depictions of rural sports in general are negative" (181). Wollstonecraft at times described a connection between men's cruelty to animals and their propensity for domestic abuse. Here, too, she puts class, gender, and environmental justice in compelling proximity, describing cruelty towards animals as a psychological "compensation by those who are trodden under foot by the rich" (qtd. in Seeber 180).

But he called game laws a "bastard slip" from the "root" with only one notable difference: while "the forest laws established only one mighty hunter throughout the land, the game laws have raised a little Nimrod in every manor" (*Commentaries* 4:407).

While Blackstone would go on to note that the game laws did in fact consolidate property rights and preserve "the several species of these animals, which would soon be extirpated by a general liberty," he also observed that the so-called "little Nimrods" found them useful for two other reasons. First, "For prevention of idleness and dissipation in husbandmen, artificers, and others of lower rank." Champions of agrarianism such as Thomas Jefferson and Hector St. John de Crèvecœur valued farming not only because it gave people subsistence, but also because it put them *to work*, providing steady, predictable labor rhythms throughout the year. By contrast, American elites viewed hunters' subsistence lifestyles—which alternated punctuated, seasonally intense hunts with long periods of rest—with suspicion. (Unsurprisingly, they had fewer qualms about hunting as a form of conspicuous leisure for the rich.) Blackstone's second point critiques the power dynamics underlying conservationist rhetoric even more explicitly, maintaining that hunting restrictions existed "for prevention of popular insurrections and resistance to the government, by disarming the bulk of the people: which last is a reason oftener meant, than avowed by the makers of forest or game laws" (*Commentaries* 2:412).[116] Because hunting was associated with European nobility, the fact that anyone could hunt in America signified New World social equality long before the explicitly democratic ideals of the American Revolution.

This discourse about who should hunt and in what circumstances had wide-ranging implications for race relations. When white writers defined Native Americans by their hunting rather than their agriculture (which they usually downplayed or ignored entirely), they infused European conceptions of nobility onto people they still imagined as "savage," hence forming a bulwark of support for Rousseau's most famous concept. A supposedly lofty ideal, the noble savage-as-hunter formulation actually opened the door for racist dismissals of Native lifestyle. On the rare occasions that white writers wrote about Native farming practices, white commentators almost invariably noted that Native women conducted agricultural labor, an inversion of white gender roles (Cronon, *Changes* 53).[117] In many cases, writers pivoted from describing Native men's nobility to depicting their "leisure" time between hunts as proof of inherent laziness—a blanket concept covering all modes of individual and cultural activity and expression that did not fit white norms for what constitutes productive work. Cooper helped popularize these erroneous stereotypes by downplaying the extensive history of agriculture by Northeastern tribes and by almost exclusively portraying both his "good" and "bad" Indians as warriors and hunters. There are only a few marginal moments in the Leatherstocking tales where—as if by accident—a gap emerges in the ideological screen Cooper

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[116] As Swann explores in a consideration of the same passages from Blackstone, the legal scholar also compares the institution of game laws to the oppressive measures taken by military conquerors. Swann covers similar ground to the analysis here and has been a key inspiration for many of the ideas and documentary sources in this section. Despite fallaciously suggesting that the history of game laws and governmental control in the early republic should directly influence modern debates over gun control, Swann's article is particularly well-researched and deserving of wider attention than it has received.

[117] As Thomas Hallock argues in *From the Fallen Tree*, the idea of "nobility" was also used to authorize removal in other ironic ways. As writers lamented the "fall" of Natives into a debased state when in close proximity with frontier settlements, politicians were able to make disingenuous arguments that removal would preserve Natives' status. Thus, James Monroe was able to portray the ravages of colonialism as evidence that exile of Indians westward was the only way to allow a supposedly lofty and ennobled population to become "a civilized people" (205).

erects to insist that Natives did not improve the land through agriculture.[118] Rather than making such moments cause for reflection, Cooper glosses over them, thereby leaving the white justifications for Native removal implicitly unscathed.[119]

In the Early Republic, many white American commoners feared that game laws would restrict their newly won constitutional rights. While in Europe game laws sacrificed economic equality to protect class privilege and prevent an unmitigated tragedy of the commons, in the seemingly endless spaces of the American frontier poor white farmers interpreted the belated adoption of such strictures as a *new* form of state tyranny designed to reduce the agrarian, rural majority to the status of peasants.[120] St. George Tucker, a judge and law professor at the College of William and Mary during the early national period, justified the Second Amendment by noting "In England, the people have been disarmed, generally, under the specious pretext of preserving the game" (qtd. in Swann 99). Rural dwellers saw gun laws seen as threats to the decentralized militias that had organized much of the resistance to British rule during the earliest phases of the American Revolution. However blatantly absurd it might be to apply these justifications to our modern debates about gun control in an urbanized, democratic country, in the Early Republic, the European coupling of royal game preserves and authoritarian governments lent credence to the idea that what passed for control over nature was really a means of thwarting revolutionary change. Meanwhile, as Wollstonecraft's attacks on game laws as an affront to "the rights of men" show, the harshest critics of gun control were often the most progressive reformers and revolutionaries of the day.[121] As a result of this history of class affiliations, it is little wonder that Natty's protests over Judge Temple's game laws have caused most critics to emphasize his political radicalism rather than his more Burkean strains.

Natural Rights, Native Influences

Because of Natty's opposition to state authority, most criticism that acknowledges the background presence of the French Revolution in *The Pioneers* casts him as a rustic, semi-coherent

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[118] For instance, though Judge Temple portrays the future site of Templeton as an unaltered environment in his recollection of the view from Mount Vision (thereby echoing William Cooper's self-mythologizing land grab), the narrator notes that the Judge's very dwelling is surrounded by old, mossy fruit trees planted by Indians before he "settled" the region.

[119] Elsewhere, (particularly in *The Deerslayer*) Cooper portrayed agricultural labor as the only means by which Natives could assimilate into white society *moving forward*. Even when he suggests that Natives can preserve their culture by adopting agriculture, Cooper reinforces the message that they have failed to do so. See chapter four for a consideration of Cooper's stadialism and the georgic guidance Natty imposes on Chingachgook and Hist.

[120] It goes without saying that those same white farmers who clung to their guns had no compunction about considering an African-American in possession of a gun automatically deserving of capital punishment. Notably, in *The Pioneers*, there are two "shootings" with an African-American present: the opening scene, when Temple mistakenly shoots Oliver; and the turkey shoot, where Brom, the only African-American and proprietor of the turkey, is the only man present without a gun. In "Talking Guns, Talking Turkey," Joe Lockard argues that this scene represents a sublimated form of violence towards Brom.

[121] Whereas today's opponents of gun control are almost inevitably conservative, the common thread in these seemingly disjunctive political alignments is the fear that gun control would give a (supposedly) oppressive, metropolitan elite a monopoly on force.

Jacobin.[122] Meanwhile, Judge Temple often emerges as a well-intentioned local monarch.[123] Richard Gravil explicitly reads Natty and Judge Temple's disputes as recapitulations of Paine and Burke's famous debate, associating Natty with Paine and Judge Temple with Burke.[124] And even when Cooper scholars neglect the French Revolution parallels, they almost universally identify Natty with Rousseau's primitivism and the pre-social state of nature while associating Judge Temple with the social contract and state of society. Such interpretations build on ample evidence, but they downplay the similarities between Natty and Temple, bypass the Burkean strains that structure Natty's thought and overlook the enlightenment strands that marble Temple's approach to leadership.

Rather than merely repeating Paine and Burke's rhetorical contentions, in *The Pioneers* Cooper grounds philosophical debates in locally situated land-use practices, thereby suggesting that both the state of nature and state of society are inextricably constructed through engagements with particular physical environments. As political positions are verbally debated and concretized through subsistence or market economies in the fields and forests around Templeton, Natty and the Judge confront nature's disruptive tendency to resist clear-cut ideological categories. Accordingly, Cooper produces two protagonists who both often find themselves torn between aspects of Burke and Paine's arguments. Natty tries to preserve a sustainable nature/culture frontier community that is under threat and Temple strives to heroically create a new one. In the process, both of them criticize the environmentally exploitative excesses of an economy predicated on geographical mobility. Marmaduke Temple, whose concern for social stability at times seems Burkean, finds himself torn between proto-conservationism and Lockean presumptions that the basis of social order is the transformation of the commons into property through labor. Meanwhile, instead of springing forth from the pre-social state of nature, Natty forcefully advocates for conservative values such as intergenerational continuity, habit, and prescription. As Natty extends something like Burke's social "ecologies" to interracial and interspecies assemblages, he laments what he sees as a *decline* from a Burkean to a Lockean community. Thus, through Natty—the supposed primitivist—Cooper begins a pattern of weaving the submerged proto-ecological strains in classical conservative thought into American fiction.

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[122] Although many have mentioned that *The Pioneers* is contemporaneous with the French Revolution, few have foregrounded the connection, and none have tracked the specific parallels with the Reign of Terror timeline. Richard Slotkin dwells on the ways that Natty plays a Jacobin role "in at least one sense" in *Regeneration Through Violence* (115). Swann offers the most developed account of the French Revolution's role in the novel.

[123] Ever since D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, most accounts of the novel argue that the binary opposition between Natty and Temple is the key to understanding Cooper's seemingly incompatible desires for heroic wilderness and refined civilization. Noting that Marmaduke Temple is a thinly-veiled version of William Cooper, a series of critics have argued that *The Pioneers* constitutes James's defense of his father's legacy. For example, Zoellner argues that Natty exhibits "moral infantilism" compared to Temple's "maturity" (qtd. in McGregor 131) and Sivils argues that Temple's environmentalism, while flawed, is more advanced than Natty's (*American Environmental* 117-118). Alan Taylor claims that James Fenimore aims to "neutralize" the claims of "his father's competitors in the conclusion," (54). Others have suggested that the novel sublimates an unconscious oedipal rebellion because Cooper unintentionally makes Natty Bumppo's arguments more compelling than Temple's. John P. McWilliams maintains that Cooper "refuses to judge" between Natty and Temple (*Political Justice* 101).

[124] According to Gravil, while Temple represents Burke's claim in the *Reflections* that the man in society "abandons the right to self-defence, the first law of nature," Natty represents the view that man in a state of nature is freer because he is at least "at full liberty to defend myself, or make a reprisal" (75).

Though the novel is constructed to plausibly tempt readers to share Richard and Hiram's condemnation of Natty as a Jacobin, such a reading understates the mix of influences on Natty's character and ideology. Natty's resistance to Judge Temple's new game laws has led many critics to position him as an anarchic opponent to all civil law; in fact, throughout the series, Natty is often associated with "natural laws" and "natural rights."[125] However, given that Natty is hardly literate, the woodsman's use of these phrases does not signify that he has a scholarly conception of European natural law or natural rights theory. While Cooper certainly meant for such charged terms to recall the epoch-defining debates of the age of revolution, it is a mistake to run to Locke, Rousseau, or Paine to parse Natty Bumppo's peculiar frontier inflections. In fact, a contextual reading of such language throughout the Leatherstocking saga reveals that though Natty does claim that "natural rights" are more easily accessed when one is close to nature and ideally interpreted through solitary encounters with wilderness, they initially emerge from a social context.[126]

For Natty, natural rights are not something given to everyone in a state of nature, but instead learned—and crucially, *earned*—through interactions with a community of human and nonhuman actors over time. As Burke might predict, such "states of nature" include prior societies that have been erased from the historical record to legitimize conquest. Thus, what Natty figures as his "natural right" to take game is tempered by a culturally prescribed, but self-enforced, proto-ecological ethic of restraint, timeliness, and humility—values that indirectly echo Burke's ecological paradigm (see chapter one). Ultimately, the crucial difference between Natty and Temple's visions of order is not that one conception comes from a state of nature and the other from a state of society. Instead, Natty's historically minded, social, common-law ecology simply depends on a different *polis* than the community of white, male property owners who benefit from Judge Temple's progressive, statutory law.

The very first scene of the Leatherstocking tales crystallizes the novel's focus on the origin and meaning of "rights." The Judge, having shot at a deer, finds his prize contested by Natty and Oliver, who are also on the scene and claim to have fired the deadly bullets. Natty claims he "can live without the venison," but insists "I don't love to give up my lawful dues in a free country. Though, for the matter of that, might often makes right here, as well as in the old country, for what I can see" (*Pioneers* 21). Natty's appeal to "lawful dues" invokes not the state of nature, but the society that establishes laws. Though Natty will go on to argue for rights that predate the United States formation as a juridical structure, at this moment Natty figures himself as a participant in the American social contract. Yet, by noting that "might often makes right here" he questions whether that contract masks prior acts of violence and coercion. Stressing continuities between contemporary injustice in America and feudal privilege in the "old country," Natty draws attention to the fact that legal compacts guarantee fairness only in principle, not practice. Additionally, Natty's

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[125] While many critics have made similar claims, John McWilliams goes into the most detail delineating the "four types of law" in *The Pioneers* and Cooper's political writings: civil, moral, divine and natural. According to McWilliams, Natty stands for natural, divine, and moral law, in some combination, while Judge Temple enacts civil laws (*Political Justice* 20 and *passim*).

[126] Those who argue that Natty situates his "rights" as emerging directly from nature, rather than society, are too numerous to fully list here. While John McWilliams sees Cooper as invoking various types of law at various times, he concludes that Natty and the other white characters in the Indian "romances are wholly within the Lockean State of Nature," even though they disagree about how to apply Locke's fundamental dictum that "no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions" (242). See particularly Dekker, *James Fenimore Cooper, The Novelist*, and Thomas, *Cross-Examinations of Law and Literature* for similar views. Richard Godden takes a subtler course, arguing that "Natty has been aptly (if over-) read as a Lockean hero of the pre-social state" (123).

refusal to situate the American Constitution as different in kind from the unwritten constitution of the "old country"—which no citizens ever signed off on—undoes the clean distinction between the production of American citizenship through positive law and the necessary fiction of a nonexistent, but postulated, social contract. By flattening the distinction between written laws and traditional power relationships, Natty enacts a Burkean move. He does so in a critical spirit, but Natty is ultimately less interested in delegitimizing society entirely than in suggesting that oral, less formally juridical societies can create norms that govern behavior just as well as written compacts.

As the dispute continues, the Judge contends that he first shot the deer in the neck and that Natty or Oliver only later shot it in the heart, ultimately killing it. The judge holds forth: "I would fain establish a right, Natty, to the honour of this death; and surely if the hit in the neck be mine, it is enough; for the shot in the heart was unnecessary—what we call an act of supererogation"" (*Pioneers* 23). While stressing that he's not the type of person "who'll rob a man of his rightful dues," Natty responds by appealing to lived experience: "I have known animals travel days with shots in the neck." Natty suggests that the Judge's imposition of the legal principle of supererogation is inapplicable, as the term is out of place in the forest. According to Natty, history, experience, and context should determine the case. Essentially, he invokes the kind of customs that lead to common-law precedent rather than a statutory principle that applies equally to all situations.

Symbolically, Judge Temple's first shot seems to reenact the initial appropriation of the commons: the Lockean moment where "mixing" human labor with nonhuman objects not only establishes private property but inaugurates the transition from a state of nature to a state of society.[127] However, even as the Judge tries to apply a blanket formulation, his phrase "establish a right" suggests that he believes rights are not inherent but instead formed through social interaction. He does not claim a *natural* right to the animal, but instead argues that the first act that modifies a natural object (violently in this case) converts it from *ferae naturae* into property.[128] As in the analogous 1805 New York Supreme Court case *Pierson v. Post,* the question of who killed an animal turns into nothing less than a dispute over "the very difficult problem of how an object in the world is transformed into that peculiar phenomenon called property." In *Pierson v. Post*, which eventually became "the best-known legal justification for the original acquisition of property," the New York Supreme court decided that Post, who flushed out a fox without wounding it, did not have as a good a claim to the animal as Pierson, the man who struck the fatal blow (Luck 1, 4). Cooper's close friend and political ally James Kent wrote the court's decision. Kent argued that "occupancy" was established by "physically seizing" the object in question, not by beginning to pursue it. This doctrine, in turn, could justify property as belonging to the first person to settle or improve a piece of land, rather than just claim it through absentee speculation.[129]

When it comes to the deer in question, Cooper—like Kent—eventually seems to side with Natty, the man who struck the killing blow. However, he leaves open the possibility that the Judge's *logic* is correct by revealing that the two shots fired by Temple lodged not in the deer, but in a tree

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[127] Trachtenberg registers the fact that "opponents of environmental regulation frequently appeal to" Locke's formulation of property rights emerging from human labor with natural resources (99). Though Trachtenberg goes on to articulate a case that Locke also presents "a theory of habitation" that places *limits* on the appropriation of the commons, he acknowledges that Locke's formulation lacks anything like "ecological awareness" (111).

[128] This moment in *The Pioneers* bears productive comparison to the "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish" chapter in *Moby-Dick*.

[129] Such distinctions about whether rights inhere primarily in property claims, property transformations, property titles or a particular mix of each are debated in *The Pioneers*, and become the central crux in the Littlepage novels, Cooper's three-novel polemic on the Anti-Rent Wars.

and in Oliver Edwards. If the judge had actually struck the deer (even without killing it) rather than merely setting out to do so, he may have had a solid claim under Kent's terms. Similarly, the idea that the first "blow" or act of applied occupancy establishes the definitive right buttresses the Judge's claims to the land as the first *developer* of the Otsego patent.[130] In opposition to Natty's environmental ethic of leaving few traces on the land and always killing with a single shot, for the Judge, the perceptible alteration of the terrain in question—the scars on the land, the multiple bullet holes in the carcass—is precisely what verifies ownership. Though Judge Temple strives to mitigate environmental damage more than most of his contemporaries, when it comes to the question of establishing property rights through transformation, he is still in accord with the standards of his age. Still a settler colonialist, he builds on the nearly two-century long tradition of making land settlement and transformation, rather than land *use*, the basis for establishing property rights: a thinly veiled means of disenfranchising Natives for almost two centuries prior to *Pierson vs. Post*.[131]

Cooper further complicates the matter of the deer in *The Pioneers* by emphasizing that the Judge technically owns the entire land tract in question. Though he does not go as far as English nobles and claim that he has absolute ownership over all the game passing through, his cousin Richard Jones later encourages him to do so: "Do you not own the mountains as well as the valleys? What right has this chap, or the Leatherstocking, to shoot in your woods, without your permission?" (*Pioneers* 93). When Temple demurs, the topic turns directly to the status of game laws in France. Richard asks Le Quoi whether in France "you let everybody run over your land, in that country, helter skelter, as they do here, shooting the game, so that a gentleman has but little or no chance with his gun?" Richard's marginalization of the "helter skelter" movement of economically disadvantaged hunters and his unintentionally ironic lament for the "poor" plight of "gentlemen" with guns lays bare the class pretensions of game laws, as does Le Quoi's haughty reply that "we give, in France, no liberty, except to de ladi." Richard responds, first by erroneously calling French laws "Sallick" rather than Gallic (an especially juicy irony since Salic laws are exactly what exclude women from succession or inheritance—hardly making "ladis" the primary possessors of French liberty), and second, by claiming that if he were in "'Duke's place, I would stick up advertisements to-morrow morning, forbidding all persons to shoot, or trespass in any manner, on my woods" (*Pioneers* 93). Richard's tendency to refer to Marmaduke Temple by the abbreviated moniker "Duke" has a comical valence, but also serves as a reminder that the revolutionary democratic gains might slip back into aristocratic usages if power over the land and society were in the hands of a less benevolent ruler than Judge Temple.

Though Temple rejects Richard's absolutist definition of property, he later acts on his feeling that ownership entitles him to enact hunting restrictions. He decrees some of the ordinances through local proclamations and enacts others through his seat in the legislature (a position obtained

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[130] For more on Kent's support for land rights of first *developers*, rather than squatters or other types of legal holders, see Taylor's *William Cooper's Town* (32). This distinction proved particularly important for Cooper's father, who engaged in lengthy legal battles for the rights to the Otsego patent against earlier, absentee landholders. Likewise, were Judge Temple less nobly inclined to honor the Effinghams's prior property rights at the end of the novel, he may have had a legal case based not only on the sale of the patent, but also on his role in developing the settlement.

[131] Ezra Tawil makes a persuasive case that *The Pioneers* ties property rights not only to modes of land transformation, but also to racial identity. He argues that by the end of the novel, "Lockean 'man' has been displaced by distinct varieties of men with different claims to property… Oliver Edward's right of property, the novel suggests, rests not on his political status as a 'man,' but on his racial status as a 'white man'" (90-91). However, in historical context the lines between racial essentialism and race *as constructed through characteristic modes of environmental belonging* were often extremely blurry.

through his wealth and social prominence as a large- property owner). His belief that he can *give* or *revoke* rights is played out even in the initial conflict over the deer. Like a benevolent dictator, he declares to Oliver: "I here *give thee a right* to shoot deer, or bears, or any thing thou pleasest in my woods, forever. Leatherstocking is the only other man I have granted *the same privilege* to."[132] Natty responds churlishly to the Judge's noblesse oblige: "There's them living who say, that Nathaniel Bumppo's right to shoot on these hills, is of older date than Marmaduke Temple's right to forbid him" (*Pioneers* 25). Surprisingly, even the white settlers who oppose Natty—and who seldom granted the legitimacy of native land claims—reaffirm his rights claims. Judge Temple seems to confirm that Natty's right is "natural" rather than civil by claiming that he "has *a kind of natural right* to gain a livelihood in these mountains" (112). Even the most rapacious loggers voice similar sentiments. Billy Kirby, who is famed for waging metaphorical wars on trees with his axe, argues that Natty "has as good a right to kill deer as any man on the patent." While Billy's line of reasoning suggests that rights are not universal, but differential, it also implies that Natty is not the only man who has earned a maximal amount of liberty. Billy is never entirely clear in his delineation of the origin of Natty's rights, except to respond that hunting "is the man's calling" and that "the law was never made for such as he" (334). Even Richard Jones, who usually defends the Judge's property rights as absolute, suggests that Natty's compatriot Chingachgook, by virtue of being a Native, "may have *some right*" which should not be abridged to hunt on the Judge's land (93).

What the Judge, Natty, and others in the community seem to agree upon is that for one reason or another, Natty and Chingachgook have some degree of a "right" that others in the community do not, and that the difference in liberty is connected to the fact that their right is somehow *prior* to the current wave of settlement. At face value, these claims *appear* to validate those who would read Natty as an avatar of natural, rather than civil, rights. However, throughout the tales, Natty calls into question the idea that his right comes from a pre-social environment. Note again his phrasing: "There's some living who say, that Nathaniel Bumppo's right… is of older date than Marmaduke Temple's right to forbid him." When Natty defends the idea that he has a prior right, he does not appeal to nature, to natural law, or to the state of nature, but to social verification: "some living can verify." Natty was not alone in the woods, nor was he in the sole possession of this right. As the subsequent Leatherstocking stories elaborate, Natty has a social history that he tenaciously clings to: a loose but interconnected society of prior white, Native, and nonhuman figures whose history has been nearly erased. As a result, his characteristic response to settlers who try to accelerate the pace of change is to remind them that New York was never an untouched wilderness, never a blank slate, but instead a palimpsest of communities and traditions.

In keeping with Natty's historicizing ethos, as the Leatherstocking prequels move backwards in time, Cooper takes pains to depict the communities that preceded Judge Temple's settlement of upstate New York. For instance, *The Deerslayer* shows the reader that Otsego Lake hosted white and Native communities three full decades before Temple and his band arrived. Even in *The Pioneers*, James Fenimore Cooper retroactively repopulates the virgin wilderness that Judge Temple—and Cooper's own father William—imagined themselves as inhabiting for the first time. In *A Guide in the Wilderness*, William's self-aggrandizing, mythologizing history of Cooperstown (1810), the elder Cooper depicts himself heroically summiting what he called "Mount Vision" for his first view of the land he plans to settle. As Alan Taylor and Matthew Winn Sivils both point out, William Cooper portrays the land as empty even though it actually contained Native American ruins, signs of

[132] My italics. The fact that this right was granted "forever" seems forgotten by all parties at the end of the novel, when Natty is punished for killing a deer out of season. While Natty's refusal to claim such a right from Temple *as a gift* is understandable, Temple's broken promise is less explicable.

ongoing Native life, multiple white squatter residences, and innumerable animals.[133] In the parallel scene in *The Pioneers*, Judge Temple initially describes his prospect from Mount Vision as disclosing "not a vestige of a man… No clearing, no hut, none of the winding roads that are now to be seen, were there; nothing but mountains rising behind mountains" (*Pioneers* 235).

Temple's colonizing gaze from atop Mount Vision constructs the land as a *tabula rasa*. It enables a fantasy that uses Lockean justifications for the appropriation of the commons in order to create an active, planned creation of a community that might someday attain the social and environmental stability that Burke locates in England's gradualist past. By orienting himself towards the future as he imagines "becoming native" to a place (in bioregionalist terms), the Judge's community building resonates with Wai-Chee Dimock's validation of "prospective rather than retrospective" modes of belonging (178).[134] However, like Marlowe in *Heart of Darkness* moving into the blank space on the map and finding a great deal of complexity, Marmaduke Temple quickly finds that the place he has constructed as empty is already inhabited. Descending from the mountain, Temple encounters Natty on the way back to his cabin "staggering under the carcass of a buck that he had slain" (*Pioneers* 236). At one point the narrator notes the old, mossy fruit trees surrounding the Judge's own house, reinforcing the fact that Natives had prolonged, stable relationships to the territory in question. And Chingachgook's presence serves as a constant sign of Native heritage as well as a reminder (throughout the series) that Natty is seldom entirely alone in nature.[135] These residual signs point to the fact that Judge Temple's projection of a hybrid Lockean/Burkean community into the future depends upon the *erasure* of Burkean communities that already existed in the past.

In contrast to Judge Temple's future-focused merger of Lockean appropriation and Burkean values, Natty frequently looks to the past, hearkening back both to those who lived their lives in the woods before Temple's arrival and to his own longstanding relationship to the land community. When Temple recalls first meeting Natty, he mentions that the hunter considered "the introduction of settlers as *an innovation on his rights*" (*Pioneers* 237; emphasis added). The use of "innovation" rather than "violation" or "usurpation" reveals that Natty does not view his rights as absolute, but compatible with the rights of others. Yet his skepticism also suggests a Burkean concern that the pace of "innovation" (a term, which according to the OED, can mean a "political revolution") might disrupt relationships with nature and other human inhabitants that have been painstakingly established over time.[136] A major facet of Natty's defense of his "right" to kill deer is that he has always done so in this particular social and natural environment. Like Burke, Natty believes that liberty is not abstract but "inheres in some sensible object" (Burke, *Writings* III:120). He stresses his length of residence as "half a hundred years" (*Pioneers* 357) and reminds the Judge that he exercised

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[133] See Taylor (32-33) and Sivils (*American Environmental* 107).

[134] The belief that one can "become native" to a new place through long habituation and environmental attunement has been especially important to new agriculturalists and bioregionalists, including Gary Snyder. See Wes Jackson's *Becoming Native to this Place* and the essay collection *At Home on the Earth: Becoming Native to Our Place* edited by David Landis Barnhill. Such investments have been harshly scrutinized by scholars focusing on settler colonialism and environmental justice.

[135] It is worth noting that while Natty is often remembered as an iconic solitary figure, Cooper almost always depicts him traveling through the woods in the company of others (especially Chingachgook). *The Prairie* constitutes the exception to this trend, but there Natty is largely alone because the expansion of white settlement has pushed him so far West. His loneliness at the end of his life registers the conspicuous absence of the community that he has lost, backhandedly reinforcing its earlier importance.

[136] Tellingly, the OED also indicates that "innovation" can signify "The formation of a new shoot at the apex of a stem or branch; *esp.* that which takes place at the apex of the thallus or leaf-bearing stem of mosses, the older parts dying off behind; also (with *pl.*) a new shoot thus formed."

his "right and privilege" to pass freely in nature when the Judge was "no Judge, but an infant in your mother's arms" (370). On the face of it, Natty's claims sound like the parochial logic of those who resist progress (and immigration) with the territorial suggestion that being "born and raised" in a place gives one's voice more weight than more recent arrivals. But what Natty seems to mean, if we take his justifications for the deer killings in combination with his lectures to the settlers on the need to reduce their "wasty ways," is that he has *earned* his right to shoot deer because he has done so for a long time *while still acting with restraint and without disrupting ecosystemic processes*.

Even though restrictions on hunting seasons—which Natty violates in the second deer killing—are meant to put limits on killing deer during breeding seasons, Natty is scornful of them because in his view, any well-trained hunter would understand the underlying rationale behind such laws and behave with more durable and adaptable restraint than the imposition of somewhat arbitrary dates on the calendar. Additionally, he notes that the sparsely populated countryside, as well as the troublesome habit of animals not to obey property boundaries, makes enforcement of such laws a practical impossibility. "Game is game," he proclaims, "and he who finds may kill; that has been the law in these mountains for forty years, to my sartain knowledge; and I think one old law is worth two new ones" (*Pioneers* 160). When the Judge suggests that the "law" (by which Natty really means custom or tradition) which Natty prefers could not be enforced and would lead to rampant overhunting, Natty responds by urging an ethic in which rights are earned over time: "None but a green one would wish to kill a doe with a fa'n by its side," he proclaims. In frontier context to be a "green one" or "greenhorn" is to be not simply young, but negligently tutored.

Natty, of course, was "tutored" in the ways of the woods by the Delawares; thus, his "right" to hunt deer derives from a culturally transmitted education that taught him to directly attend to nature's rhythms in order to guide his action. It is such norms—rather than positive laws—which Natty internalizes and tries to transmit to others in the novel. However, in *The Pioneers*, references to Natty's upbringing with the Delawares are scant and elusive. In fact, Cooper never directly relates incidents from Natty's youth with the tribe anywhere in the Leatherstocking series: even in *The Deerslayer* (the last novel published, but first in the chronology of fictional events), Natty is on his "first war-path" rather than ensconced in tribal life. Nonetheless, when Cooper wrote a retrospective preface to the Leatherstocking tales, he reframed the series as a whole by stressing Natty's cross-cultural education. He emerges as "a character that possessed little of civilization but its highest principles as they are exhibited in the uneducated, and all of savage life that is not incompatible with these great rules of conduct, and favorably disposed by nature to improve such advantages" (*Deerslayer* 491).[137] In claiming that Natty is "disposed by nature," Cooper seems to mean two almost contradictory things simultaneously: first, that whatever is *inherent* in Natty's character draws him to heed both Native and white cultural influences (to an extent), and second, that Natty is impelled by his close *relationship* to the nonhuman environment to reject what Cooper sees as the excesses of each culture.

Throughout the tales, Cooper carefully maintains that Christian practices are more appropriate guides for Natty's conduct than tribal rules, given his white "natur'" and "gifts". These factors all seem to marginalize the role that Native influences play for Natty. However, in the 1850 preface, Cooper's language is quite deliberate: though Natty "retains the best and simplest of his early *impressions*" from white society, the "best *associations* of that which is deemed savage" are at least equally determinative when he "sees God in the forest; hears him in the winds" (*Deerslayer* 491-2).[138] According to David Hume's philosophy of sensation, while "impressions" relate to the imprint of

[137] Likewise, in the Preface to *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper portrays Natty as "betraying the weaknesses as well as the virtues both of his situation [with the Delawares] and of his birth" (9).

[138] By contrast, Cooper often makes *Natty's* utterances deliberately vague and self-contradictory.

sensory experience on the mind and emotional responses, "associations" are the "secret tie or union" (662) by which we order ideas. Impressions, then, communicate the "force" and "vivacity" (2) of experience to us, while association—though operating as an internal organizing principle—is more amenable to the mediating forces of culture and education. These distinctions suggest that while Natty was "impressed" with the power of God in nature during his early life in white society, he learned a method of ordering his "associations" from the period of his life "which is deemed savage." Thus, experiences in white culture provided Natty with the motive force to find God in nature, and the Delawares gave Natty the means to interpret the signs he finds—signs amenable to many potential meanings, and often misinterpreted by white readers within the tales. In fact, elsewhere in the preface, Cooper figures the poor whites who initially raised Natty as "uneducated," not the Natives he later lived with. Accordingly, when Natty refers to his "edication," he generally mentions the Delawares as his teachers.

When the events of *The Deerslayer* take place, Natty has spent roughly half his life with the Delaware tribe and half in white society. In the 1850 preface, Cooper portrays Natty as "too proud of his origin to sink into the condition of the wild Indian, and too much of a man of the woods not to imbibe as much as was at all desirable, from his friends and companions." (*Deerslayer* 491). The term "imbibe" is important here: it signifies a mode of learning that is dispersed; that comes from lived experience, rather than didactic instruction; from the communion of community, not just conversation. Though Cooper does not clearly delineate the reason that Natty was brought up by the Delawares beyond hinting at a tragic loss of Natty's parents (Natty says "Providence placed me among the Delaware young," 774), Natty indicates that his "edication" from the Delawares has trained him to construct his masculinity through violent, but culturally regulated engagements with nonhuman actors. Thus, he reprimands Hurry Harry (whose nickname signals a frenzied temporality that Natty resists) by telling him that "there's little manhood in killing a doe, and that, too, out of season; though there might be some, in bringing down a painter, or a catamount" (499).

Natty later says that he hopes to "live and die in [the Delaware tribe]." When he continues and says "Still I do not mean to throw away altogether, my natyve rights, and shall strive to do a pale-face's duty, in red skin society," (*Deerslayer* 774) the use of the term "native," along with the signifying misspelling and italicization ("natyve") makes it deliberately unclear whether he imagines these fundamental "rights" as emanating from his white skin, from white society, or from lived experience in the Delaware culture. In the process, the source of "rights" is jarred out of its fixed position in social contract and positive-law philosophical and legal theory. In such debates, Natty often reads white "gifts" (essentialized and embedded cultural practices) as superior to Native gifts, but at times he also reverses the priority. Even while insisting that most racialized "gifts" are immutable, Natty preaches that success in the woods comes from adapting as much as possible to the cultural practices of those who live there.[139] As a result, Natty adopts many Native practices ranging from applied skills (tracking, imitating animals) to attire (wearing moccasins) to cultural practices (behaving with restraint as a hunter; participating in a campfire council before engaging in lengthy pursuits, etc.).

However, none of these practices constitute what Natty calls racial "gifts." "Gifts" signify lines Natty clearly won't cross. In particular, Natty abhors interracial sexuality and rigorously maintains that whites should never scalp those they vanquish in battle. If Natty were to cross such lines, he believes that it would do more than betray his whiteness, but would "unhumanize my natur'" (*Deerslayer* 563). In Natty's extreme, racist conception, to act outside one's racial "gifts" is no different than crossing the line dividing the human from the nonhuman. However, as a racial

[139] For example: "Whoever comes into the woods to deal with the natives, must use Indian fashions, if he would wish to prosper in his undertakings" (*Mohicans* 48).

essentialist—and something of a cultural relativist—Natty does not judge Natives for scalping their foes, as he believes it is a tradition consistent with Native "gifts" (*Mohicans* 156). When it comes to such practices, Natty seems guided by an idiosyncratic inner light that tells him which white and which Native cultural practices one can choose, and which are inherent and unchangeable. "Natur'" is Natty's term for this immutable sense of culturally and racially defined selfhood: "a natur' is the creature itself; its wishes, wants, idees and feelin's, as all are born in him. This natur' can never be changed, though it may undergo some increase or lessening" (*Deerslayer* 921).

Cooper scholars have tied themselves in knots trying to form a coherent account of Natty's philosophy of gifts, largely because Natty himself is so inconsistent in his use of the term. He does attempt, at some length, to differentiate immutable gifts from translatable cultural practices, arguing that gifts include "tradition, and use, and colour, and laws" (*Deerslayer* 528). He says that he is "white in blood, heart, natur', and gifts, but a little red skin in feelings and habits" (775). Even Natty's effort to define these terms confuse and contradict as much as they clarify (to say nothing of his many looser uses of the words throughout the series). Given that Natty's Native "feelings and habits" come from his interactions with the Delaware community, it is not entirely clear what differentiates them from the "tradition and use" that constitute his white gifts. The term "colour" seems like an unambiguous reference to physical facts, but by saying that his "feelings and habits" are not only "Indian" but "red skin" Natty suggests that skin color may be mutable rather than a totalizing marker of racial difference. It certainly alters the valence his frequent claim that it is "wrong to mix colours" (qtd. in McGregor 147). As a result of such vagaries, some have adopted the tempting proposition that Natty's "terms are used so loosely and inconsistently that they become virtually meaningless" (McGregor 147).

There is another possibility—namely, that despite Natty's attempts at clarity, by portraying Natty as profoundly inconsistent, Cooper signifies both the potential and perils of conservative appeals to tradition.[140] On the one hand, Natty's refusal to adopt either Native or white cultural norms wholesale allows him to select the "better qualities of both conditions, without pushing either to extremes" (*Deerslayer* 491). This adaptability to circumstance, and distrust of absolutes, is one of the central tenets of Burke's thought. On the other hand, by having Natty appeal to tradition, use, laws, and habits, but then pick and choose which he wants to follow, Cooper suggests that seemingly impartial appeals are necessarily selective at best, and dangerously arbitrary at worst. For our purposes, two factors are vital. First, even though Natty's account of gifts is confusing and contradictory, they are inherited from social communities, at least in part. As such, they serve as Burkean counterbalances to the moments when Natty claims to access God's ultimate and unchanging truths directly from nature. Second, Cooper implies that prescriptive inheritances can be as binding as positive laws.

Before proceeding, a word of clarification is in order. I have variously used the terms "practices," "habits," "customs," "norms," "inheritances," and "traditions" to refer to a loose set of practices that are gradually accreted and communally transmitted. By using a cluster of words with similar significations, but different valences, I have attempted to portray the looseness and adaptability of those inheritances that Burkean scholars often valuate under the umbrella term "prescription." In *The Conservative Mind*, Russell Kirk defines Burkean "prescription" as "the customary right which grows out of the conventions and compacts of many successive generations" (42). My hope is that by using a multiplicity of terms, I will best represent the way that predominantly oral societies often *disperse* cultural practices and inheritances across a range of practices and contexts rather than consolidating them within institutional structures. However, I do

[140] In particular, I have in mind what Russell Kirk called the three pillars of Burke's thought (and hence, the conservative tradition): prejudice, prescription, and presumption (42). See chapter one.

not mean to imply that these terms are identical: the word "norms," for instance, has a moral *force* that "customs" may or may not carry. Whereas norms are often attached to characteristic *modes of enforcement* even in societies without codified laws or standing juridical apparatuses, customs are often expressed less formally and less prescriptively. In turn, "habits" represent both individual idiosyncrasies and the internalization of social customs. They are often only visible from the outside: the individual may be least equipped of all to recognize that his or her habits are related to broader social ideologies.

By contrast with this loose cluster of prescriptive terms, I use "law," "legal" and "code" to refer more narrowly to those positive, statutory, or systematic laws emerging from first principles or enlightenment rationality. Kirk implicitly distinguishes between legal compacts enacted at a given moment and those prescriptive practices which seem to organically "grow" over long periods of time. Kirk's interpretation risks making prescriptive norms seem more natural—and thus, less subject to appeal or revision—than positive law. Nonetheless, because they evolve locally, idiosyncratically, and over many generations, common laws are generally prescriptive *even though* they can be expressed and enforced through a formal legal system. As Burke elaborated at length, the unwritten English Constitution itself is more a prescriptive concept and an unruly, evolving body than a consolidated expression of positive law. In The Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper is particularly interested in not only Natty and Temple's debate about whether prescriptive practices or positive laws are preferable, but also in the way that frontier settlements tend to expose the fuzzy boundaries between the two categories.

However, Cooper's interest in overlap and complexity has racialized limits. While Burke showed that certain white laws emerge from prescriptive inheritances, in Cooper's hazy history, *all* Native jurisprudence is prescriptive. This *does not* mean that a given native practice is less meaningful, just, or potent than a white law. But because any given dictum has no identifiable moment of origin and no written record of composition, Cooper (like nearly all nineteenth-century whites) imagines Native traditions as always already prior—inheritances from the mists of time.[141] Such a conception dehistoricizes Native sovereign and governmental history, helping Cooper to portray them as existing outside of historical progress. But in many cases, by locating the origin of Native customs outside the historical record Cooper portrays them as *more* durable, not less. Cooper's most dramatic demonstration of the power of Native prescriptive tradition comes in *The Deerslayer*. After Natty is captured, the Hurons allow him to go on "furlough": letting him leave captivity and visit his friends based on a firm promise that he will voluntarily return to meet his punishment. Natty discourses at great length about the reasons he must keep his word, citing both his honor within the Delaware tribe and his "white man's duties" (*Deerslayer* 898).

Ultimately, Natty—sounding much like the American founders—maintains that both white and native "laws" are superseded by the higher "laws of God" (*Deerslayer* 529). Natty frames his decision to honor furlough as "a solemn bargain" between himself and God just as much as an imperative to act in accord with Native customs (886). In practice, though, Natty tends to engage in acts of civil disobedience (justified by an appeal to higher laws/laws of nature) far more frequently in response to white legislation and jurisprudence than in defiance of Native tradition or authority. In *The Pioneers*, Natty never feels any compunctions about violating game laws, breaking out of prison, or shooting a state authority. Meanwhile, in *The Deerslayer* Natty ultimately chooses to honor a

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[141] Cooper's contemporaries often did not share his enthusiasm for recognizing the durability of Native traditions. Ironically, whereas white settlers invalidated native "laws" in part because they had no definitive origin date, a *treaty*—agreed to and enacted at a particular moment, on paper, could be read as *the* binding statement of a native polis, superseding the entire body of unwritten law that it might contradict or ignore. (Of course, this hardly kept the American government from upholding its end of treaties.)

commitment inescapably associated with tribal traditions, even though in *The Pioneers* he rejected parallel white strictures that would restrict or confine him.

When defining the elements that constitute "gifts," Natty named "laws" as one of his criteria, seemingly siding the term with whiteness, writing, and "civilization." It is striking, then, that Natty—himself largely illiterate—often refers to Native practices as "laws." As we have seen, Natty hardly treats white laws as binding, but by using the term "laws" to refer to unwritten Native practices, Natty suggests that Native norms can be at least as durable as positive law. In fact, several other times in Cooper's fiction, Native "laws" prove more binding than the written codes, showing that Natty is not the only one who feels their force. For instance, in *The Last of the Mohicans*, the Hurons flaunt Munro's command to allow the soldiers to retreat unharmed, but are themselves protected by the unspoken, "inviolable laws of Indian hospitality" and thus allowed a safe retreat from Tamenund's camp later in the novel (357). In both *Mohicans* and *The Deerslayer*, the Hurons uphold a cultural norm by allowing white characters they consider mentally challenged to come and go as they please (despite the fact that David and Hetty supply valuable intelligence to their white friends). And in *The Chainbearer*, even the squatter Thousandacres who scorns the very concepts of law and civilization extends furlough privileges to Susquesus, trusting absolutely that the Native's honor-bound custom will prove more durable than any prison walls.

By portraying the ways that Native society uses norms to restrain behavior without needing a standing judicial apparatus or written law, Cooper anticipates the insights of economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi. Polanyi argued that market economies did not truly exist prior to the industrial revolution. Whatever forums for exchange existed were incidental and not essential to provide life's necessities. Economic interests were governed by "reciprocity" and "restraint" because they were "submerged" in "social relationships" (Polanyi 48). Building on Aristotle's distinction between house-holding and money-making, Polanyi argues that "the principle of production and gain" that was instituted along with the accumulation and storage economies of agriculture *created* a "boundless and limitless" appetite that had not previously existed and was "not natural to man" (56). In two key set pieces, Cooper portrays the Templeton pioneers as occupying a destructive middle ground. Freed from the traditional "social relationships" that activate restraint and motivated by an artificial "boundless and limitless" appetite, but not yet compelled by conservationist laws, the settlers engage in wholesale "wasty" destruction of thousands of birds and fish.

In each case, Sheriff Richard Jones leads the charge: he fires a cannon filled with shot into a passing flock of passenger pigeons and then rallies the settlers as they use huge seines to ensnare thousands of lake trout. On both occasions, the settlers amass a massive haul that cannot be stored or consumed before it spoils. Natty Bumppo, ever the intermediary between Native and white traditions, abhors the "waste" but can see how the settlers are driven by misplaced desires from the accumulation and market economy traditions: "If they had fur, like a beaver, or you could tan their hides, like a buck, something might be said in favor of taking them by the thousands with your nets; but…" (*Pioneers* 266).[142] In each scene, Natty could easily take a dead animal from the pile for his own consumption, but rather than do so he insists on killing a single animal himself, causing Judge Temple to accuse Natty himself of wastefulness.[143] Polanyi helps us see why Natty, who incidentally

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[142] Locke's key limitation on the appropriation of nature is the "spoilage proviso." Zev Trachtenberg summarizes it as stating that "Because God's purpose for the Earth is to support human survival, and goods that spoil can no longer fulfill that function, labor doesn't generate the right to more than one can consume before it spoils" (102). Natty seems to care about the lives of the pigeons and fish as well as the anthropocentric uses of them, but these instances of overhunting function as moments that Natty *sounds* more Lockean than Burkean, even while he also defends the cultural practices of a prior community.

[143] Some environmental scholars, such as Hallock, have elaborated upon the charge (206).

engages in the fur trade but still fundamentally obeys a pre-market mentality inherited from Native culture, jealously guards his right to harvest his own food even when confronted with a glutted surplus.

By using a single rifle shot to kill a pigeon and by spearing a single fish, Natty does more than avoid tainting himself by association with wholesale slaughter. By demonstrating skill and right practices, he asserts his social role as a worthy member of his community, reinforcing that he is someone who can provide food for his small tribe (now consisting of only Oliver and Chingachgook), just as he shared meat from a deer with Judge Temple when they first met. Neither subsistence nor self-reliance is the point: instead, he seeks to define the extent of his chosen community and the limits that will determine its behavior. Rather than participate in the misguided, wasteful accumulation economy of the settlers, Natty asserts an ethic of communal sharing that is governed by moderation. Similarly, when Natty asserts that Oliver shot the deer before Temple (in the opening scene), the Judge offers to buy the carcass. Natty and Oliver refuse even though the Judge asserts that the money is "enough to buy you many deer" (*Pioneers* 25). More than pure points of pride, these moments can be read as representing Natty's philosophical refusal to participate in an economy predicated on exchange, accumulation, and spoilage rather than reciprocity and restraint.

The pigeon and fish slaughter are not the only scenes where the distinctions between prescriptive traditions and positive law take on environmental dimensions. As principles that have developed over time to fit specific, local, and environmentally contingent circumstances, Native practices often seem both anachronistic and parochial to the progressive white settlers bent on forcing nature to fit into the rectilinear grid they impose on the land's natural contours (in these regards, Judge Temple and Richard espouse the same enlightenment land planning principles as Fulton, Imlay, and Jefferson).[144] Whereas Judge Temple attempts to impartially impose statutory laws on a novel environment, Natty insists rules governing conduct that evolved in one location and cultural context are often ill-suited to the local particularities of another environment.[145] In such instances, Natty prefers the environmentally situated, embedded traditions associated with Native society (and which are analogous to common law) over rationalistic or universalizing scientific claims. In effect, Natty's central objection is that Temple's Lockean community of white property-holders unnecessarily displaces communities whose Burkean and Native traditions evolved in tandem with the environment and had already effectively regulated environmental behavior for generations.

Just as Natty's language often gestures toward Burke's preference for prescription, other characters describe Natty in terms that Burke would approve of, especially invoking humility, prejudice, and habit. For instance, when the more educated Oliver notes that Natty is "simple,

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[144] Richard explains to Elizabeth that "We must run our streets by the compass, coz, and disregard trees, hills, ponds, stumps, or, in fact, any thing but posterity" (*Pioneers* 183). The rectilinear grid directly reproduces French landscape garden aesthetics, associated first with Louis XIV's absolutism, and later with the French Revolution's leveling tendencies. For American uses of the grid as a land management tool in the early national period, see chapter two.

[145] In this reading, I depart from Charles Hansford Adams, who maintains that the Judge attempts to import common law in the form of empty tokens of noble rank (66). While this may be true, by associating common law with only a British tradition, rather than allegorically extending the concept to include practices established by non-Western communities and traditions, Adams bypasses the ways that Natty may be a more consistent representative of common law *ideals* than Judge Temple. Ultimately, Adams vindicates the role of common law and astutely notes that the novel moves towards a "reconciliation of the opposition between legal form and human identity" (which is more malleably expressed via common-law practices, 71) through the Judge's decision to give up his strictly legal right to the land in keeping with an oral promise made to the Effinghams.

unlettered, even ignorant" and therefore "prejudiced"—that is, influenced more by the circumstances of his immediate lived history than learned principles—he nonetheless concludes that Natty's "opinion of the world is true" (*Pioneers* 345). This is not, of course, to say that Natty would know more about analytical philosophy than other characters in the novel; instead, it is a validation of Natty's intellectual humility. Natty's decision to speak only on matters within his lived purview and to fit his doctrines to the particularities of place and time constitutes the wisdom that Oliver highlights as much as any of Natty's particular contentions. Oddly enough, the unmannered and opinionated woodsman may be governed by an ethic more like propriety—a sense for the contextual contours of the moment—than like a rigid code of behavior. What might seem his provincial and narrow unwillingness to engage with the broader world can also be read as a conscious desire not to *intrude* in environments where he does not understand the codes of conduct (like he sees the settlers intruding in Native and natural spaces by claiming permanent property rights in areas formerly governed by usufruct principles).[146] However, these attitudes cause problems for Natty when he is not able to adapt to the rapid pace of frontier settlement.

Ultimately, even Judge Temple finds some value in Natty's gradually acquired, contextual approach. Though he is a tireless advocate for the law's impartiality (as he proves when he puts Natty on trial even though Natty saved his daughter's life), when the Judge issues jury instructions, he suggests that because Natty "was acting more *under the influence of habit* than by the instigations of malice, it will be your duty to judge him, but *to do it with lenity*" (*Pioneers* 369). This is not the only time that Natty's "habits" cause the Judge to mitigate legal sanctions. In fact, by ultimately procuring a pardon for Natty, the Judge works within the legal framework, but also admits that sometimes the strictures of codified justice do not fit the realities of a given case. The pardon, finally, represents the institutionalized mechanism by which positive law pays homage to the occasional need for Burkean, common law traditions and to the way that even a perfectly designed system cannot *fully* capture the various complexity of lived circumstance.

The Multispecies Contact Zone

Cooper's upstate New York environment where Hurons, Delawares, and other multiethnic settlers meet is clearly a contact zone. But what happens if we extend Mary Louise Pratt's famous term to encompass encounters not only between social and racial groups, but beyond the human?[147] That is what Donna Haraway attempts in *When Species Meet*: "If we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism, then we know that becoming is always becoming with—in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake" (244). Haraway's leap is not without risks. Pratt's work on contact zones focuses primarily on the ways that actors form linguistic and written relations when they do not speak a common tongue. We already encounter the peril of anthropomorphism when describing animal agency, much less animal (or even eco-systemic)

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[146] These hesitations are most fully displayed in Natty's aversion to courting Judith Hutter. A complex mix of motives and subconscious feelings structures Natty's relationship to courtship in *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*, including Natty's attraction to the land itself. Here, too, Natty acts from a sense of humility and propriety. Despite having some sense of his own inner nobility of character (at least in the terms Cooper defines it), Natty feels that Judith can only fully be happy in the settlements, and thus argues that she needs a partner who more intimately understands the codes and practices of settlement life.

[147] Sivils also refers to the "inescapable contact zone between people and the land" in the Early Republic (*American Environmental* 168).

language or writing.[148] The utterances by Cooper's animals communicate things, but they never come close to approximating auto-ethnographic "collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror" (M.L. Pratt, "Arts" 35).[149] Ascribing a range of reasoned, intentional, and even wily behaviors to nonhuman agents and actants risks flattening the distinction between adaptive or instinctive responses and the often brilliant "arts of the contact zone" subaltern people use to rectify fundamental power imbalances.

Nonetheless, there are good reasons to put Mary Louise Pratt and Haraway in more extended conversation. The contact zone, after all, names and describes processes that occur *in the absence* of stable "speech communities" (M.L. Pratt, "Arts" 37). Animal-human interactions often depend on crude, semi- or extra-linguistic modes of signaling and response. Similarly, as Pratt notes, human languages in the contact zone "are commonly regarded as chaotic, barbarous, and lacking in structure" (*Imperial Eyes* 8). Rather than dismiss these features as lacking or unrefined, we might revalue them for the ways that their loosened rules foster dynamic possibilities for improvisation. Additionally, in Pratt's central formulation, the "arts of the contact zone" include non-linguistic factors such as "relations… in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power" (*Imperial Eyes* 6-7). Much like intercultural encounters, the always "radically asymmetrical relations of power" between humans and nonhuman entities are both particularly pronounced and subject to particularly volatile rearrangement in frontier communities like those that Cooper describes.[150] In fact, such power relationships depend on more than just human and animal participants, comprising an interwoven, unfolding assemblage that also constitutes plants, microbiotic agents, watersheds, climates, etc.[151] In his account of the way that hasty clearcutting can result in firestorms that threaten human communities in *The Pioneers*, for instance, Cooper demonstrates how seemingly stable (but often deeply exploitative) human-nonhuman power relations can be quickly unsettled and rearranged in rapid succession when ecosystems are disrupted.[152]

In Cooper's works, multispecies interactions sometimes cause "miscomprehension, incomprehension … [and] absolute heterogeneity of meaning"—what Mary Louise Pratt calls "some of the perils of writing in the contact zone" (37). But since Pratt's formulation looks beyond

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[148] In *Environmental Practice and Early American Literature*, Ziser tries to untangle the extent to which we can legitimately refer to animal agency, language, and even "nonhumans as authors" in antebellum texts, including Cooper's *The Oak Openings* (5 and *passim*).

[149] In fact, Cooper's texts almost never privilege authentic Native voices at length, meaning that his contact zone tends to be linguistically one sided even within the human realm.

[150] The dynamic rearrangements of power and subversive power of contact zone "arts" do not change the fact that exploitation was largely unequal. In *Archives of American Time*, Lloyd Pratt issues a somewhat overdue critique by observing that too often, "postcolonial studies ignores the unequal nature of power, preferring instead to 'celebrate' minor infractions against the rule of law, economic deprivation, and other forms of injustice. It overinvests in trivial modes of resistance that obscure the pain, death, and deprivation visited upon subaltern subjects" (192). Pratt's critique applies equally to environmental power relationships.

[151] In using the term "assemblage" I follow in the tradition of Deleuze, Guattari, Latour, and Haraway. Ogden, Hall, and Tanita summarize the concept of the assemblage as "not a mere collection of entities and things, but a complex and dynamic process whereupon the collective's properties exceed their constitutive elements" (7).

[152] As Valtiala notes, the fire at the end of the book is the direct result of the "wasteful" practices that both Natty and Judge Temple criticize, since the conflagration grows with unnatural rapidity by feeding on the bone-dry branches that settlers have left near trees they have logged. Additionally, it is worth noting that human caused fires—in forests, grasslands, and houses—make up a destructive motif in four of the eight Leatherstocking and Littlepage novels.

language, we can still locate instances of "co-presence, interaction" and "practices" in nonhuman entities without resorting to anthropocentric metaphors. Particularly in rapidly altering colonial environments (it could be argued that almost every human-animal interaction continues to be structured by the logic of colonialism), animals and humans precipitate and respond to rapid changes in both the material substrate and in one another's accustomed practices. As transformation of the land accelerates, the lines between instinct, adaptation, and improvisational response become even more blurred than usual. In Cooper's novels, animals react to shifting cultural norms and practices wrought by settler society's displacement of native tribes, in turn causing human culture to adapt. Thus, deer, bears, and beaver did not merely disappear; they made themselves scarce as they altered their behavior in response to changing human cultures, which in turn led to changed hunting and cultural practices.[153]

This section argues that Cooper adopts two main strategies to portray upstate New York as a multispecies contact zone: first, by focusing upon ecological interconnection, and second, by dwelling on human and animal interactions. In *The Pioneers* in particular, Cooper contrasts Judge Temple's conservationist rationality with Natty Bumppo's proto-ecological preservationist approach, locating particular wisdom in the hunter's experiential insights. By stressing that wisdom comes from observation and interaction, rather than abstract theory or social planning, Cooper captures the contingent, even ad-hoc nature of ecological unfolding. As the series progresses, Cooper shows how Natty's practiced, Native-inspired approach to interspecies encounters disrupts human hierarchies. Though Natty sometimes jealously polices the human-nonhuman divide, he also increasingly figures himself as a participant in an interconnected system where both human and non-human beings are capable of complex forms of signaling, response, mutual learning, and even attraction. Such modes of interaction asymptotically move towards reciprocal linguistic expression—never quite arriving and effacing species difference, but still unsettling clear taxonomies.

While Cooper recontextualizes Burke's social state of nature into new social environments by dwelling on Natty's cross-cultural education, he also returns Burke's metaphorical social "ecologies" back to the nonhuman world and reframes humans as participants in (not *masters of*) natural ecosystems. When Natty, whose experiences of nature and society have been shaped by one another, looks at environmental problems, he tends to see them in relational terms. Rather than viewing objects as discrete variables best understood through isolation, he considers their interactions. Thus, while Natty and Temple's shared appreciation for habit and continuity causes each of them to criticize the "wasty ways" of their fellow pioneers, their methods and their conclusions differ profoundly.[154] As several ecocritics have noted, Judge Temple aims to *conserve natural resources* for sustainable future use. Meanwhile Natty, by locating something sacred in nature,

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[153] For instance, beavers' shift towards nocturnal habits was significantly accelerated after rampant overhunting—a combination of evolutionary selective pressure and learned behavior. My observations are not meant to mitigate the extreme effects of overhunting or the very real risk of species extinction. I do, however, believe there is value in recognizing that animals have capacities to respond dynamically to extreme pressures and human violence, just as postcolonial scholars have long argued that a focus solely on victimhood participates in the politics of erasure rather than truly resisting it.

[154] This essay takes its place in a series of ecocritical readings of *The Pioneers*. See especially Sivils, Taylor, Willis, and Valtiala. Willis, in particular, makes a forceful case that ecocritics have overvalued authors "like Emerson and Thoreau, who investigate the wonder and complexity of the natural world, while marginalizing those, such as Cooper and Longfellow, who express anxiety about the consequences of the nation's environmental destructiveness" (4)

tries to *preserve ecological systems* for their own, inherent value (despite his legendary skill in killing individual animals).[155]

Each of Temple's efforts at conservation focuses on isolating a particular species from its ecological context and then placing caps on harvests. The game laws are the most obvious examples, but Temple's opposition to Richard's fervor in the pigeon-hunt and fish-netting set-pieces also embody similar principles. Most characteristically, he advocates for sugar maples. As Alan Taylor tracks, settlers in upstate New York (including James Fenimore's father William Cooper) imagined that sugar maple production could become a substantial, sustainable industry. Unlike clearing the land for agriculture, which eventually led to depleted soil and the need for further settlement, maple sugar refinement could leave large portions of the forest relatively intact. Additionally, maple sugar promised a kind of moral redemption. In one of the first documented consumer boycotts in America, William Cooper partnered with a number of Philadelphia Quakers to promote maple sugar production as an ethical alternative to refined sugarcane produced on Caribbean plantations.[156] The elder Cooper, seldom a moralistic stickler in his land deals, opportunistically adopted this anti-slavery rhetoric, probably motivated by the quick cash influx from selling expensive sugar pots to settlers and his monopoly on the regional refining process.

William Cooper's maple sugar production faltered because crop yields proved fickle, individual settlers' investment in expensive sugar pots drove them into debt, and most urban consumers tended to prefer the cleaner appearance of refined cane sugar to the moral cleansing offered by combating slavery. Unfortunately, the settlers who failed in the sugar maple trade often turned to selling potash to pay off their debts quickly. Potash, generated through burning of large quantities of wood, transformed timber into an easily transportable commodity for sale in urban markets. However, the practice of burning trees for potash depleted the farmers' land of a great deal of biomass useful as fertilizer. Without the forest nutrients being returned to the soil, their farms were not sustainable. Thus, Cooper's effort to financially capitalize on the conservation of sugar maples ironically hastened the settlers' tendencies to treat the land itself as a temporary, extractable resource rather than an intergenerational inheritance.[157]

In *The Pioneers*, Cooper projects his father's concern for sugar maples onto Judge Temple on two occasions: first, when he becomes angry at finding maples used for firewood in his house, and second, when he sees that Billy Kirby's mode of harvesting sugar inflicts grievous, potentially fatal wounds on the trees. These moments epitomize both the Judge's conservationism and its limits. When visiting Kirby in the forest, the judge sympathizes with Burke's desire for continuity. To Billy Kirby, he says, "I earnestly beg you will remember, that they are the growth of centuries, and when once gone, none living will see their loss remedied." While Temple faults Kirby for tapping the sugar maples too aggressively, he does not comment on the fact that Kirby has culled all other arboreal species from the maple grove, thereby wrenching the trees from their ecological context. Even though he must be aware that sugar maples are notoriously difficult to cultivate deliberately, the Judge treats them as a generic, replaceable resource. Through analogy, Temple's maples become "these jewels of the forest, these precious gifts of nature, these mines of comfort and wealth" (*Pioneers* 105). By invoking temporal continuity but ignoring Burke's focus on the dangers of

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[155] See Sivils (117-122).

[156] Such efforts to boycott products of slavery were much more common among English Quakers of the time.

[157] For the entirety of the foregoing history of maple sugar production and ethical consumption, I am indebted to Alan Taylor's *William Cooper's Town* (120-136). See also chapter five herein for a more detailed history of both extractive and relatively sustainable agricultural practices along the American frontier.

uprooting and context, he fails to think ecologically.[158] Additionally, the Judge is quick to note that he does not value the past for sentimental reasons or because of the trees' role sustaining other organisms, declaring "it is not as ornaments that I value the noble trees of this country; it is for their *usefulness*" (229). By evacuating trees of their aesthetic and symbolic value, the Judge narrows Burke's famous invocation of oaks as symbols of intergenerational inheritance, instead prioritizing economic succession over the tree's value as a social emblem of nobility sustaining an interconnected system.

By contrast, Natty constructs his environmental ethic from orally communicated traditions and construes his right to hunt deer as inseparable from his duty to protect the environment that sustains any given species. Even if most of Natty's criticisms of the settler's "wasty ways" seem incapable of creating change, in at least one regard his divergence from Temple proves prescient. Natty may have hunted hundreds of deer in his day, but as an experienced observer of the local environment, he is able to correctly identify that "clearings and betterments" (as well as fences) destroyed habitat and therefore harmed the deer population on a much wider scale than overhunting. Instead of looking to proximate causes, Natty evaluates a set of environmental relationships. If Judge Temple's effort to save particular species looks forward to early twentieth century conservationist efforts, Natty's observation of interconnectedness at once reaches back to Native American traditions, across the Atlantic to Burke, and forward to the Aldo Leopold's "Thinking Like a Mountain." Thus, whereas the Judge's desire to limit resource exploitation is economic, Natty's approach is ecological.

Despite this ecological outlook, Natty is far from an environmentalist saint. However pointedly he criticizes the new bourgeois order, he occasionally makes himself an exception to the principles he proposes. Natty was less conservation-minded earlier in his life, and at times he even brags about how many animals he has hunted.[159] The Major, Natty's longtime acquaintance, points out that he "didn't use to pe so prutent, as to look ahet mit so much care" (*Pioneers* 161). Elsewhere in the novel, Natty recounts having "shot thirteen deer, without counting the fa'ns, standing in the door of my own hut" (22). Though Natty may have shot the deer over a number of seasons, the reference to shooting "fa'ns" suggests that his practices have evolved over time. But if such changes in behavior are Natty's way of responding to the decline in the deer population, they indicate not so much hypocrisy as proof that a Burkean ethic of restraint adapts to evolving circumstances rather than positing eternal truths. Additionally, Natty's point about "wasty ways" still stands: to shoot a fawn may seem cruel, yet it would still mean meat being put to use; whereas to kill a doe and have the vulnerable fawn run away would likely mean sacrificing two lives while only harvesting one animal. Nonetheless, moments which hint at Natty's *lack* of restraint—including the final deer hunt, which is more impulsive than necessary—also call into question whether self-monitored (but culturally prescribed) norms are sufficient deterrents to "wasty" behavior. The very forces of habit that regulate Natty's behavior might make him slow to adapt to changing circumstances. By viewing himself as an intrinsically moral actor because of his past behavior, he might exempt himself from carefully considering the ethical consequences of particular actions. Thus, Cooper suggests that custom can be a powerful prescriptive force, but like positive law, it is hardly perfect.

Critics have levelled a more durable critique of Natty's ecological ethic, charging that regardless of the philosophical merits of his approach, it largely fails to create change. Because Natty's approach depends on gradual cultural transmission, it is poorly suited to periods of rapid population growth and geographical mobility (to say nothing of the forced removal of Natives).

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[158] Others have made similar points. In particular, Willis criticizes those who view Temple's game laws as ecological rather than anthropocentric and conservationist (42).

[159] Natty shows less discrimination with animals destined for commercial trade, bragging of having "killed two hundred beaver in a season." By contrast, he abhors the massacres of pigeons and fish.

Norms of restraint prove ineffectual with discontinuous communities, and Natty's ethic lacks both an enforcement mechanism and the ability to "scale" along with the influx of new settlers. Thus, several scholars have argued some variant of the claim that Natty proposes no *alternative* to the "unregulated use (and hence occupation) of the land by only expert woodsmen such as himself" (116).[160] Even if we view Natty's discourse as an effort to educate others to become "expert woodsmen," his effort to pass on an ethic of restraint and timeliness to the new settlers is wildly unsuccessful. Perhaps *because* his norms have been inherited over generations and across cultural boundaries, he is unable to speak in the new settlers' language or persuasively respond to the centrality of Lockean property rights in their thought and expression. Natty's inconsistency and his communicative failings hamstring his appeals, making him particularly ill-suited to the pace of transformation in this human contact zone.

If Temple's approach anticipates Gifford Pinchot's early twentieth century conservationist politics, Natty's invocations of the sacred in nature sound like John Muir's preservationist hymns. Meanwhile, despite the fact that Temple speaks the settlers' language more effectively than Natty, his utilitarian approach to managing the settlement proves almost as ineffective as the hunter's more emotional appeals.[161] As Alan Taylor concludes, use of sugar-maple for firewood in Temple's abode (like his ineffectual injunctions in the bird and fish slaughters) show that the judge "is not truly the master of his own home, much less the surrounding settlement" (Taylor 136). Nonetheless, while Judge Temple's conservationist approach proves ineffectual in *The Pioneers*, similar lines of reasoning provided the basis for early environmental efforts in the subsequent century. By contrast, Natty's approach, which combines Burkean values of prescription, cultural inheritance, and ecological embeddedness with a Muir-like sense of the sacred in nature still maintains largely untapped potential.

In contradistinction to Natty's failed navigation of the politically muddled, ever-shifting human contact zone, the woodsman exhibits a powerful ability to respond to subtle forms of nonhuman expression. Cooper anticipates Natty's eventual efforts to converse with wild creatures by dwelling upon his interactions with domesticated dogs in *The Pioneers* and *The Prairie*. Dogs, who most biologists now characterize as not only shaped by human agency, but as co-evolved partners who also have actively (if not necessarily intentionally) shaped human society over the last several millennia, are uniquely attuned to human facial patterns, gestures, and linguistic cues.[162] In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway notes that when dogs are trained, information flows both ways: rather than functioning as mere Descartian "machines" responsive to stimuli, dogs give, withhold, and

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[160] McGregor also argues that Natty's approach in *The Pioneers* fails because it foregrounds mere "personal morality." By contrast, McGregor argues that in *The Prairie* Natty finally embraces "the protection of the powerful and impartial institutions of law and order" (128). John McWilliams claims that "the forest evokes all of Cooper's yearnings for utter freedom, but also reveals his acute awareness of the inevitable perversion of that freedom" (129). These dismissals of the efficacy of Natty's discourse are well-founded, although they each continue the broader trend of figuring Natty as an individual who exists entirely outside of society.

[161] Willis, for instance, argues that both Natty and Temple's approaches are failures, arguing that Cooper exhibits no "faith" that "any political force" can relieve environmental problems (47).

[162] As Timothy Morton notes in *The Ecological Thought*, "Pets are queer animals, not natural" (86). We might reciprocally ask what this says about the human species, given that pets have shaped our evolution. In *When Species Meet*, Haraway quotes Tsing's observation that "Species interdependence is a well-known fact—except when it comes to humans. Human exceptionalism blinds us" to the reality of our co-evolution with thousands of plant and animal species, many of which tailor their behavior to what we tend to regard as our agency in selecting survivors that make up the gene pool (218). Our full symbiotic dependence on the bacterial biome that colonizes our digestive tract—and whose cells outnumber the human cells in the body—is only the most dramatic case in point.

solicit attention strategically in order to communicate not only their desires for edible or affective rewards, but also their interest in training their inter-species partner to engage in enriched modes of play or focused tasks that make life more interesting for both parties.[163] As a result, training emerges as an ongoing exchange of information that can result in focused attention and accomplishment.[164]

In the Leatherstocking tales, we never see Natty training his dogs, but the interactions between hounds and hunter nonetheless shed light on the co-education that preceded each novel.[165] For instance, in the famous pigeon massacre, Natty's lament for the fate of the pigeons seems shared by his canine companions, who are "crouching under the legs of their master, as if they participated in his feelings at this wasteful and unsportsmanlike execution" (*Pioneers* 74). The shared feelings between bird, man, and canine in this scene bring human and nonhuman feeling in close alignment, demonstrating possibilities of sympathy across species lines. Natty and his dogs' mournful affect directly contrasts with the mob mentality of the villagers, who are drawn closer to one another by asserting the absolute distinction between human and nonhuman. According to one critic, the scene demonstrates that the hounds "of course, follow the biological rule of checks and balances that Natty also strictly adheres to" (Valtiala 74). But this is misleading. Despite romantic myths to the contrary, neither humans nor canines refuse to kill more than they "need" for survival, as is abundantly apparent to anyone whose well-fed domesticated dog has penetrated a henhouse.[166] Additionally, ecosystems (which are never statically balanced) do not achieve something allegorically *akin* to "biological balance" through the inner restraint of predators, but through the scarcity of food that results when predators kill prey too rapidly. Instead, the dogs' restraint (and ability to discriminate between sportsmanlike and unsportsmanlike conduct) in a scene of such dramatically unleashed destructive energy, coupled with the physical and emotional bond with Natty, all point towards an extensive interspecies bond achieved through mutual training. Human and animal nature are revealed as existing in malleable relationships, just as in the later scene where Natty is able to use just a few words to restrain his dog Hector from foolishly attacking the panther that kills Brave, Elizabeth's less trained dog who heroically but futilely sacrifices itself fighting the wild animal.

All of this may appear as idle praise for Natty's "good dogs" or his status as a good master. But the restraint demonstrated by the hunting dogs poses a direct contrast to the Judge's fears that the unleashing of wild energies would make revolutionaries—such as the Jacobins, or by extension, Natty— "monstres … bloodthirsty as dogs." Both Natty and his dogs are able to modulate their instinctive and violent responses to the demands of the situation, calling into question the Judge's fears the French revolutionaries efforts to draw society closer to nature will inevitably devolve into

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[163] See Haraway, *When Species Meet*, chapter eight. Haraway notes that for her show-dog, the skillful completion of the agility course becomes an end in itself, as the dog will often refuse food when focused on the endeavor at hand.

[164] Training through positive reinforcement cannot *create* behaviors: it instead amplifies and re-channels behaviors that animals already express into novel forms of endeavor. Thus, when Haraway wants to train her dog Cayenne to follow a new path on an agility course, she does not drag it against its will and risk having it associate training with punishment, but instead waits until it moves its head in the desired direction and offers it either affective acknowledgment or a more tangible reward.

[165] Importantly, Natty only has dogs in *The Pioneers* and *The Prairie*: the two novels in which he dwells in a place for an extended period of time.

[166] There are also documented instances of wild wolf packs engaging in substantial "surplus killings" (Ellis and Alsup). Ranchers have been quick to seize upon such instances to push for wolf removal in the West, even though these killings could be read as linking wolf behavior closer to human behavior, rather than making it more alien.

animalistic violence.[167] When Natty uses the dogs to threaten Hiram Doolittle, the dogs astutely read the "semiotic signs" that differentiate Natty's ironic beckoning from a truly urgent attack command.[168] In a parallel instance, Natty later shoots Hiram, but in a nonlethal, and even comic way. When contrasted with the pigeon massacre, such moments suggest that wild Natty Bumppo and his domesticated dogs may be better at discriminating between communicative signs than the Templeton settlers who represent civilizational advancement.

In addition to training his dogs, Natty relies on them to pass on information not accessible to human senses. Whereas Haraway notes that in agility training "the human has to be in the right place at the right time to give good information," hunting dogs engage in even more reciprocal acts of observation, interpretation, and communication. More than prosthetic extensions for human perception, hunting dogs serve as agential beings capable of translating modes of knowledge not accessible to human understanding into mutually understood terms (as established by prior interactions). In *The Prairie*, Cooper uses such canine perceptions to incisive comedic effect by contrasting them with the epistemological tendencies of Dr. Obed Battius (or Bat). Bat, as his name suggests, is comically blind to his environment. He takes a place in a long line of Cooper characters whose cloistered "book larning" (in Natty's dialect) leaves them unable to adapt to their environmental localities or even perceive reality accurately.[169] Though he finds himself in the prairie looking for samples, Battius is a closet naturalist by training and inclination, more comfortable organizing specimens taxonomically than considering them in living relationships with their native ecosystems.[170] As a proponent of abstract knowledge, Battius may be the least Burkean character in Cooper's lineage of misguided experts.[171]

In one of Cooper's most effective satirical scenes, Dr. Battius finds himself alone at night on the prairie, stalked by a mysterious beast. Figuring himself as a selfless man of science, Battius takes notes rather than fighting or fleeing the monster, detailing the beast's "inconspicuous" ears, "carnivorous" habits, frightening roar, and "long, arquated, dangerous" talons. When the beast later approaches the camp during daylight, not only are all of Battius's particular descriptions rendered demonstrably false, but the creature, which he gave the Linnean moniker *Vespertilio: Horriblis,*

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[167] The Judge's fears are somewhat validated when the dogs, freed from their leashes by Squire Doolittle, chase a deer into the lake, as well as when Natty, caught up in the moment, slits its throat out of season.

[168] In *When Species Meet*, Haraway discusses at length the ways that dogs adapt to contextual cues, especially by preceding rough, but nondestructive play with "semiotic signs" such as play bows that signal the subsequent growls are not to be taken literally. As Haraway puts it, "play can occur only among those willing to risk letting go of the literal" (239).

[169] This lineage includes the doctors in *The Spy* and *The Pioneers*; Cap in *The Pathfinder* (whose knowledge, while based in experience rather than theory, is dangerously misapplied to the inland waterways; the psalmist David in *The Last of the Mohicans* (the most naïve and benign of such stock types); and of course Richard in *The Pioneers*, who attempts to impose a wide range of theoretical knowledge practices on the young community of Templeton, most hilariously in his construction of Judge Temple's hideous house. Natty, who disdains "book l'arning" throughout the series, serves as a primary foil to each character in the Leatherstocking series.

[170] As Sivils observes, "Bat, in particular, represents how taxonomic systems of compartmentalizing and naming species fail to account for the ways that organisms interact to form multifaceted communities of interdependence" (132). Willis considers Battius a prime exemplar of Mary Louise Pratt's scientists of empire: "image of a European bourgeois subject simultaneously innocent and imperial" (52).

[171] In preferring experience over theory, Cooper followed his father William, who wrote: "I am not an enemy to ingenious speculations, nor even to theories, provided they be the result of long and attentive observation, and grounded upon facts well ascertained… As yet I think it safer that the philosopher should learn from the farmer, than the farmer from the philosopher" (qtd. in Sivils 122). One would be hard pressed to more directly approximate Burke's mix of apprehension and openness to agricultural experiment (see chapter one).

Americana, is revealed to be his donkey—his "own ass!" At first, Battius is unable to admit that the *Asinus Domesticus* before him is the same animal he saw at night, only to eventually tear up his notes in defeat.[172]

As a recent critic notes, Battius builds "his conception of the creature from his observation of individual parts rather than of the whole." Unlike the Comte de Buffon, who argued that American animals would inevitably degenerate into smaller forms, Battius views his donkey through "a distorted lens… in which the American landscape becomes not only enlarged but grotesque" (Sivils, *American Environmental* 132).[173] By contrast with Battius's distorted visual perception, Cooper stages multiple scenes in which Natty's dog Hector is able to accurately discriminate among species even when he cannot see them. In one tense moment, Natty, Battius, and others become aware that something is rustling in the bushes. Still terrified of *Vespertilio: Horriblis, Americana*, Battius urges his friends to prime their rifles. Natty, who draws his gun, hesitates before proceeding. Battius exclaims that "It exceeds the limits of earthly knowledge!" to identify the being in the bushes. "Buffon himself could not tell whether the animal was a quadruped, or of the *order*, serpens! A sheep, or a tiger!" (*Prairie* 997).

In a single, unintentional phrase, Natty undoes Battius's association of "earthly knowledge" with scientific taxonomy and human epistemological privilege, responding "Then was your buffoon a fool to my Hector!" Through a complex system of gestures involving ear and head motions, a partial but retracted growl, scenting the air, shaking, and then displaying calm, Hector signals to Natty that the "strange animal" is "neither game nor ravenous beast" but "a man" (*Prairie* 997). When Battius objects to privileging "Brutality to learning! Instinct to reason!" he not only underestimates the animal's perceptive power, but also the depth of communicative possibility between Natty and Hector. As Natty observes, "There is little said atwixt the hound and me, but we seldom mistake each others meaning!" (997). For Natty, the fact that information is exchanged between species is more important than delineating the exact nature of animal apprehension or attributing anthropomorphic agency to animals.[174]

This is not to say that Natty romanticizes animals or considers them the equals of humans. In fact, he sometimes zealously polices the boundaries of human identity and asserts

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[172] Though Cooper blurs the line between humans and animal by exploring their ecosystem interactions, Cooper is still averse to implying a common evolutionary ancestor, satirically remarking that because Battius lost his notes "the natural scientists have irretrievably lost an important link in that great animated chain which is said to connect earth and heaven, and in which man is thought to be so familiarly complicated with the monkey" (959).

[173] Through the character of Battius, Cooper disputes with Buffon, who famously argued that the American climate would lead to the degeneration of species in the New World. According to Buffon's racialist theory, the disappearance of Native Americans was proof of his hypothesis. Famously, Jefferson sought to refute Buffon's claims by collecting American specimens that were larger than analogous species in Europe. In *The Prairie*, Battius—who is observationally stunted—ironically criticizes Buffon at length as a "mere compiler" who "flourishes on the foundations of other men's labors" (954). The implications of the Battius/Buffon dispute have been explored at length by a variety of critics, including those who observe that the gigantic stature of the Bush clan seems to refute Buffon's hypothesis (though the Bushes are far from moral giants). Ironically enough, Cooper, who wrote *The Prairie* prior to visiting the region, shared Battius and Buffon's lack of contextual knowledge of the plains ecosystem. See also chapter four, herein, for the implications of the Jefferson/Buffon dispute on transatlantic politics.

[174] Natty accentuates this contrast between useful information that emerges from encounter and intellectual "Knowledge!" in a later dialog when he claims that Battius's inability to interpret why the "hound is so uneasy" reveals his incapacity to address larger questions such as "what is life, and what is death?" (*Prairie* 1083).

anthropocentric superiority. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, for instance, Natty quickly overcomes the scruples of his companions and slays a horse to hide their presence from the Hurons, citing the "rationality of killing a four-footed beast, to save the lives of human men" (*Mohicans* 60). Similarly, in *The Prairie*, Natty argues that some animals are too wild to be domesticated: "Many are the cubs, and many are the speckled fawns that I have reared with these old hands, until I have even fancied them rational and altered beings, what did it amount to! The bear would bite, and the deer would run" (*Prairie* 1150). In each account, rationality emerges as the final dividing line—that which both distinguishes humans from animals and makes human life worth more than animal life.

However, even these seemingly clear moments of anthropocentric priority contain slippages that subtly deconstruct Natty's emphasis on rationality. Trying again and again to tame bears and deer, Natty may simply be a slow learner, or he may keep trying to activate some glimmer of new interspecies communicative possibility before ritualistically disavowing it in frustration. Immediately after killing the horse in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Natty sends it "down the stream" so that a nearby wolf-pack will not reveal their location to the Hurons. "Though the Delaware tongue is the same as a book to the Iroquois," Natty lectures, "the cunning varlets are quick enough at understanding the reason of a wolf's howl" (*Mohicans* 60). Here, Natty figures Delaware and Iroquois utterances as not only mutually incomprehensible, but as so unlike as to comprise different *modes* of communication (written/oral). By contrast with this communicative impasse, animal utterances such as the wolves' howls become *more* universally comprehensible than human language. In this context, Natty's misuse of a preposition signifies more than it might otherwise imply. He does not say that the Iroquois will understand the "reason for" the wolves howling, but the "reason of" it. Whereas "reason for" would simply signify the cause of the howling, "reason of" holds open the possibility that the howling allows the Iroquois to discern some higher order thinking (reason *as* rationality) *within* the canine utterance, linking the wild wolves to Natty's domesticated hunting dogs.

Later in *The Last of the Mohicans,* Cooper also figures beavers as rational creatures. Heyward—ever prone to misinterpretation—mistakes a series of beaver lodges for a Huron encampment, but is surprised to find that it "possessed more of method and neatness of execution, than the white men had been accustomed to believe belonged, ordinarily, to the Indian habits" (248). While the moment seems designed to criticize Native tribes' nomadic tendencies, Heyward uses the encounter to question human exceptionalism more broadly, reflecting that "even the brutes of these vast wilds were possessed of an instinct nearly commensurate with his own reason" (261).[175] Elsewhere, Natty goes so far as to call beavers and muskrats "l'arned creatur's," suggesting that animal instinct is not the opposite of reason, but another potential means of rational long-term planning (*Deerslayer* 582).

In *The Deerslayer*, Cooper continues to test out the human/animal, reason/instinct dichotomies by demonstrating that wild animals may be attuned to the relative rational capacities of human subjects. At one point, Judith Hutter's younger sister Hetty embarks on a solitary mission to a hostile Huron encampment, intending to use New Testament injunctions to appeal to the Hurons. Throughout the novel, Cooper portrays Hetty as mentally impaired but blessedly innocent. Instead of being "governed by any chain of reasoning," Hetty is motivated "by her habits, the latter often supplying the defects of mind, in human beings, as they perform the same office for animals of the inferior class" (*Deerslayer* 645). Before arriving at the Huron encampment, Hetty—more a naïve child of nature than Natty—lays down in "a bed of leaves" to sleep, and then awakens to find a bear cub rooting around next to her (649). Like Natty, Hetty initially tries to deconstruct the wild/domestic divide: "The first impulse of Hetty, who had been mistress of several of these cubs, was to run and seize the little creature as a prize, but a loud growl warned her of the danger of such a procedure."

[175] Though Cooper does not make the comparison explicit, the aesthetically and functionally ordered beaver colony bears positive comparison to the haphazard architecture in Templeton in *The Pioneers*.

Such danger is quickly averted, however, as "the dam, though proverbially fierce when its young is thought to be in danger, manifested no intention to attack the girl… it raised itself on its hind legs, and balanced its body in a sort of angry, growling discontent, but approached no nearer" (651).

The mother bear's lack of aggression seems to romanticize both wild animals and mental impairment, constructing a quasi-mystic league of innocence in the forest.[176] But the scene also depicts an unfolding encounter full of gestural communication and meaning-carrying vocalizations, grounding the heavy-handed symbolism in plausible behavioral processes. Hetty's behavior—and communicative acts—save her, not her disability.[177] The bear is unthreatened not because of Hetty's mystic innocence, but because she neither approaches the cub nor runs away, but "recoil[s]" just "a few steps." In turn, Hetty tempers her behavior in response to the bear's conditional "discontent," suppressing her subsequent desire to "play with" the cub that "frisk[s] and leap[s] about in wantonness" (*Deerslayer* 651). By the end of the scene, the bears follow her in an attitude of curiosity, "watching every movement as if they had a near interest in all she did." Both their new understanding and its limits are delineated at the end of the scene when Hetty attempts to persuade the bear to follow her into the Huron village "by childish signs, and even by direct appeals made in her own sweet voice" (*Deerslayer* 652). The bear—no longer threatened or threatening—chooses not follow her, but lines of communication have clearly been opened and some mutual understanding has been achieved.

Having left her cultural community behind, Hetty's extra-linguistic interaction with the bears anticipates her interactions with the Hurons, most of whom also do not speak her language. Once Hetty arrives in the village, the Hurons treat her in ways that mimic the mother bear, but coalesce around pre-existing cultural norms rather than instinctual responses and behavioral adaptations. Initially wary, the Hurons quickly determine through Hetty's bearing and gestures that she isn't a threat. Ultimately, they give her free passage to come and go as she pleases because of her mental handicap—yet another instance of a binding cultural norm that proves more durable than white laws.

Had the bear followed Hetty into Cooper's version of a Huron village, it would not have been entirely out of place and could have continued to serve as a figure for boundary crossing. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, for instance, Cooper maintains that bears were "often domesticated by the Indians" (*Mohicans* 286). More broadly, as Matthew Wynn Sivils relates, in Iroquois oral traditions the bear is "a figure adept at crossing the borders of species and cultures," just as "Cooper's bears … serve as guides for the transition between animal and human realms" ("Bears 5-9). Likewise, Natty's infamous bear-disguise in *The Last of the Mohicans* seems comical and lighthearted, but depends upon a series of crossings that reaffirm the multispecies, multicultural nature of Cooper's contact zone.[178] Before Natty unmasks himself from behind the bear costume, he uses it first to

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[176] Starobin, for instance, interprets the moment as a "charming vignette" that shows how "God … watches over the mentally impaired" (143-146).

[177] Lawrence Buell argues that "environmental representation" can be "akin to the novel of manners, where tea ceremonies, tiny conversational nuances, and minute gestures and variances of dress matter immensely" (*The Environmental Imagination* 107). Cooper—who began his career with a novel of manners in the style of Jane Austen and presented a "chronicle of manners" in his late Littlepage Trilogy—was attuned to the vital role of manners within the wilderness as well as within civilization.

[178] Tompkins gives the best reading of the much more comprehensive series of disguises and crossings that take place late in *The Last of the Mohicans*—too many to recount here. Tompkins argues that "each of the characters crosses a boundary line into a category that represents the opposite of his or her actual place in the social structure. At the same time, the exchange of roles reinforces some trait already present in the character, suggesting the possibility of a common bond between categories that are supposedly antithetical" (123).

alarm Heyward ("it growled loudly and fiercely," 286) and then to challenge Heyward's distinctions between animal and human by having the bear produce "a sort of low growl, sounds, if not words" in keeping with the "melody" of David's music (288). Whereas Heyward initially exhibits alarm and confusion, the Natives largely ignore the bear. Some of them believe it is tame, and others, like Magua, recognize the skins as a disguise (the "well known attire of their conjuror" who often uses them in ritual practice, 296). When Heyward later praises the verisimilitude of Natty's performance ("the animal itself might have been shamed by the representation"), the hunter chalks his virtuosity up to his experience of the wilderness: "I should be but a poor scholar, for one who has studied so long in the wilderness, did I not know how to set forth the movements and natur of such a beast! ... though, for that matter too, a bear may be overacted" (292).

Natty does not aggrandize his acting abilities or sell himself short: he capably performs several roles. In these short scenes, he mimics a wild bear, a tame bear, and even a Huron conjuror's mode of playing the role of bear. He responds to and manipulates the disparate audience expectations of American Hurons, a Horican (Magua), and a white soldier (Heyward). Cooper suggests a fourth influence through the chapter epigraphs, which come from Bottom, Snug, and Quince's performance as a lion in the play-within-a-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In actuality, then, Natty's virtuosic ursine extravagances do not refer entirely to knowledge gained through solitary stints in the wilderness, but equally upon multicultural perception and performance. The masquerade presents such an effective scene of cultural and species crossing that Natty is ultimately forced to re-clarify his racial *and human* identity, asserting that his "blood is as little tainted by the cross of a bear, or an Indian, as your own" (*Mohicans* 304).[179] By replicating his own repeated overperformance of whiteness in a now absurd context, Natty descends into self-parody, ironizing the very premise of unadulterated independence that he so zealously seeks to defend throughout the novel.[180]

Despite the comic valences of these scenes, Cooper takes seriously Natty's claim that one can be a "scholar" of the wilderness by finding quasi-linguistic possibilities outside literal texts. Appealing to the ancient "book of nature" trope, Natty says that he has studied a single "volume" for "forty long and hard working years" (*Mohicans* 134). In *The Pathfinder*, Natty tells Mabel Dunham that the woods are full of "conversation, for such as can comprehend their language, there is no want of rational and instructive discourse" (275). The conceit is not Natty's alone: Magua claims that "the Great Spirit gave different tongues to his red children" so "that all animals might understand them" (*Mohicans* 340). In a series of novels that describes complicated, meaning-bearing interactions

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[179] Sivils astutely notes that "the cultural elasticity that Hawk-eye gains by wearing the bear suit disproves Magua's ideas about the inflexibility of racial categories." Nonetheless, when it comes to Natty's claim that he has no "cross of a bear, or an Indian," Sivils argues that "with this characteristic statement of racial purity, Hawk-eye equates bears with American Indians and proves that his mimicking of the bear in no way altered—or relied upon alteration of—his cultural identity" ("Bears" 5-9). By contrast, I maintain that Natty's ability to imitate not only a bear but also a Huron performance of a bear reaffirms his culturally hybrid upbringing, despite his jealous guard over *genetic* whiteness.

[180] Like Sivils, Jane Tompkins argues that Cooper intended the cultural "mergers" of the disguise scenes to be unmasked as a mere mirage when the novel moves towards the conclusion where "the categories that the disguises had conflated are wrenched violently—and permanently—apart… Men are men, and animals are animals; the Delawares hate the Hurons and always will, and there will be no marriage between any Indian chief, either Magua or Uncas, and the daughters of Munro" (124). Tompkins is right that Cooper attempts to foreclose these possibilities; however, as explored herein, such encounters contain residue of transgressive possibilities of interracial and interspecies crossings, such as the way that Natty and Chingachgook emerge from their animal disguises to become symbolic co-parents mourning Uncas in the final scene of *Last of the Mohicans*.

between people, dogs, and bears, Natty and Magua's invocations of nature's "language" are not merely figural. Instead, in the nearly illiterate hunter, Cooper produces a subject for whom the woods are more legible than books and animal "speech" is often more navigable than human social conventions. Similarly, Magua's totemic theory of tribal identification with particular species suggests communicative affinities between particular human groups and animal species that outstrip connections between disparate human speech communities.

By depicting the world as an extra-textually linguistic, terrestrial sphere, Cooper suggests that language is not an exclusively human creation. However, perceiving it depends upon active human attention and interaction. The book of nature "tis open before your eyes," Natty tells David, "and he who owns it is not a niggard of its use" (*Mohicans* 134). Scientists like Doctor Battius who neglect to listen to the "speech" of nonhumans such as Hector are guilty of not only inattention but also linguistic imperialism. Like early ethnographers who insisted that Native language was primitive and that the lack of a written alphabet proved Native backwardness, those who seek to dominate nature validate conquest by constructing themselves as the sole bearers of logocentric rationality. Insisting that the nonhuman subaltern cannot speak, the Latin-obsessed Battius serves as a particularly potent forerunner of coming environmental domination. His early presence in the wide-open prairie serves as "a reminder that the entire continental span has already been penetrated, classified, and brought to order by a scientific force we would never notice without him" (Willis 52). By contrast, Natty's invocations of the book of nature and "conversations" with nonhuman assemblages suggests that nature's "language" deserves to be considered in its own right. There are significant critical implications to Natty's constructions. As Michael Ziser writes, literary critics have "conventionally understood" nature as existing "without a language of its own" and therefore "from the beginning admissible only as an object of representation" (16). Attending to nature's voice means opening ourselves up to the possibility that it might be not just something represented but filled with agents and actants themselves *engaged in acts of representation*.

While Natty does not go so far as to attribute artistic *agency* to plants or animals, he still suggests that humans can learn as much from nature as from human society. In *The Deerslayer*, when Natty gazes upon the Glimmerglass, he calls it "an edication of itself, to look upon." In Natty's natural theology, the (nearly) untouched lake represents "the ordering of the Lord" (275).[181] As *The Pathfinder* established, Natty believes that such scenes can provide intellectual development ("rational and instructive discourse," 275). In *The Deerslayer*, Natty proposes that encounters with natural sublimity can also guide one's *moral* development. Striking a note that particularly recalls Rousseau, Natty suggests that "Judith ought to be a moral and well disposed young woman, if she has passed half the time you mention, in the centre of a spot so favored" (*Deerslayer* 514). Natty's assumptions here strike a powerful challenge to this chapter's thesis that Natty does *not* represent man in a state of nature, but instead emerges from an intercultural social education. After all, if one can gain an intellectual, rational, and moral education directly from sublime scenes, then might not the wilderness's natural pedagogy bypass the need for social forms of education?

Cooper responds in the negative, taking pains to invalidate Natty's theory that nature inevitably exerts a benign influence. Hurry Harry informs Natty that Judith is not so innocent after all: "the gal has her vagaries." Though Harry largely attributes these "vagaries" to the winters she has spent in forts with "the settlers, and especially from the gallantifying officers," thereby seeming to

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[181] By suggesting that Natty's interpretations of the wilderness depend upon his cultural upbringing, I do not mean to diminish Natty's sense that God can be accessed unmediated (or "face to face," *Pathfinder* 95) in nature. Instead, there is a distinction to be made between Natty's unfiltered *awe* in the face of creation/the creator and the *lessons* (be they intellectual or moral) which he takes away from such encounters when they are translated back into behavioral dictates or human idioms.

reaffirm that civilization is the source of corruption, *his own* hurried and violent conduct also calls into question Natty's theory that time in nature produces innocence (*Deerslayer* 514).[182] As multiple critics have noted, in Cooper's account the "ennobling influences of a sublime nature" do not seem to affect the Iroquois, white American settlers, the English, or the French who sojourn or settle in remote grandeur (Valtiala 170). In fact, white "squatters" living close to nature (such as Ishmael Bush's family in *The Prairie* and Thousandacres's brood in *The Chainbearer*) become Cooper's chief exemplars of amoral squalor, behaving with neither the ennobled restraint of pre-industrial communities nor amenability to the civilizing influence of the law.

In light of these contrasts, Natty's natural law moralism emerges as the *exception*, not the rule.[183] Nature itself has the potential to educate, but just like other texts, the book of nature is open to multiple interpretations. Its meaning depends upon the assumptions and exegetical practices the reader brings to bear upon it.[184] Natty is "purified" by a vision of God in nature that operates almost regardless of his will but he is open to that vision in the first place because of his cultural influences. Most critical attention has focused on the moments when Natty turns his gaze to the woods and hills he finds confirmation of "higher laws" that supersede both white laws and native cultural norms. In fact, Natty, who venerates the Bible as a totemic object but is barely able to read it, tends to find meaning most legibly foliated on the leaves of trees, not in libraries: the book of nature at times *substitutes* for the book of God.[185] Recalling that Natty uses the same term ("edication") to refer to both the Glimmerglass scene *and* his upbringing with the Delawares, we might say that when Natty scans the book of nature for insight into God's ways, he does so based on reading practices he learned from the Delawares. In turn, Cooper suggests that Natty's *attunement* to nature is consonant with his Christian upbringing. While Natty does not elaborate his hermeneutic strategies in the language of literary criticism, he understands "higher laws" through cultural meanings and associations.

Debates about the Leatherstocking novels will continue to see-saw with no end in sight so long as we continue to assume that Cooper forces us to choose between nature and culture. Yet, all along, Cooper has presented us with assemblages and ecosystems in dynamic motion. Interwoven and prone to disruption, they consistently contain nonhuman and human participants negotiating modes of relating to one another. By viewing Cooper's frontier as a multispecies contact zone, we can see that the novels pose no stable dichotomies between speaking humans and nonspeaking environmental others, but instead stage a series of encounters designed to unsettle categories and raise the possibilities of multispecies conversation. As Natty reminds us, one cannot be called truly "solitary" when in the conversational, legible "bosom of natur'" (*Prairie* 1162). Ultimately, then, Cooper does not oppose the state of nature and the state of society, but—inverting Burke's claim that the state of society is a state of nature—reminds us that the so-called state of nature *always* contained social encounters between cultures and species. Thus, Natty Bumppo does not represent

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[182] Valtiala writes that Hurry Harry shows that nature "may just as well assist in giving free reins to savage and destructive propensities in man" (180).

[183] John McWilliams states the case succinctly: "With the single exception of the Deerslayer, Eden has not impressed its moral laws upon the frontiersmen" (279).

[184] As Timothy Morton observes in *Dark Ecology*, the "book of nature" can be protean, shifting and elusive: "some letters might not be letters at all, just squiggles. Interpreting the book depends on interpreting the blanks between the marks, letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages" (62). McWilliams notes that many other characters in Cooper's novels (such as Hurry Harry in *The Deerslayer* or Thousandacres in *The Chainbearer*) claim the sanction of "natural law" but they often misread nature in ways that Cooper clearly disapproves of, thereby showing the necessity for civil law as an intermediating force.

[185] For Kolodny, such moments establish Natty's "total dependence on the Book of Nature" (103).

the triumph (or failure) of nature in opposition to society, but instead, the delicate (and often charged, problematic, and unsuccessful) possibility of what Bruno Latour calls a hybrid nature/culture.

Chapter Four
Beyond Reproductive Futurity: Sublimity, Temporality, and Race

While the previous chapter focused Cooper's efforts to reshape and extend Burkean social ecologies to nonwhite and nonhuman participants, this chapter explores consequences of the disjunction between Cooper and Burke's conceptions of political temporality. While Burke's response to the French Revolution was ideologically consistent enough to inspire a coherent political philosophy (modern conservatism), Cooper responded to antebellum America's accelerating pace of social transformation and pervasive emphasis on futurity with decidedly mixed feelings. Just as Burke, who was less a reactionary opponent of change than a theorist of gradualist reform, argued that society should evolve carefully and incrementally, Cooper temperamentally distrusted rapid upheaval. But Cooper's skepticism of futurity was complicated by his flirtations with stadialism, the theory maintaining that civilizations rose and fell in predictable—even mechanistic—patterns. Throughout his career, Cooper vacillated between fatalistic confidence that stadial progress was inevitable and anxiety that American empire might be delayed, diverted, or even derailed before it truly began its ascent. In late works such as *The Crater*, he fixated on an inverse catastrophe: the prospect that civilizations might grow and implode at such an accelerated rate that rise and fall, democracy and decadence, indistinguishably collapse into one another. Since Cooper never seems to have fully accepted that stadial progress was truly preordained, he variously protested, celebrated, and lamented particular historical developments, especially when he felt that they moved society too quickly towards a particular stage or temporarily jarred history awry from its supposedly inexorable trajectory.

The Leatherstocking tales (along with other works such as *The Wept of Wish-ton-wish* and *The Crater*) reflect both Cooper's political evolution and his ongoing vacillations. This chapter's tripartite structure suggests that three much remarked upon facets of Cooper's fictions—sublime landscapes, accounts of Native "disappearance," and the sexual marginalization of putative hero Natty Bumppo—should not be viewed as discrete themes. Instead, they were collectively shaped by Cooper's pervasive anxieties about America's relation to temporal progress and to futurity itself. Together, these sections maintain that Cooper was fixated on ways that reproduction (in social, biological, civilizational, and even nonhuman terms) happens—or more often, *fails* to happen—following revolutionary violence and upheaval.

The first section examines how Cooper tries to move past Burke's related rejections of revolutionary change and sublimity. Through both action scenes and landscape tableaus, Cooper appeals to nature in order to model historical changes that depend upon complex interplays between catastrophism and gradualism, prolonged observation and accelerative motion. In the following two sections Burke recedes as Cooper's interlocutor. I instead elevate queer theorist Lee Edelman and several critical race studies scholars. Their work enables a reconsideration of Cooper's treatment of marginalized subjects in light of the recent temporal turns in literary studies. Applying their insights to overlooked psycho-sexual dimensions of *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pathfinder*, and *The Deerslayer*, I maintain that Cooper's projects non-heteronormative sexualities onto his male protagonists and antagonists as part of a coping strategy to deal with his anxiety about not only America's future, but futurity itself. Accordingly, the second section of this chapter argues that Cooper portrays Native peoples as alternately death-bound and death-dealing subjects who exist outside a racialized regime of reproductive futurity. By tying Native cultural and reproductive practices to the land itself, Cooper naturalizes their disappearance, even while expressing contrasting fears that white cultural and biological reproduction will proceed at an unsustainable pace. The third section functions as a brief, but necessary, aside: an excursion outside the Leatherstocking series to consider *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, a novel where Cooper superficially seems to reverse course, but ultimately suggests

that assimilation is just another pathway to invisibility. The fourth section conjectures that though Cooper marginalizes Natty Bumppo by associating him with overdetermined Native modes of relating to the natural world, Natty's surprisingly ecosexual orientation offers glimmers of a *jouissance* that resists the teleological drive of stadialism and the future-focused imperative of sexual reproduction.

Clearing Space for Sublimity in the American Forest

As the Age of Revolution unfolded, Burke and Cooper's feelings about sublimity evolved to reflect their changing politics. Broadly put, both writers qualified their early celebrations of sublime landscapes in response to social unrest and to reflect their new reservations about democratic upheaval.[186] For Burke, the French Revolution constituted a decisive turning point. Meanwhile, Cooper drifted gradually towards skepticism of sublime spectacle after being a firsthand witness of the European Revolutions of 1830, the Jacksonian expansion of democratic rights, and the Anti-Rent Wars in New York (1839-1845). Cooper's shifting positions were especially complicated and nuanced. However, contrary to popular perception, *neither* Cooper nor Burke's increasing objections to democracy or their reevaluations of sublimity reflected a totalizing shift from liberalism to conservatism. In fact, Burke exhibited hallmarks of conservative thought early in his career, and his later objections to the French revolution did not cause him to abandon reform projects such as his opposition to British imperialism in India (see chapter one).

Meanwhile, both early and late in his life, Cooper was more ideologically idiosyncratic than he is generally given credit for. Despite betraying certain conservative inclinations, his early nonfiction writings functioned as propaganda for American democracy. In response to the European revolutions of 1830, Cooper voiced both misgivings and tentative support.[187] In this early period, Cooper was also an apologist for American empire. He was willing to overlook or even condone Indian removal and his fictions obscured a history of white violence in fatalistic laments over Native "disappearance." By the end of his career, occasional echoes of these earlier positions can still be discerned. But for the most part, Cooper underwent a series of gradual shifts, nearly inverting his views on Indian removal, empire, democracy, and revolution. At the time of his death, he was working with his friend George Copway, an Ojibwe activist, on contributions to a journal dedicated to Native studies and liberation. As Robert Levine observes, this was "a Cooper who regards Indians as alive and well in the United States and not on the verge of extinction" ("Temporality" 177): a Cooper who, in his own words, opined that "The red man has a high claim to have his cause defended" and whom Copway could defend as "hav[ing] done more justice to our down trodden race than any other author" in "our dear native land" (qtd. in Cooper, *Letters* 6:275).

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[186] Though few critics read Burke's writings on the French Revolution in conjunction with Cooper, many have invoked Burke's account of the sublime as a major influence on Cooper's forest and sea tales. In the most extensive study of Cooper's landscape aesthetics, Valtiala concludes that Cooper understood sublimity "in the somewhat loose post-Burkean sense" (33), although he tended to locate it "on the Burkean levels of admiration, reverence, and respect" rather than "on the top level of absolute horror" (35).

[187] Blake Nevius registers Cooper's "interest" in the revolutions in Belgium and Italy as well as the fact that he "actively supports" Poland's struggle against Russia (notes to The Library of America edition of *The Leatherstocking Tales* 2:1036). John McWilliams, however, argues that "The events of 1830 and 1831 in France only confirmed Cooper's belief that the stability of any polity depends on its duly created institutions rather than its men" (*Political Justice* 147).

However, it is a mistake to think of Cooper as a late convert to progressivism. In fact, most criticism overcorrects in the opposite direction, oversimplifying Cooper's later politics as a conclusive, reactionary shift to the right.[188] After the Anti-Rent Wars, Cooper generally conflated elections and revolutionary violence, excoriating both. Accordingly, he increasingly sought to validate property rights, social cohesion, and existing power structures. But late in his life Cooper also bitterly condemned most *transformative or expansionist* facets of the American project, questioning his fellow citizens over-attachment to the American Revolution's legacy, genocidal violence against Natives, belief in manifest destiny, nascent imperial ventures, and movement towards direct democracy.[189] Taken together, these seemingly idiosyncratic positions tend to show that Cooper did not grow more reactionary, but more Burkean (in a social, not proto-ecological sense). Even as he exhibited new care for colonized and subaltern populations, he zealously defended the transfer of wealth between generations, became reflexively skeptical of sources of social upheaval, and rigorously opposed progressive or revolutionary appeals for sweeping changes that were not grounded in traditional practices.

By contrast with Cooper's increasingly Burkean politics, Burke and Cooper's changing treatments of sublimity—an aesthetic category with irresistible political dimensions that nonetheless resists ideological reductivism—reveal key *differences* between their late thought. In each writer's work, sublimity transforms from a primarily visual dimension into a vehicle capable of expressing complex responses to Anglo-American societies' shifting temporal orientations. But Cooper and Burke's relationships to these new revolutionary temporalities diverge significantly. Whereas Burke's late elevation of beauty over sublimity promotes gradualism, Cooper's verbal landscape paintings disclose a mixed history of catastrophism, gradualism, and punctuated equilibrium. Carefully detailing both human and non-human sources of land transformation in clearings and forest ecosystems, Cooper reluctantly reveals that landscape descriptions which superficially aspire to aesthetic holism are capable of disclosing overlapping temporalities with divergent political valences. As a result, he produces a broadly conservative eco-poetics of sublimity and action that challenges the automatic correlation between sublimity and radical historical/political rupture. By producing narration that suddenly shifts between prolonged description of green spaces and dashing plot advancement, Cooper's work also calls into question the modern ecocritical tendency to celebrate only those forms of environmental perception that depend upon slowness, prolonged attention, and close reading.

In Burke's influential early tract, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the young Irishman famously described the sublime as that which "operates in a manner analogous to terror" yet produces awe and delight "at certain distances" of safe remove. By calling the sublime "productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" he initially elevates it—both in terms of sheer power and personal preference—over the merely pleasant (mellow, harmonious, smooth) sensations that characterize the beautiful (*Philosophical* 36). However, Burke's youthful, quavering affinity for the "terror" of the sublime turns to disgust and rejection in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Instead of depicting two kinds of aesthetic experience, each of which is appropriate to given moods and contexts, in response to the French

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[188] As the coda to this project argues, Cooper's late conservatism reflects not so much a simple shift rightward as a fraught negotiation between two strands in constant tension in conservative thought ever since Burke: a valuation of social and environmental interconnection and tradition capable of gradual evolution, on the one hand, and an over-determined conflation of property rights with social cohesion, on the other.

[189] For an account of how Cooper's 1850 injunction to read the Leatherstocking novels in diegetical chronological order rather than by date of publication retroactively revises the imperialist and racialist stances of the earlier Leatherstocking novels, see Levine's compelling "Temporality, Race, and Empire."

Revolution Burke represents the sublime and the beautiful as morally charged, fundamentally incompatible political modalities.[190]

Scholars have also maintained that Cooper gradually abandoned the sublime in favor of the picturesque.[191] However, given Cooper's early celebrations of the picturesque (such as the agrarian prospect that opened *The Pioneers* in 1823) and extended action set pieces late in his career (such as the breaking of the ice dams in *Satanstoe* in 1845), such glosses must account for many exceptions to the trend.[192] In truth, Cooper's tendency to use landscape symbols in ideologically mixed ways both pre- and postdates his Burkean distrust of democratic change. For instance, in *The Pioneers*, Natty Bumppo lambasts the Templeton settlers' sweeping, rationalistic land transformations. But Cooper creates a dynamic interplay between the aesthetic and temporal dimensions of sublimity that is ultimately more nuanced than Natty's whole-hearted rejection of the settlers' efforts to tame the wilderness. When describing what Templeton was like *in 1793* (at the time of the French Revolution), Cooper echoes his hero's critique, portraying the land as denuded. Deforestation has produced a pockmarked stubble of stumps and dead branches. Because the settlers have prized temporal sublimity (the furious pace of change) over aesthetic effects, the scene is ungainly, if not downright ugly. Here, Cooper—who sometimes celebrated manifest destiny on a continental scale—expresses less concern with the sheer size or amplitude of environmental disruption than with its startling, revolutionary speed. The most pressing problem is not the extent of settlement and deforestation, but the fact that it proceeds too hastily, outpacing the ability of natural ecosystems to recover and adapt. The rapid deforestation helps to create the conditions for a dramatic, nearly instantaneous firestorm near the conclusion of *The Pioneers*—an analog for the all-consuming Terror of the French Revolution.

However, Cooper moderates the associations between land transformation and revolution by beginning The *Pioneers* with a landscape sketch set at the moment of the novel's composition (1823). Surveying the same location that was an ugly specter in 1793, Cooper preemptively reassures readers that even revolutionary upheaval can gradually enable an idealized scene that merges beauty and sublimity, producing "romantic and picturesque character… under the dominion of mild laws"

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[190] Burke was always interested in clearly differentiating the sublime and the beautiful, just as he objected to the way that the terms "delight" and "pleasure" had been "confounded with each other, because vulgar use has ranged them under the same general title" (*Philosophical* 34). These differentiations take on newly *politicized* valences after the French Revolution, however.

[191] Valtiala, for instance, claims that as a result of his European stay between 1826 and 1833, Cooper generally came to prefer "states of nature indicating order" over scenes of wilderness (17).

[192] It is fair to situate Cooper's sojourn in Europe in the late 1820s and disillusionment on his return to Andrew Jackson's America as inciting both Cooper's gradual shift in political priorities and the new dimensions in his landscape scenes. As a sign of Cooper's self-conscious shift in priorities, in *A Letter to His Countrymen*, the 1834 essay in which he feared being "Burked out" of democratic inheritances, Cooper renounced his role as an author of fiction, proclaiming that Americans were "too much under the influence of foreign theories" to appreciate works that were "purely American, and of which love of country should be the theme" (*American Democrat* 342). Cooper's promise to deliver purely American themes proved empty, as his next several books were travelogues detailing his time in Switzerland, France, England, and Italy. When he returned to fiction with *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found* (1838) four years later —a veritable eternity for an almost obscenely fecund writer—he was impelled by a desire to present a favorable self-portrait by reframing his disputes with his neighbors in a positive light. Cooper fictionally reproduces his own disillusioned homecoming in *The Redskins* (1846), where the protagonist returns from several years traveling abroad to find his estate imperiled by the Anti-Rent movement.

(*Pioneers* 16).[193] Instead of portraying the damage to the land as permanent, Cooper suggests that the skeletal remains of the forest were merely a transitional stage. Stumps may ooze forth like over-scratched acne pustules on a teenager's face, but Cooper implies that revolutionary rupture can be remedied by the gentle passage of time. It serves as the temporal analog of Burke's "certain distance" (or physical remove) that smooths sublime terror into awe and contemplative delight.

Thus, in the relative optimism of *The Pioneers*, the traumas of the French Revolution that Cooper projects onto American soil represent not so much the end of tradition as temporary disequilibrium. The settlers' efforts to establish new communities and traditions risk destabilizing the vulnerable, but also largely resilient, nonhuman ecologies that their society relies upon. Since Natty and Temple's proto-environmentalist advocacy proves ineffectual in the novel, Cooper implies that Templeton avoids environmental tragedy only because the rampant deforestation, pigeon hunts, and overfishing failed to create a total wasteland before a stable, more environmentally responsible agrarian society could be established. Judge Temple's prophetic warnings about resource exhaustion serve as a reminder that the movement from initial settlement to agrarian paradise was fortunate rather than foreordained. However, by reassuring the reader that everything has worked out by 1823, Cooper ultimately deflects attention from the precarity he spends so much time describing.

Such moments register broader tensions in Cooper's thinking about historical progress. Cooper unsuccessfully tried to balance his temperamental distrust of upheaval with his belief in the grand historical arcs that characterized the Scottish Enlightenment theory of stadialism. Stadialism argued that societies follow an inexorable developmental pattern: hunter-gatherers give way to pastoral shepherds; georgic society ascends into metropolitan empire. However, these triumphs are always followed by decadence, decline, the collapse of empire, and renewed tribalism. The clear presence of stadial thought in Cooper's novels constitutes his most prominent divergence from Burke's belief that historical change should unfold as a slow, contingent, interwoven process. Burke's ideal old-world society might eventually transform through a series of small gradations, much as every component of the Argonaut's ship would eventually be replaced without a single moment of drastic alteration. By contrast, Cooper—torn between environmentalist concerns and a desire to embrace rapid settlement patterns, between elegies for Native culture and an early-career belief in manifest destiny—finds sublime historical arcs more appealing.

A telling sign of Cooper's attraction to stadialist doctrine is the fact that Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire* (1833-1836), perhaps the most famous expression of stadialism, became Cooper's favorite work of art.[194] The series of paintings comprises five massive panels depicting the rise, fall, and collapse of a nameless civilization. It ends with a vision of ruins, but without visible human figures. Notably, Cole's pictorial sequence leaves out the Georgic stage that is present in most stadialist accounts, leading Thomas Allen to postulate a Jeffersonian reading. Because the painting implies that the transition from pastoral society to empire to ruin is inevitable, the absence of the agricultural stage hints at an alternate possibility for American development; namely, the fantasy that America might avoid "corruption and decline" so long as it remained an agrarian nation (Allen 53). Many readers interpret Natty's disappearance over the horizon at the end of each novel (or death, in

[193] In his 1794 tract "Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful," Uvedale Price proposed the picturesque as an aesthetic term to describe scenes that contain a mix of the sublime and beautiful in the same view. As Lawrence Buell puts it, Price's distinction was "dependent on the two older categories … One of its fundamental characteristics is the sudden variation, a dramatic shift between contrasting elements" (37).

[194] Valtiala notes that the so-called "rendezvous rock" that persists in Otsego Lake across Cooper's novels serves a similar function as a geological promontory visible in all five of Cole's panels (192).

the case of *The Prairie*) as ritualistically reenacting the moment the tribal stage of development passes into the agricultural stage.[195]

However, the temporally disordered historical trajectory of the Leatherstocking novels disrupts the coherence of straightforward stadial readings. Because the books are published out of order, Natty Bumppo inveterately returns in sequels, generally growing younger as white society becomes less developed and Natives are present in larger numbers.[196] Additionally, Natty deals with settlers at several stages of stadial development within *each* novel, and his agency is not always recessive. As a result, the temporally disordered novels depict not so much an inexorable forward motion or grand narrative progression as a series of fitful stops and starts. The arc of the series suggests that conflicting representatives of various so-called stages of civilization are *always* present—and always have been—within each and every generation (albeit in different, fluctuating proportions). These disruptions imply that though Cooper believed that history *tended* to move in predictable stadial patterns, either human agency or nature's cataclysmic unpredictability could suspend, intemperately hasten, or otherwise disrupt its directional tendencies.

Such stadial disruptions and cataclysms follow a particular pattern across Cooper's novels. Cooper tends to be optimistic about both environmental resilience and stadial progress when he grounds his accounts in familiar landscapes, but when he imagines uncharted, treeless spaces, he expresses apocalyptic fears about civilizational collapse. Given the closing image of the series in *The Deerslayer*—the Hutters's frontier lake house falling into obsolescence—the association of familiar landscapes with optimism may seem counterintuitive. However, in Cooper's 1850 preface to the series—his last authorial word on the subject—Cooper advocated reading the novels in the order of the events narrated rather than in the order of publication. If one follows Cooper's advice, the decayed lake house is not the close of the saga, but merely the concluding note to the first entry. It suggests not a final collapse of the American project, but the precarity and cyclicality of civilization building efforts. White settlement becomes not a single project, but a palimpsestic process. Even if the novels are read in the order of publication, Cooper's emphasis on the particularity of place serves as a reminder that the Hutters's initial failure ultimately paves the way for the vision of agrarian paradise that opened *The Pioneers*: the watery setting of *The Deerslayer* (the so-called "Glimmerglass") is unmistakably the same site (Otsego Lake) where Judge Temple and the settlers later establish Templeton.[197]

Additionally, in *The Deerslayer* Cooper differentiates between regenerative, natural decay and broader cataclysmic violence, hinting that the disintegration of the Hutter dwelling may not so bad

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[195] Some such readings, such as George Dekker's astute account of stadial dynamics in *The Prairie*, have great worth. Delineating the dispute between Natty and Ishmael Bush, Dekker notes that these two opponents of settlements are unable to fathom one another's arguments because they represent different developmental stages. Whereas Natty refuses to recognize property rights to cattle as significant, citing the Natives "right" to raid the ranchers who pass into their hunting grounds, Ishmael is equally unable to comprehend the "agriculturalist's claim to hold land as personal property" and put up fences that restrict the right to free range (*American* 91).

[196] Natty Bumppo, as proto-cowboy figure, proves hard to lay to rest: the frontier may always be ending, the hero repeatedly exiled from existence, and yet he—a vigorous, hat-waving zombie—keeps reappearing. Even the Hollywood cowboy was supposed to have died in 1969, but he still seems to have a stubborn tendency to run for office well into the twenty-first century.

[197] I am not the first to question the straightforward stadial readings of the Leatherstocking tales. In his account of *The Deerslayer*, John McWilliams notes that "The Leatherstocking Tales conclude, not with the founding of an advancing westward civilization, but with its extinction" (*Political Justice* 288). By teasing out the implications of Cooper's 1850 insistence that *The Deerslayer* should be read first, I build upon Robert Levine's "Temporality, Race and Empire."

after all. Natty reprimands Judith Hutter when she praises the comforts of deforested spaces. In response, he portrays clearings as tree cemeteries: "You find their disabled trunks, marking the 'arth like head-stones in a graveyard. It seems to me that people who live in such places must be always thinkin' of their own inds, and of universal decay; and that, too, not of the decay that is brought about by time and natur', but the decay that follows waste and violence" (*Deerslayer* 745).[198] In this Burkean moment, Natty draws a distinction between providentially sanctioned cycles of life, death, and decay in forest ecosystems and the settlers' ever accelerating war against the land.[199] Natty invokes the well-worn landscape painter's trope of the fallen tree as *memento mori* but suggests new associations for the familiar symbol. Disregarding natural contours and violently leveling the ground, the settlers appear all too eager to lop off crowns of both men and trees, thereby transforming a noble spectacle into a grotesque graveyard. Most fundamentally, Natty objects to the new temporal *pace* of sublime human activity ("the decay that follows waste and violence"), not sublimity's vastness or associations with death. By contrast, Natty's phrase "universal decay" implies the routine regenerative processes whereby old materials decompose slowly and enable new growth; a process easily assimilated into Natty's perception of God's plan. The gradual reabsorption of the Hutters's lake house into the ecosystem reflects not only a melancholy ending, but also what is to come later. The end is the beginning is the end is the beginning—and America seems to have a bright, if not entirely linear, future.

This is not to say that the Leatherstocking novels lack a stadial arc. If they are read in the order Cooper intended in the 1850 preface, the blithe depiction of Otsego County farmland that begins *The Pioneers* directly contrasts with the vision of emptiness that closes *The Prairie*. Whereas he built upon his intimate familiarity with the region to show successive stages of development in *The Pioneers* and *The Deerslayer*, in *The Prairie* Cooper portrayed a landscape he had never visited and produced a foreboding warning about the fate of American empire. At the time of the novel's publication in 1827, many of the white settlements west of the Mississippi still existed quite tenuously, their continuance much less assured than those in upstate New York. In this context, the white settlers' eastward retreat at the end of the novel takes on a dramatically different valence than the similar movement in *The Deerslayer*.

Accordingly, Cooper blurs the lines between natural and unnatural (or human and heavenly) upheaval that are comfortingly clear in the passage on clearings in *The Deerslayer*.

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[198] Natty's differentiation between acceptable and unacceptable forms of decay in *The Deerslayer* is not altogether new to the series. Early in *The Pioneers*, Cooper's narrator describes the tree stumps that pockmark Cooperstown as a "skeleton" (45). Images of dead trees also occur throughout *The Last of the Mohicans*. Valtiala notes that they are particularly associated with Tamenund, who says "I am a blazed pine, in a clearing of the pale-faces." Given Cooper's deliberate distinctions between trees downed by the axe and those falling naturally, Cooper most likely is not comparing Tamemund to fallen logs so much as contrasting naturalized, peaceful death with a life cruelly prolonged amidst the violence of settler colonialism. Blazed trees are generally left standing in order to point the way for loggers to cut down other groves, just as Tamenund has outlived his contemporaries and witnessed violence that portends ongoing campaigns of removal or extermination.

[199] The language of warfare against nature is most apparent in three places: in *The Pioneers* scene where Richard marshals the villagers to massacre pigeons, even loading a cannon full of shot to create mass carnage, in the mock-heroic description of Billy Kirby as engaged in Homeric single combat when chopping down trees, and during the somewhat more serious account of Ishmael Bush and his family as military giants who chop down the first trees they find in *The Prairie*.

Throughout *The Prairie*, Cooper suggests that the prairie ecosystem may not be able to sustain white society.[200] In an under-studied passage, Natty portrays the entire bioregion's supposed desolation as divine retribution *for human wastefulness*. He imagines that white settlers will encounter the naked land "and find that a hand, which can lay the 'arth bare at a blow, has been here, and swept the country, *in very mockery of their wickedness*. They will turn on their tracks, like a fox that doubles, and then the rank smell of their own footsteps, will show them the madness of their waste" (*Prairie* 963). The tone Natty adopts here stands out from the rest of the series. While Natty's bitter laments over poor conservation practices are always filled with judgment, here the ominous imagery ("the fox that doubles," "the rank smell of their own footsteps"), the Biblical tenor, and the terrifying, but almost gleeful, poetic and retributory justice (for "the madness of their waste") shift the tone from social critique to prophecy, gesturing toward a lineage of environmental Jeremiads past and future.[201] Taken in combination with the novel's account of prairie mounds—the final burial place of dead civilizations—this passage implies that white settlement might justifiably be wiped out entirely.

By imagining the land as a cleared forest, rather than an originally treeless ecosystem, Cooper implies that the grove the Bush family encounters is the last remnant of a prior order rather than a random anomaly. The imagery implicates, "in very mockery," the white settlers' "wasty ways" in *The Pioneers*. In the shape of the prairie itself, God fulfills the environmental destruction that the settlers *could have* brought upon themselves in *The Pioneers*—had their logging practices proceeded just a bit faster, had Billy Kirby been quite as rapacious and efficient as Ishmael Bush and his sons are when they clear-cut the lone stand of trees they find in the prairie. In a scene that is at once Homeric and Biblical, Ishmael Bush stands by as his gigantic progeny ravage the grove:

> At length the eldest of the sons stepped heavily forward, and, without any apparent effort, he buried his axe to the eye in the soft body of a cotton-wood tree. He stood, a moment, regarding the effect of the blow, with that sort of contempt with which a giant might be supposed to contemplate the puny resistance of a dwarf, and then flourishing the implement above his head, with the grace and dexterity with which a master of the art of offense would wield his nobler though less useful weapon, he quickly severed the trunk of the tree, bringing its tall top crashing to the earth, in submission to his prowess. His companions regarded the operation with indolent curiosity, until they saw the prostrate trunk stretch'd on the ground, when, as if a signal for a general attack had been given, they advanced in a body to the work, and in a space of time, and with a neatness of execution that would have astonished an ignorant spectator, they stripped a small but suitable spot of its burthen of forest, as effectually, and almost as promptly, as if a whirlwind had passed along the place (*Prairie* 898).

As Richard White observes, environmentalists have at times been guilty of overusing the metaphor of rape to describe human exploitations of natural environments, but if ever there was a nineteenth-century passage that justified the convention, this is it (White 63). The violation involves not just the

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[200] One reason that The Great Plains were initially referred to as The Great American Desert is because the deep root mats of prairie grasses were often too difficult for settlers to plow until John Deere's invention of the steel-tipped plow in 1837. Cooper wrote *The Prairie* almost a decade before this development, but by the time of his 1850 preface, the status of settlement in the region had changed substantially.

[201] Aside from the Book of Jeremiah itself, Natty's language of desecration and punishment particularly recalls portions of Michael Wigglesworth's "Day of Doom," the culmination of Jonathan Edwards "Spider Letter," the first stanza of Gerard Manley Hopkins's "God's Grandeur," a smattering of texts studied in the subfield of toxic ecologies, and many writings of the late 1960s and 1970s, including Judith Wright's short poem "Australia, 1970" and nearly every word penned by Edward Abbey.

use of the phallic "implement" to penetrate the tree's "soft body" (its "cotton" wood torn asunder like a dress stripped away), but the "indolent curiosity" of the brothers who watch before they join the "general attack." Collapsing the distinction between pornographic spectatorship and participation, Cooper's ghastly scene imagines that the "eye" can be "buried" as deeply in a body as a weapon or a penis; that a collection of viewers can be inspired by their discretely individual, yet shared, gaze to merge "in a" single "body" of mimetic depredation; and that a totalized conflation of sexual violation and murder ("execution") can proceed in grotesquely unexpected ways: *from* a coldly detached observational position rather than emotional frenzy, all *with* a chilling "neatness."

This rape is profane in religious as well as secular senses. Physically elevating himself above the "prostrate trunk" in "submission to his prowess," the Goliath-like Philistine and his brothers gaze down at the "dwarf"-like logs, while Natty, watching the scene, "cast his eyes upward, at the vacancies they left in the heavens" (*Prairie* 898). Natty intuits something the Bush's don't consciously realize; namely, that by despoiling one of the last groves remaining in the prairies, they have taken it upon themselves to *complete* what Natty imagined as God's retributive justice *for* human wastefulness. In their destruction of the forest's remnants, they bear an analogical relationship to a force of nature itself ("a whirlwind"). But the narrator uses a simile, rather than a metaphor. It is only "as if" the Bush clan had the power of a whirlwind. They proceed disturbingly fast, "almost" (but not quite) "as promptly" as the force of nature/God, and only succeed in having "stripped a small but suitable spot." Anticipating the moment when they are forced to abandon the prairie entirely at the end of the novel, this scene's emphasis on human power slips into a subtle meditation on the workings of hubris. Far from divine whirlwinds, these aptly named, fallen Bushes are in fact far punier than the trees they fell.

Cooper's brings his message home as the novel hurtles towards a fire that is reminiscent of the destruction late in *The Pioneers*. In the grassland ecosystem, the blaze moves with especially dangerous rapidity, threatening to reduce the (nearly) burning Bush clan into charred remains. By depicting the human-caused fire's overwhelming speed, Cooper invokes Natty's Biblical vision once again, echoing—but again falling short—of the destructive potential of God's singular, *instantaneous* "blow."[202] Taken together, these visions of deforestation warn that unregulated, rapid environmental transformation might result in an apocalyptic conflagration that would end the stadial cycle of rise and fall entirely, transforming all of America into a prairie Cooper imagines as capable of sustaining only nomadic tribes.[203] The consequences of such an essentialist link between particular places and civilizational "stages" underlie the rhetorical sleights of hand Andrew Jackson used to justify the Trail of Tears: by deeming Oklahoma suitable *only* for Natives, he tried to naturalize the political decision to send *all* natives to Oklahoma.

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[202] In addition to suggesting environmental retribution, the fire scene in *The Prairie* serves a double function. It allows Cooper to indicate knowledge of the ways Native burning practices served as a means of altering landscapes and corralling game, thereby thwarting the popular twentieth century image of Native Americans as saintly environmental Indians. It also calls into question the nineteenth-century claim that since Natives did not modify the land itself, it could be appropriated by settlers who saw so-called "improvement" as the final proof of property ownership.

[203] Of course, the Great Plains are biotically complex, lush, and eminently habitable, and always have been. As many have pointed out, Cooper's depiction of the Midwest as a wasteland owed more to the myth of the Great American Desert than to his own observation. The fact that he never visited made it all the easier to depict it as an empty, allegoric wasteland.

Cooper portrays a nascent settlement coming to an even more dramatic end in his late novel *The Crater* (1847).[204] Like *The Prairie*, *The Crater* takes place in a treeless ecosystem that Cooper never visited. The novel tracks Mark Woolston's shipwreck on an uncharted volcanic Pacific island and his laborious efforts to transform the space into a pasture, a farm, and ultimately, a colony for hundreds of inhabitants. Instead of arboreal absence signifying prior divine judgment or social collapse, the island is brand new and offers the possibility of creating a morally-cleansed civilization from scratch. The result is a far purer state of nature fantasy than anything in the Leatherstocking novels. In the *Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke famously maintained that property rights were first established when a person in the state of nature "mixed his Labour" with a natural object and thereby "joyned to it something that is his own" (*Two Treatises* 288). This primal image of "mixing" has always conveniently attached to scenes of plowing, planting, and harvesting the soil, suggesting an inherent link between agricultural labor, landed property, enclosure, and exclusion. But on the igneous crater, Woolston must generate the soil before he can "mix" his labor with it. He does more than build society from the ground up; he creates the ground itself. After nearly a hundred pages describing Woolston's composting practices, Cooper not only imagines the entire settlement as thoroughly and righteously appropriated by Woolston, but also offers an environmental analog to the settler colonial fantasy of finding true *terra incognita* (or in this case, *terra inprocreabilis*: land that is "uncreated" prior to the white man's transformative touch). Such a space can be colonized without the nagging guilt of having genocidally displaced, enslaved, or otherwise subjugated an indigenous population. In fact, Cooper recasts Pacific Natives from a neighboring island as imperial invaders of Woolston's domain, making the novel perhaps the purest (if also most fantastical) nineteenth-century instance of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a narrative of anti-conquest: the generic pattern, especially in natural history and sentimental narratives of exploration, that disguises one's complicity in imperialism behind reluctance or passivity (*Imperial Eyes* 9).

The climate's perfect growing conditions and Woolston's almost effortless initial successes as colonial governor accelerate the new society's development. In this stage, the novel plays a great deal with expectations about temporal representability. After almost a hundred pages describing Woolston's composting methods, the colony's accession of hundreds of residents occurs with stunning rapidity. Prior to the novel's conclusion, Cooper appears to celebrate civilizational progress by compressing stadial development into an impossibly short span. But ultimately, Cooper shows how the recursions of seasonal cycles, the prosaic continuity of homogenous empty time, and the relatively rapid stadial development are *all* imperiled by the catastrophic immediacy of geologic rupture. Ultimately, Woolston's success and failure has far less to do with agricultural innovation or social contrivance than three geological events: the volcanic eruption that creates the crater, an earthquake that drastically enlarges the island until it can fit a much larger colony, and a third unspecified geological happening that sinks the bulk of the island, killing all the colonists except Woolston and his family. The causes of the geologic cataclysm are unclear. But Cooper, increasingly skeptical of populism and embittered in his old age, depicts the society's rapid decline (even before the geological rupture) as connected to the inhabitants' efforts to establish a free press and depose Woolston from his role as a benevolent dictator. By portraying democratic developments as profoundly misguided, Cooper raises the disturbing possibility that he now believes reforms *deserve* God's punishing wrath, making *The Crater* a powerful exemplar of both his conservative turn and his skepticism of extending American empire outside the North American continent. The book is

[204] Because my focus here is on the Leatherstocking series, *The Crater* appears as a brief, comparative aside. The novel fully deserves its own chapter and is finally beginning to receive meaningful critical attention.

indeed a stadial tale, but by compressing ages into a few short years, it warns that America's development might be *too* hasty, and ultimately implode in upon itself.[205]

The Crater's apocalyptic ending mirrors and amplifies Burke's hyperbolic response to the French Revolution.[206] Long scenes of solitary survival and agricultural endeavor cause readers to invest in Woolston's (and, more distantly, Rousseau's) project of creating a society from scratch, only to reveal that the project's apparent successes were illusory. What seems to be *terra firma* is destabilized. That which is hastily begun (the island's overnight appearance and dramatic expansion) is hastily undone. Cooper suggests that societies established by singular, catastrophic revolutions are unstable and prone to secondary cataclysms. By moving from the whirlwinds and firestorms in the Leatherstocking novels to visions of geologic upheaval, Cooper—having already echoed Burke's metaphors of uprooting in his accounts of deforestation—employs another of Burke's favorite figures for revolution: earthquakes. In describing the "earthquake of popular commotion" and voicing a fear that France might merely be a foreshock of a "general earthquake in the political world" of Europe, Burke uncannily anticipated the French revolutionaries' later celebratory appropriation of cataclysmic imagery, including Desmoulin's *torrent revolutionnaire* and Barere's claim that the revolution was "not merely revolutionary, but 'revolutionary like nature'" (qtd. in Miller 16).

According to Mary Ashburn Miller, revolutionaries' use of such metaphors reveals that the French "Terror was not a result of a radicalization in hopes of realizing the general will, but instead was understood to be, and was portrayed as, the rule of nature—agentless, inevitable, destructive in its preservation of order" (18). As Hannah Arendt argues in *On Revolution*, unleashing such language meant not only naturalizing discrete violent acts, but surrendering agency to historical processes with irresistible momentum that were beyond the powers of human regulation. In this context, Burke's choice of earthquakes—the type of geological event that unleashes the broadest devastation with the least warning—seems prescient. But because Burke also repeatedly insisted that the French revolution was "*unnatural*," he found himself caught in a double bind that necessitated reading nature selectively, effectively *de*naturalizing those facets of the nonhuman world that did not fit with his political preferences. He painted himself into the opposite corner as the Committee of Public Safety, who used equally opportunistic metaphors but "*only* envisioned [nature] in its accidental convulsions, the eruptions of volcanoes, the earthquakes in Lisbon and Sicily" (Miller 16).[207]

For both Burke and Cooper, cataclysmic metaphors do more than register destruction: they also indict the essential *strangeness* of revolutionary practices. More often than he denounced the French Revolution by comparing it to cataclysms in exotic climes, Burke painted pictures of gradually established, interconnected, verdant landscapes *threatened* by upheaval. In these familiar English scenes, oaks, cows, flies, and grass live in ordinary, everyday relation to one another. Burke uses such imagery to promote proto-ecological complexity and move towards political nuance, at least compared to his more simplistic metaphors of revolution as destructive earthquakes. Similarly, Cooper's most politically prophetic and didactic landscapes were those least grounded in personal observation: the emptiness of *The Prairie* and the alternately desolate and tempestuous land- and seascape of *The Crater*. Cooper does not skimp on descriptive detail in these novels (particularly in

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[205] At the end of *The Crater*, Cooper explicitly compares the eponymous outcropping to Cole's iconic promontory in *The Course of Empire*.

[206] In the closing paragraph of *The Crater*, Cooper zooms out from geology to a cosmic scale, reminding us that we have but "temporary possessions of but small portions of a globe that floats, a point, in space" thereby re-emphasizing the utter insignificance of human endeavor (359).

[207] Of course, when the Committee invoked earthquakes and volcanoes as metaphors for revolution, they did so approvingly.

The Crater), but in each case human settlers are entirely responsible for attempting to graft ecosystem relationships—and human social order—onto a land initially presented as barren. Cooper implies that such grafts are likely to fail, not least because any complexity in such a system emerges out of the folly of human contrivance, not from the natural world's ecological interconnections.

By contrast, when Cooper depicted landscapes he knew from direct and prolonged observations (especially in the Upstate New York forests he is most associated with), they accrue a range of nuanced and overlapping associations. In addition to signifying divine judgment in *The Prairie* and *The Crater*, Cooper portrays clearings caused by human deforestation as variously signifying revolutionary temporality, human hubris, and the possibility of the sublime giving way to the picturesque.[208] Generally, Natty Bumppo is opposed to all of these registers. But in his retrospective 1850 Preface to the Leatherstocking tales, Cooper suggests that clearings have enabled the hunter a particular kind of access to God all along:

> The imagination has no great task in portraying to itself a being removed from the every-day inducements to err, which abound in civilized life, while he retains the best and simplest of his early impressions; who sees God in the forest; hears him in the woods; bows to him in the firmament that o'ercanopies all; submits to his sway in a humble belief of justice and mercy; in a word, a being who finds the impress of the Deity in all the works of nature, without any blots produced by the expedients, and passion, and mistakes of man. (*Deerslayer* 492).

More than a romantic rapture, this passage subtly yet profoundly recasts the respective moral valence of sublime and beautiful landscapes elsewhere in the novels. Cooper pictures Natty finding God in the forest, but then draws attention to the sky with the image of the "firmament that o'ercanopies all." The "heavens" are not visible through the dense forest canopy; they can only be accessed through clearings, signifying an important connection between civilization and religious feeling that cuts against Natty's usual efforts to locate God within nature.

In *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Robert Pogue Harrison argues that wooded spaces took on a "profane" significance in Western culture for "a simple reason: they obstructed the communication of Jove's intentions. In other words, their canopies concealed an open view of the sky […] since Greek and Roman times at least, we have been a civilization of sky-worshippers, children of a celestial father" (6). In light of Harrison's mytho-poetic reading, Natty's recognition of God in the heavens incongruously suggests spiritual value in the very practices of deforestation that he usually so vehemently opposes. Billy Kirby's imperiling, too-officious axe is what causes Natty to move from recognition ("hear[ing]" God's voice in the forest) to supplication: in the clearings, he "bows" to God's will. These sanctified associations do not merely supplant earlier meanings; in *The Pioneers*, the forest fire caused by wasteful logging practices also darkens the sight lines opened by the clearings.[209]

Adding further complexity, Cooper depicts clearings created by non-human forces, thereby challenging Natty's assumptions that nature's rhythms must be either gently continuous (Burkean) or intensely apocalyptic (scenes of revolution or divine judgment). In the opening panorama of *The Pathfinder*, the narrator describes four figures climbing a "pile of trees… uptorn by a tempest" (or

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[208] Cooper even draws attention to the fact that clearings may take on specific, local valences early in *The Pioneers* when he deems it necessary to clarify that the term itself is a regional colloquialism: "In the vale… there was what *in the language of the country* was called a *clearing*" (*Pioneers* 17).

[209] In addition, Judge Temple's house has four chimneys, suggesting poor construction and excessive use of wood as fuel (Valtiala 57). Rutkow notes that "In terms of sheer quantity, domestic fuel demands accounted for the greatest number of felled trees in the new nation" (70) also causing smoke-filled skies in the clearings.

"wind-row") as "a sort of oases in the solemn obscurity of the virgin forests of America" (9). The scene seems conventional enough but is fraught with tensions and contradictions because it forces Natty to confront a fact that he evaded in *The Pioneers*: clearings often occur without human intervention, and the forest is not necessarily more natural or peaceful than environments modified by human agency.

The tableau poses as a conventionally pleasant "prospect" familiar from both landscape painting and opening scenes of nineteenth-century novels, but the very clarity of the view poses problems for Natty given his stated aversion to clearings in *The Pioneers*.[210] Because he must get out of the trees in order to truly see his beloved forest's immensity, he is back in the thick(et) of it when it comes to a coherent attitude towards clearings; not out of the woods at all, the clearing does not clarify, but challenges Natty's (ironically) clear-cut, moralistic mapping of virtues onto landscapes. Puns aside, Cooper's depiction of an open space produced through nature's violent agency illustrates a key difference between his use of the sublime and Burke's. Whereas Burke indirectly implies that certain phenomena observable in nature (such as earthquakes) are *unnatural* in order to discredit the French revolutionaries, Natty's vision of a healthy ecosystem serves as a reminder that violent upheavals take place within the natural world, rather than as exceptions to it. Nature contains not only gradual, accretive, interwoven processes, but also cataclysms. Thus, whereas Burke seemed to reverse his aesthetic preferences for the sublime over the beautiful in response to the excesses of the French Revolution, in this late Cooper novel, Natty directly confronts the fact that his access to God's sublimity depends on upheaval that took place with a swiftness eclipsing the settler's deforestation practices which he abhors.

However, where God's retributive deforestation in *The Prairie* was apocalyptic, here Cooper presents a scene where swift, event-bound "catastrophism" is common, where it varies in size and scope, and where disruption contributes to a healthy ecosystem. *The Pathfinder* is subtitled *The Inland Sea*, and on its surface the passage seems to affirm the connection between not only the Great Lakes and the ocean, but also between the expanse of greenery and the rolling blue waves. The imposing grandeur of the scene depends not only on the elevated vantage point, but also on the reiterated comparison of the swelling hills and unbroken foliage as "oceanic"—the concept that most aptly represents sublimity in both Burke and Kant's accounts. However, Cooper complicates what he calls "the sublimity connected with vastness" (*Pathfinder* 9) by disrupting our vision of immensity with particularity, making sure we don't miss the trees for the forest. The "broad and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage" is not an undifferentiated oceanic totality, but a site of diversity. As Natty looks down from atop his jack-strawed heap of broken arbors he observes

> Here and there, by some accident of the tempests, or by a caprice of nature, a trifling opening among these giant members of the forest, permitted an inferior tree to struggle upward toward the light, and to lift its modest head nearly to a level with the surrounding surface of verdure. Of this class were the birch, a tree of some account, in regions less favoured, the quivering aspen, various generous nut-woods, and divers

[210] Cooper considers the problem of sublime clarity elsewhere as well. In a clearing scene after the massacre at Fort William Henry in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper paints the landscape a second time, finding that the formerly "lovely" view has turned horrifying not because it is enveloped in vast obscurity (a key feature of Burke's sublime) but because its sublime features such as "the bold and rocky mountains" are now rendered "*too distinct*" as "objects were arrayed in their harshest but truest colours." Such excessive visual clarity, however, does not produce transcendent insight, as "the illimitable void of heaven," which one is forced to look to for both visual and psychological relief, is "shut" to the eye's "gaze… by the dusky sheet of ragged and driving vapour" (*Mohicans* 205). Such clearings both clarify and terrify, changing the Burkean association of sublimity with occlusion.

> others, that resembled the ignoble and the vulgar, thrown by circumstances, into the present of the stately and the great. Here and there, too, the tall, straight trunk of the pine, pierced the vast field, rising high above it, like some grand monument reared by art on the plain of leaves. (*Pathfinder* 11)

The metaphors about trees that dominate this passage elicit a literary hall of mirrors containing such shadowy influences as Virgil, Ovid, Dante, and Spenser, each of whom seeks to outdo his predecessors' epic catalogs.

Despite these classical resonances, it would be a mistake to view the scene as *only* an intertextual dialog rather than an account of a living forest ecosystem. While Cooper and his contemporaries did not have the scientific basis to elucidate the exact "caprice of nature" that causes such gaps in the canopy, modern forest ecology shows that Cooper's detailed depiction reveals not just the results of a single cataclysm, but a realistic, mature first-growth forest subject to a variety of slow changes, small disruptions, and larger climatic events.[211] Whereas the larger clearings—like the jack-strawed pile that constitutes Natty's vantage point—likely came about because of a prior hurricane or large-scale thunderstorm, middle-sized and "trifling" gaps in the region are often caused by wind let in after the first large disturbance or by non-weather events such as animal defoliators and pathogens. In keeping with Cooper's observations, such mid-sized gaps do, indeed, tend to be colonized by wind-blown, shade tolerant species such as birches and aspens.[212] And in some cases, when a tree is blown over, the tipped-up root-ball of soil at the base creates a microhabitat for several different species based on relative quantities of shade, moisture, and soil conditions—leading to odd instances where a solitary specimen is surrounded by trees of different species that thrive in different conditions.

Henry David Thoreau's article "The Succession of Forest Trees", still sometimes cited by ecologists today, goes further than Cooper and posits mechanisms that cause particular species to succeed one another after human or nonhuman disturbances result in widespread deforestation (*Natural History Essays* 72-92). Though Cooper's scene in *The Pathfinder* only hints towards providence or "caprice" rather than offering a causal theory, it is equally astute as an observational account of New England forests. Without speculating directly on past events, Cooper's synchronic tableau gestures at a diverse history characterized by what Timothy Morton calls "concentric temporalities": individual organisms' overlapping and simultaneous relation to geologic deep time, homogenous empty time, modernity's ruptures, and many other coexistent temporal regimes (*Dark Ecology* 69).[213] Where Thoreau focuses on singular, sweeping cataclysms and their after-effects, Cooper moves between an initial focus on a single "accident" to an account of many "circumstances" that create "divers" speciation.[214] As a result, his prospect contains a different set of implications for the barely submerged metaphor of revolution than Thoreau's lecture that focuses on a single instance of overthrow and "succession" that causes one monoculture to succeed another.

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[211] For the following claims about forest ecology, gap dynamics, and succession in *The Pathfinder*, I am indebted to a collaborative close reading with Stella Cousins, who researches conifer forests as a University of California Sustainability Fellow. Cousins informs me that some of the species that Cooper describes elsewhere in the tree catalog—such as chestnut and elm—no longer grow in Cooper's region due to disease.

[212] Coincidentally, forest ecologists refer to the first tree colonizers after a disturbance as "pioneers."

[213] As Paul Huebener observes, "Ecosystems contain as many 'times' as they do objects, processes, or creatures—probably more" (334).

[214] This is not to claim that Cooper is more *accurate* than Thoreau—they are simply describing different stages and kinds of forest succession. Just as Thoreau is more perceptive regarding causation and patterns, Cooper's account is more attuned to the role that topographical and climatic factors play in rendering succession unpredictable.

In fact, the political power of Cooper's passage—namely, its ability to describe the way that a *variety* of temporalities come together to produce a single organic whole—depends upon his decision to step back from political metaphor and let environmental detail lead. Instead of becoming entrapped (like Burke or the Jacobins) by trying to fix certain processes as natural and others as unnatural, Cooper emphasizes the descriptive over the prescriptive. By being less anthropocentric, he stumbles into a more compelling metaphor for historical change. Cooper's tableau likely would not appeal to Burke's aesthetic sensibilities. But by refusing to force the contours and complexities of the nonhuman world into the contours of a political program, Cooper, who feared that Americans might be "Burked-out" of their rights, instead out-Burkes Burke.

By drawing attention to a sublime landscape punctured by diversity, Cooper anticipates the modern, post-equilibrium ecological subfield of gap dynamics. We now know that the presence of certain "climax" species (such as yellow birch) that mark a mature (but not teleologically complete and unchanging) forest, are often present *only* "due to disturbance" (Kimmerer 84).[215] In *The Pathfinder*, both the initial, unnamed cataclysm—which acts with a sublime speed and force that counteracts the sublime vastness of the scene—and subsequent "trifling" incidents leave allegorical hierarchies intact even while providing for transgressive exceptions. They literally "uproot" trees, breaking down the uniformity of the forest ecosystem, thereby allowing the "inferior" species to rise to a position of near equality. While Cooper does not ultimately claim that these "inferior" trees' impressive stature undoes the structural differences between "the vulgar" and the "stately and the great," he nonetheless creates an arboreal landscape that looks something like Burke's great harmony: containing "divers" multitudes all necessary for the functioning of the whole within a rigid and unbending class structure. More importantly, as Michael Pollan observes (contrary to Thoreau's somewhat mechanistic account of forest succession) "chance events can divert [nature's] course into an almost infinite number of different channels" (*Second Nature* 183).[216] By emphasizing "accident" and "caprice" rather than a divinely sanctioned plan, Cooper suggests that even if a certain social order is somehow "natural," it has emerged from an arbitrary, contingent history with a multiplicity of causes. The implication is that history could have produced a different, *yet equally natural* order.

The depth of environmental detail and hints of a complicated past that open *The Pathfinder* stand starkly opposed to the environmental generalizations Cooper employs when he portrays the entire great plains region as the result of a singular act of divine justice in *The Prairie*. There, a vengeful God actively intervenes, while *The Pathfinder*'s forest seems to evoke a removed, almost deistic creator content to let a variety of events play out. This distinction between two types of Cooper settings and stories—the ecologically "grounded" forest novels and treeless novels of "reckoning"—recalls a long-running debate among Cooper scholars over the question of Cooper's realism or lack thereof.[217] Despite the verisimilitude Cooper employs in scenes such as the opening

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[215] Kimmerer observes that "Paradoxically, disturbance is vital to the stability of the forest" (84).

[216] In "Gardens, Landscape, Nature" Elissa Rosenberg observes that "succession is a highly probabilistic and contingent process" (225). It unfolds neither predictably nor towards a teleologically stable end state.

[217] The difference between these categories depends more on Cooper's personal experience and observation than something inherent to the different landscapes or ecologies. As Ziser observes, in the late novel *The Oak Openings*, Cooper returns to a prairie setting after finally visiting the Midwest and astutely portrays the ecological relationships between settlers, bees, and oak meadows. As the title indicates, Cooper no longer depicts the plains as a deforested, flat abstraction. Cooper's sea novels deserve to be considered as a third type of symbolic landscape, albeit one beyond the scope of this project.

prospect in *The Pathfinder*, generations of critics have argued that Cooper's historical romances take place in idealized landscapes lacking particularity.[218]

Beginning with D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, many have maintained that Cooper's action-driven narration obscures observational inattention and thematic incoherence. Unsurprisingly, Leslie Fiedler, the most demystifying (and thus, modern) member of the myth and symbol school, is the harshest critic in this line. In his portrait of Cooper's historical romances as fuzzy evocations of a nostalgic past, Fiedler argues that "ordinarily [Cooper's] characters flee or pursue through woods which contain not oaks or beeches or maples, only unnamed archetypal trees, the tree-ish, conceptual trees children draw." In these

> magic woods… no mosquito bites, no ant crawls; the charmed underbrush itself relents and will not tear the clothes or mar the looks of the two girls who without soap or comb or brush must maintain their symbolic beauty, light and dark, unblemished. Were one of the actors once to sweat or belch or retire to the bushes to relieve himself, the spell would be broken. (201)

While Fiedler's criticism of Cooper's idealized female figures is on-point, he anachronistically imposes the value criteria of late-nineteenth-century realism onto the antebellum era. Given Cooper's attention to particular tree species in certain passages, Fiedler's account of Cooper's "magic woods" is, if not entirely off base, itself a generalization. Nonetheless, similar dismissals persist in recent criticism. For instance, Valtiala portrays the opening prospect of *The Pathfinder*—considered herein as an exemplary incorporation of environmental detail—as a "dream space of an idealized wood" rife with rehashed language about "the carpet of foliage" and the "vault of heaven" (156).

Despite such criticisms, Cooper is a more perceptive observer of nature than he usually gets credit for—even if his attention often drifts.[219] On the one hand, Cooper made a self-conscious decision to decrease description and increase the pace of action as the Leatherstocking tales progressed. In an 1832 preface to *The Pioneers*, Cooper suggested that he had been overly attached to description in his 1823 novel. It would have been "a better book," he reflected, if it included less "literal fact" and more "general detail" (*Pioneers* 6). On the other hand, even late in his career, Cooper continued to gain inspiration from particular places, grafting plots onto them after the fact and thereby challenging the usual fictional hierarchy that elevates action over setting. *The Deerslayer* was initially inspired by an evening ride around Otsego Lake that Cooper took with his daughter Susan (who would go on to be one of the most astute reporters of nature in nineteenth-century America in her own right). According to Susan's recollections, Cooper initially began the last book in the series not out of a desire to conclude observations on Natty Bumppo but because, as he exclaimed to her, he felt he must write "one more book, dearie, about our little lake!" (qtd. in Valtiala 173).

More importantly, Cooper's characteristic alternations between plot-driven action and environmental description are capable of disrupting critical categories. If Cooper lacks bona fides as a nature writer, it may be because of ecocriticism's historical tendency to gravitate toward—and perhaps over-invest in—minute, static description. Traditionally, the type of environmental attention

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[218] At times critics also draw connections between Cooper's misrepresentations of Native Americans and his wavering attention to environmental detail. In *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden*, a work that has much to say about landscape, McGregor summarizes the debate over whether Cooper's natives are realistically portrayed (135-137).

[219] One might also recall the oak tree released from "thralldom" early in *The Pioneers*, or the extensive debate over the comparative merits of sugar maples and pine trees later in the novel.

that attracts the plaudits of ecocritics is either granular (focused accounts of particular forms/verbal still-lives) or *biologically* relational (ecological), but Cooper's action scenes evince a deep interest describing *dynamic* interactions between humans and nonhuman *things*—bodies in motion and relation. For instance, in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Glens Falls symbolize a complicated interaction between free will and predestination.[220] However, it is their existence as a real place—a material fact, not a symbol—that interrupts the novel's incessant motion, halting the characters' flight and impelling a momentary shift from breathless action to detailed description. Cooper portrays the caverns with precision that attests to his visit to the site. But the presence of place and materiality of objects is not diminished when hostile Natives arrive, and a shootout commences. If anything, spatial relationships come into *sharper* focus. The precise material contours of the caverns determine the action that follows, serving as a map that both inspires and constrains the scope of authorial creativity. The question of who lives, dies, or is injured seems determined not purely by Cooper's design, but also by the actual placement of rocks that shield characters from bullets as they attempt to navigate the angles of this mimetically reproduced space. As Lawrence Buell observes of works more central to the environmental literature canon, at such moments "literature releases imagination's free play, though the play is not entirely free, since the imagination is regulated by encounters with the environment" (Buell 94).[221]

Michael Ziser comes closest to capturing the way that Cooper's plot both depends upon and is constrained by spatial arrangements of material objects. In Natty's standoff with Billy Kirby, the woodsman threatens to fell a tree on Natty, and Natty responds by promising to shoot any (human) limbs that Billy might expose during the process. Ziser notes:

> the attention that Cooper's narrative casts on the material quiddity of the tree at this moment is intense, and even though the author does not provide us with a richly descriptive portrait of them, the unnamed particulars of the tree loom large in any reading. *It is as if an important plot function suddenly depends upon and follows from the matter it habitually orders.* The stalemate could not be without a tree of a certain size, composition, habit, and placement … (134; emphasis added)

When Ziser argues that the "particulars of the tree loom large in any reading," he does not mean that they are described in great detail; in fact, they are "unnamed." And yet, they are integral to our ability to imagine the scene. In an act of misdirection, Cooper marks the tree's particular features not

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[220] Cooper describes Glens Falls as a place where "The whole design of the river seems disconcerted. First it runs smoothly, as if meaning to go down the descent as things were ordered; then it angles about and faces the shores… as if unwilling to leave the wilderness and mingle with the salt! … the river fabricates all sorts of images, as if having broken loose from order, it would try its hand at every thing. And yet, what does it amount to! After the water has been suffered to have its will for a time, like a headstrong man, it is gathered together by the hand that made it, and a few rods below you may see it all, flowing steadily towards the sea, as was pre-ordained from the first foundation of the 'arth!" (*Mohicans* 64-5). The moment merits reading in conjunction with Jefferson's famous description of the junction of the Potomac and the Shenandoah, which likewise stages a drama of sublime revolutionary energies being merged into a more peaceful representation of transcendent purpose: divine providence in Cooper's novel, the union of North and South in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. It also recalls Imlay's account of the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers near Pittsburgh (*Emigrants* 53), and anticipates Melville's representation of the Mississippi as "the all dashing and all-fusing spirit of the West" that brings together "helter-skelter" an eclectic array of social types in *The Confidence-Man* (17).

[221] Even Valtiala, who is often dismissive of Cooper's failures of verisimilitude, acknowledges that in Cooper's novel "Not only do the events as a rule take place in nature, they are to a considerable extent impelled by nature" (12). Valtiala cites Dekker and John McWilliams in support of this claim.

through elongated description but by placing them in relation to the changing arrangement of human bodies. He brings the reader's *unconscious* attention to the forest by a kind of obtrusive necessity. We may wish to stare at Billy Kirby, but we must notice the obstructing tree if we wish to see any part of him peeking out. Configuration channels attention towards objects that would otherwise serve as mere obstacles, thereby revealing them to have a life of their own.

Cooper also habitually activates other, under-theorized kinds of environmental relationships. His characters constantly run past, through, around, over, and under environmental hindrances. Their mode of knowing nature unfolds in the moments that tactile and visual perception intersect with kinetic activity, which is also revealed as a mode of perception. No less an observer of naturalistic detail than Honor de Balzac suggested that these action scenes connect readers to the land. In a review of *The Deerslayer*, he praised Cooper's capacity for spatial observation in strikingly environmental terms, writing

> From page to page, dangers rise naturally, without any effort to bring them on the scene … The dangers are so allied to the lay of the land that you examine attentively the rocks, the trees, the rapids, the bark canoes, the bushes; you incarnate yourself in the country; it passes into you, or you into it, and you know not how this metamorphosis, this work of genius, has been accomplished; but you feel it impossible to separate the soil, the vegetation, the waters, their expanse, their configuration, from the interests that agitate you. (qtd. in Valtiala 152)

It is counterintuitive that Balzac, the quintessential realist in the period, found Cooper's scenes so environmentally evocative, given their lack of granularity. But Balzac's review emphasizes the way that particular details emerge "naturally" from the environment rather than the artist's imagination: the sense of being radically present "in" the site described rather than conscious of the moment and site of reading and the manner in which both natural objects and the reader are defined by a web of relation where it is "impossible to separate" self and other. "You incarnate *yourself in* the country; it passes *into you, or you into it*." This is an ecocritical review, indeed; but unbound by our modern standards of what constitutes nature writing, Balzac imagines Cooper's action scenes as surprisingly potent instances of almost mystical, trans-species (perhaps trans-object? inter-thing? between-bodied?) connectivity.

Despite Balzac's endorsement, it is tempting to consider Cooper's sidelong, blurry visions of trees and rocks as modes of marginalizing the nonhuman world. Gazes that glance and gloss rather than dwell and tell seem less modes of doing and being (verbs) or means of description (nouns, adjectives) than prepositional elevations of nature from background (past, through, around …) to subject. These rapid, sidelong peeks at rocks and trees could easily be read as indictments of fallen alienation from the nonhuman world rather than modes of environmental perception. Yet, the repetition of scenes of active relationship reaffirm that Natty and Chingachgook's almost supernatural agility in the woods is a kind of hard-won knowledge. Their survival often depends on their ability to peruse the book of nature with speed and fluency (reading and reacting, not reading and describing).[222] Taking just one example: in *The Pathfinder*, Natty is forced to mimic natural forms as he seeks to shelter his party from Iroquois warriors who are following them downstream. His success depends on *quick* assessment and assimilation of the unique spatial arrangements of this particular place: "the natural formation of the bank, the indentation in the shore, the shallowness of the water," and so on (*Pathfinder* 55). But Natty's nimble-fingered eco-mimetic dexterity as he weaves

[222] In selecting the term "peruse," I intend to invoke both its denotative definition (of reading in a thorough and careful way) and its nearly opposite meaning in common parlance (reading casually; skimming). When it comes to Natty and Chingachgook's modes of environmental awareness, the two meanings are not as far apart as they might seem.

together reeds *implies* a history of prior, prolonged attention. The very speed of the action does not elide granular observation but gesturally discloses a hidden history: Natty has previously spent many prior hours contemplating the shapes of reeds and contours of river shores. Fittingly, Cooper's attention to the dynamics of weaving make the scene a potent allegory for the author's efforts to interweave art and nature, the created and the given.[223]

The temporal dimension—namely, the imperative to hurry—in scenes like the shootout at Glen Falls or the shooting of the rapids in *The Pathfinder* display Cooper's proto-cinematic sensibility.[224] It is often as if his characters inhabit an outdoor movie set strewn with particular obstacles. The screenwriter has dictated the lines to be spoken, the director has chosen the filming location, and the scene has been elaborately blocked and staged. Nonetheless, to execute the action, the actors have no choice but to adapt their activity not only in response to the director's instructions, but also because of their own physical limitations and the unfolding constraints caused by objects whose movement is unpredictable once the scene is set in motion.[225] Cooper's technique at such moments does not lie in finely wrought description, but in building up a vivid, kinetic relationship between character and environment. Characters' virtues (or lack thereof) depend on their relationship to the nonhuman matter. Lives are constrained by the motions of animals and the placement of trees as well as by subtler forms of organic agency, assemblage, and arrangement. These include cavernous landscapes with contours carved out through erosion over generations (Glen Falls) and ground that dynamically shifts underfoot, demonstrating the folly of mistaking matter's solidity for permanence. In short, Cooper's writes his most thrilling set-pieces with the eye of a new materialist, ever attentive to ways that human lives are impinged upon by bodies within and without.

Such scenes challenge ecocritics' general preference for close reading and what Lawrence Buell characterizes as "microscopic vision" (91) or "minute extrospection" (103).[226] In Buell's

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[223] The epigraph to the chapter in question comes from the Bower of Bliss episode in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, another meditation on interrelations between art and nature: "Art, striving to compare / With nature, did an arber greene dispred, / Framed of wanton yvie flowering fayre, / Through which the fragrant eglantine did spred—" (qtd. in *Pathfinder* 50).

[224] Walter Scott, whose historical romances inspired Cooper in myriad ways, was famous for visiting Scottish localities where he collected both material artifacts—especially weapons from battlefields that decorate the walls of Abbotsford—and folk tales (see Lukács, *The Historical Novel* and Dekker, *The American Historical Romance*, for the best treatments of Scott's influence and the history of the genre as a whole). Even though Cooper chafed at being called "The American Scott," he used Scott as a model in many regards. However, finding himself constrained by the lack of recorded white history or material remnants, Cooper seems to have collected landscapes rather than artifacts.

[225] The result is not always entirely realistic. At times, Cooper's overemphasis on precisely reproduced *places* leads to unbelievable displays of human dexterity. As an adventure writer, Cooper cannot consign his heroes to an early death; but as a naturalist, neither can he bring himself to rearrange the material contours of the scene taken from nature, so it is necessary to temporarily endow the characters with nearly superhuman abilities. Similar acts of sudden, suspension-of-disbelief-crushing virtuosity are all too prevalent in classic Westerns and low-budget action movies. Such campy obtrusions often produce more kinetic satisfaction than CGI and green screens, which often feel uncanny because of the very lack of physical mooring that makes them so much more visually stunning than practical effects.

[226] Buell gestures towards alternate modes of environmental perception more in line with Cooper's project when he refers to the way that Peterson's bird guides present "a limited number of field marks" yet seem more effective in teaching recognition than "a denser mimetic image, such as a photograph" (97). As Buell notes, such representation has a "power to invent, stylize, and dislocate while at the same time pursuing a decidedly referential project" (99).

account, what poses as a critical preference for a particular kind of visual attention (the microscopic) masks an uneasy relationship to temporality and change. When one zooms in to a microscopic scale, stillness is mandatory. Even the tiniest movement registers as a jarring blur, disrupting the slide. Relatedly, the environmentalist rhetoric of landscape often privileges still representation (paintings, photos, prospects) or leisurely pans and zooms (in film). Such views do not rush or jump, they sweep. As a result, while ecocritical accounts of vast panoramas have produced meaningful reflections on the sublimity of deep time, they have often had less success incorporating the temporal aspects of sublimity operating on the levels of events and narrative. At times, the result has been a totalizing conflation of slow (or cyclical) temporality with nature, writ large.[227]

By contrast, in Cooper's work, action scenes unsettle associations between nature and slowness just as effectually as his accounts of the sudden ecosystem disruptions that create clearings. By placing emphasis not on granular detail, but on speed and constantly renegotiated relationships, Cooper's action scenes avoid the pitfall of missing the forest for the trees, or of letting close reading of particular natural phenomena make us forget that discrete entities exist in dynamic relation. Objects intrude into and sometimes determine the action, background and foreground impinge on one another, and the line between passive object and active subject becomes as blurred as the trees that Natty rushes past. Despite—and because of—the breathless rush of his plotting, Cooper's attention to spatial flow foregrounds observational modes that are no less impressive than Thoreau's description of the melting mud-bank in the "Spring" chapter of Walden. While Thoreau dazzles by animating fixed clay's torpid flow into languid leafy and linguistic forms, Cooper's thaws take place in jolts and dashes.

It is more than a fortuitous accident that like Thoreau's "Spring," Cooper's best set-piece is a meditation (albeit a breathless one) on solidity come undone, on ice melting: namely, the nearly fifty-page passage in *Satanstoe* when Corny Littlepage and Guert Ten-Eyck race sleighs along the partially frozen Hudson River to escape icebergs set free by a sudden thaw and bursting ice-dam. At one point, Cooper interrupts the action with narrative dilation as he details the region's environmental history. Here, Cooper describes not only cyclical flood patterns but also the settlers' interventions in the landscape, such as leaving an unlogged "thicket of trees… at the head of each island" to form a "barricade" preventing erosion by floods (221). More than a digression, Cooper's brief environmental history reveals the way that Corny Littlepage's seemingly spontaneous, virtuosic leaps from ice floe to island and from tree to shore depend upon a prior intermixture of human and natural forces. Like the forest as seen from the clearing at the beginning of *The Pathfinder*, this material world, which sets useful constraints on Cooper's imagination and the realm of the possible within the novel, has been shaped by a combination of slow climatic processes, seasonal repetitions, periodic cataclysms, and the various mix of motivations that determine the human history of settlement. In an environment overlaid with temporalities ranging from deep-time to jump-cuts, the relative positions of islands, the angles of the shore-banks, and the height of trees produce consequences that influence the characters' mortal and marital fates almost as determinatively as the depth and diameter of Walden pond help Thoreau to articulate his philosophy of living.

Ultimately, both Cooper's prolonged descriptions of clearing and his scenes of rushing through the woods revalidate the disruptive temporal dimensions of sublimity that Burke rejected in *Reflections*. But Cooper's scenes complicate, rather than simplify, our sense of his late politics. In a

[227] As Huebener observes, "slowness has become an infamous point of critical contention" (2). Noting that slowness seems to privilege certain subjects over others, Huebener concludes that "When we equate one particular temporality—slowness, or cyclicality, or anything else—with natural time, we are privileging a single, limited perspective, and closing off other forms of understanding" (10).

telling inversion, whereas Cooper's painterly prospects of clearings pose as still-lives but ultimately testify to a dynamic history shaped by gradualism and cataclysm (analogues to reform and revolution), Cooper's action scenes hurtle his characters towards the conservative, Burkean values of gender normativity, marriage, and domesticity. Thus, in *Satanstoe*, Corny Littlepage's bravery and dexterity in escaping the ice floes influence his future wife Anneke to reject more financially eligible suitors. Similarly, in nearly all of the Leatherstocking tales, Natty's breathless runs through the forests serve as the means to make marriage possible for a young couple. In the process, Cooper's wild scenes of seemingly revolutionary temporality create the conditions for a white, bourgeois nation-state full of heteronormative marriages.

Native Disappearance and Reproductive Futurity

The fact that almost all of the Leatherstocking novels end with the promise of domestic bliss for a young white couple sits uneasily with Cooper's denial of conventional romantic fulfillment to his principal protagonists (Natty, Chingachgook, Uncas, and other Natives). As each novel concludes, the very figures who navigate the woods most skillfully and read nature most fluently are left behind as stadial remnants. In this section, I argue that Cooper bars Natty and Natives from domestic contentment partly *because* of their over-determined closeness to natural environments. By merging with the wilderness, they become incapable of merging into society. As a result, the Mohicans and Natty help create the conditions for America's unfolding national project but are prohibited from full participation in post-revolutionary society. In turn, Cooper reimagines the American social contract not as a one-time agreement but rather as active participation in a racially exclusionary regime of biological and cultural reproduction.

To understand how Cooper's conservative emphasis on social continuity links political participation and biological reproduction, it is useful to return to Edmund Burke. Contrary to most scholarly claims, Edmund Burke did not reject the concept of the social contract, but instead extended it across generations and throughout time. In what many latter-day Burkeans have taken as Burke's most foundational expression of conservative thought, the Irishman maintained that "society is indeed a contract … [a]s the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born" (*Reflections* 96). The comment consolidates several of Burke's central tenets. First, it refuses to treat the past as dead or the dead as past. Second, by insisting that the polity must include "those who are yet to be born," Burke avoids reactionary resistance to all change in favor of promoting a society that must, necessarily, change over time in response to the as yet unknown (indeed unknowable) preferences of future generations. Third, Burke portrays historical change as neither forward-driven nor based upon a single, foundational act of constitutional composition that discards prior texts and supersedes all that came before. Instead, Burke imagines a partnership that gradually rearranges inherited concerns and speculative futures—a social "contract" as living document in which the phrasing is perpetually curated by the present generation in the interests of the dead and the unborn.

While Burke's intergenerational partnership seems to *temporally* democratize the political rights that more conventional natural rights theorists tried to extend across *class* boundaries, in practice it invokes past and future generations to place constraints upon the rights of living actors. Less obviously, it implicitly privileges one social group. By conflating the continually unfolding production of society with the continuity of sexual *re*production, Burke elevates those human

subjects who bear and raise children. Those who are unwilling or unable to biologically reproduce are still granted a stake, but by not reproducing they have less representational power than the subjects who conjoin the processes of social indoctrination and sexual reproduction. By producing hypothetical "unborn" voices, the latter are granted a more direct stake in futurity itself, and thus, more powerful agency. Burke's conception of the intergenerational social contract thus reaffirms the social construct of reproductive futurity that queer theorists like Lee Edelman have critiqued at length.[228]

Despite Cooper's many Burkean beliefs, the characters in the Leatherstocking novels struggle to achieve Burkean continuity between past and future. In fact, as Cooper increasingly made intergenerational continuity the central criterion for social order, he delineated romanticized, past-bound figures (Indian and frontiersman) from the sentimentalized, future-oriented settlers, thereby distributing the Burkean categories of the "unborn" and "the dead" across racial and social lines. Particularly in *The Last of the Mohicans,* Cooper emphasizes the reproductive incapacities of both Natives and (in *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*) his supposed hero Natty Bumppo to depict a frontier where partnerships across generational or racial divides are only tenuously viable.

Cooper ensnares Natives in a particularly pernicious double bind. In addition to being passively death-bound, Natives warriors serve as active agents of death. Magua—a figure long (and, I argue, somewhat incorrectly) associated with rape and miscegenation—represents a second, hitherto unrecognized type of threat to the white women in the novels; not sexual violation, but life and death removed from the possibility of both biological and social reproduction. Even though the central male protagonists and antagonists (including Magua) are putatively heterosexual, Cooper over-identifies them with past generations and constructs them as threats to children. Building upon the conceptual apparatus Lee Edelman proposes in *No Future*, I argue that Cooper's romantic heroes and predatory villains may appear to be straight but that their failures to reproduce at times (re-)present them both *as queer* (in the outdated, socially pejorative sense) and *queerly* (in their fleeting capacity to suggest alternatives to disciplinary regimes of reproductive futurity—particularly through Natty's nascent eco-sexuality). Whether they are death-bound (the Mohicans), death-dealing *sinthomo*sexuals (Magua), or sexually and historically regressive (Natty), Cooper marginalizes any romantic appeal his forest dwellers might have by locating them outside his conception of the nation's white, heteronormative, reproductive future. By highlighting connections between Native cultures' supposedly necrotic orientation, Natty's sexually "infantine" nature (*Pathfinder* 107), and Natty *and* Natives' shared connections to nature, Cooper naturalizes so-called "primitive" death and disappearance, conjoining affective entanglements with the nonhuman world to political marginalization and historical atavism.

Cooper begins to flatten the distance between Natives and their environment early in *The Last of the Mohicans*. The melodrama of the tale reaches fever pitch in the moments when Natives attempt to draw white characters into grave embraces with either their own bodies or the forest. From the beginning, Natives fade in and out of a deathly landscape, seldom detaching themselves as fully distinct human subjects. The white soldiers imagine "that the yells of the savages mingled with every fitful gust of wind that issued from the interminable forests" (*Mohicans* 17), suggesting that the Natives embody the forest's deadly hazards. In truth, most of the casualties in the French and Indian War (1755-1763) were caused by battles between French and English forces, disease, or exposure.

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[228] In short, Edelman argues that the regime of reproductive futurity conditions full participation in the production of the political present upon the individual's socially sanctioned production of future generations, usually within the heterosexually normative domestic family structure. According to Edelman's *No Future*, societies often reaffirm their commitments to reproductive futurity by demonizing or scapegoating those who are unable or unwilling to reproduce, especially LGBT individuals and communities (*passim*).

But in Cooper's telling, massive armies "bury themselves in these forests," and those few that return emerge "in skeleton bands," permanently marked by the ghastly encounter with nature and Natives (16). Such convergences, Cooper concludes "increased, immeasurably the natural horrors of warfare" (17). While the word "natural" here most directly denotes "inherent" or "customary," alternative significations collapse in upon one another. Cooper's phrasing suggests that in most wars, the "natural horrors" (that is, those inherent to armed conflict, such as bullet wounds or disease) *do not* include encounters with the non-human environment. The horror is "immeasurably" intensified *because* what is "customary" has become inseparably absorbed into that which is considered "natural" in a different sense: wild, other, heathenish. Through these loaded phrases, Cooper succinctly portrays a confluence of the nonhuman natural (the gothic forest, the wind) and human (native utterances and yells) as uncanny, even *un*natural.

Additionally, Cooper conjoins connections to the past, to nature, and to mortality by depicting Natives as obsessed with staying in close physical proximity to the "graves of their fathers" (*Mohicans* 21). Through insistently repeated references to these graves, Cooper enacts a gothic collapse of the ecological Indian and disappearing Indian tropes. The ultimate consequence of being close to the natural environment, Cooper seems to suggest, is bodily disintegration *into* the environment. Such moments reconfigure Native territorial attachment from a proprietary relationship that implies ownership into a harbinger of absence and death. In the process, Cooper, who frequently compensated for his lack of detailed knowledge of Native culture by making Natives embody the "noble," Europeanized attributes he saw white Americans as lacking, essentially projects a Burkean concern with past generations onto Natives. But by reducing Burke's reverence for place, community, tradition, and inheritance into a fixation with material skeletal remains, Cooper transforms a living, intergenerational contract into a referendum on a macabre culture's fetishistic attachment to deathly totems.

At the same time, Cooper signals that *within Native cultures* an individual's attachment to parental burial sites serves as a marker of integrity.[229] Chingachgook laments that he has never actually visited "the graves of my fathers," but his decision to stay in his tribe's traditional territory causes him and his son Uncas to be separated from the other Delaware bands (*Mohicans* 39). Rather than bemoan Uncas's distance from their still-extant tribe, the other Delawares celebrate the young Chief's decision to stay close to his dead forebearers as a marker of his heroic character (386). In these instances, proximity to a dead past becomes a purer index of prestige and belonging than participation in a living community of Delawares. For Cooper, however, the Mohicans' overdetermined association with the graves of the fathers serves as a marker of their death-bound *telos*.[230]

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[229] Cooper's conjunction of gravesite imagery and discourse naturalizing Native disappearance was hardly unique, as Freneau's poem "The Indian Burial Ground" and William Cullen Bryant's "An Indian at the Burial Place of His Fathers" attest (among many other examples). Most famously, Andrew Jackson's 1830 speech to Congress treated reveries about "the graves of extinct nations" as a romantic cliché: an indulgence to overcome by a spirit of "true philanthropy" in the service of forcible removal (qtd. in McWilliams, "Historical Contexts" 424). A notable difference between such accounts and *The Last of the Mohicans* is that Cooper does not simply have white characters visit Native ruins; instead, he presents Native characters as *already* focused on death. Preemptively melancholic, it is as though they anticipate the presence of later white graveyard tourists who can co-opt their sufferings into sentimental economies.

[230] Cooper also occasionally attaches white settlers to parental graves. *The Pioneers* begins with an account of how "the pioneer who first broke ground in the settlement of this country, are succeeded by the permanent improvements of the yeoman, who intends to leave his remains to moulder under the sod which he tills, or, perhaps, of the son, who, born in the land, piously wishes to linger around the grave of his father" (16). However, such descriptions are the exception rather than the rule when it comes to white settlers.

Knowing these Native priorities, Natty initially distrusts Magua because he is one of "the Tuscaroras, who have travelled too far from the graves of their fathers always to remember the Great Spirit" (*Mohicans* 21). But Magua—who of course does not regard himself as a villain—actually shares Chingachgook's concern with parental bones. He kidnaps Cora in part to enact revenge on her father Colonel Munro, who had him publicly whipped for drunkenness. But in Magua's account, this incident is inseparable from a *prior* inebriated mishap. Magua was initially expelled from his tribe after French Canadians "taught him to drink the fire-water, and he became a rascal." Seething, Magua bemoans that "the Hurons drove him from the graves of his fathers, as they would chase the hunted buffalo" (117). As a result, Magua's subsequent actions, including his attempt to kidnap Cora, are not solely motivated by revenge against Munro. They also reflect Magua's desire to reestablish his prestige within the Huron tribe and thereby return to the "graves of his fathers." This backstory serves as the first indication that Magua treats Cora less as an embodiment of sexualized futurity than as a means to restore a severed relationship with his ancestors.

Cooper's frequent references to the indissoluble bond between Natives and the "graves of the fathers" epitomize his refusal to represent Native life without constant reference to mortality. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, in particular, Cooper presents his Natives as having only three options. Like Tamenund, who accepts the death and disappearance of his own tribe with relative equanimity, they can capitulate to Cooper's stadial logic (exhibiting passive nobility). Like Magua, they can resist white conquest by kidnapping or killing white settlers (exhibiting active but doomed villainy). Or, like Chingachgook and Uncas, they can *attempt* to protect the bearers of white futurity and assimilate into interracial romantic relationships (exhibiting active but doomed nobility). But in Cooper's conception, these choices do not matter on some level: whether a Native man is passive or active, heroic or villainous, death-dealing or live-saving, his attachment to deathly remains always serves as an overdetermined signifier that he and his way of life are death-bound. As the Leatherstocking series progresses, the relationships between being death-bound and death-dealing slip into one another. Thus, where Chingachgook was decayed, doddering, drunken, and death-bound in *The Pioneers*, in *Mohicans* his appearance testifies to his capacity as a lethal agent: "His body, which was nearly naked, presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in intermingled colors of white and black" (35).[231]

Similarly, Cooper uses Magua's effort to motivate his followers to blur the line between being attached to the "graves of the fathers" and being a violent agent of mortality. Magua points out that the Hurons slain by Natty are left to rest far from tribal territory: "'Are the bones of my young men,' he concluded, 'in the burial place of the Hurons! You know they are not … Brothers, we must not forget the dead; a red skin never ceases to remember'" (*Mohicans* 283). In Magua's speech, the work of memory and the work of violence become inseparable. Seemingly harmless and sentimental past-bound temporal orientations are deployed to justify racially charged violence. By showing the consequences of Magua's rhetorical prowess, Cooper implies that those who are too conscious of the past can be easily manipulated into declaring war on the bearers of futurity. Thus, even though Cooper does not portray *every* Native subject slipping back and forth between memory

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Additionally, Cooper seems to celebrate the son's attachment to his father's farm because it signifies that his "yeoman" father is more invested in sustainable agricultural "improvements" than the wasty, short-sighted practices of the "pioneer who first broke ground." Contextually, instead of pointing to the past, the white attachment to the father's grave points equally towards a Burkean connection *between* past, present, and future.

[231] Schweitzer notes that the chiaroscuro imagery depicts Chingachgook as "marked and defined by an affective interracial crossing that proves deadly" (160).

and violence as smoothly or destructively as Magua, he uses Magua to render the Native attachment to memory deeply suspect.[232]

Where Cooper's Natives look only towards past generations, his white settlers neglect the past in favor of a single-minded (though to Cooper's mind, still preferable) focus on children and reproductive futurity. Fetishizing the parent-child bond, the settlers neglect their inheritances from, and responsibilities to, prior generations. In a dialog with Magua, colonial soldier Duncan Heyward frames the contrast directly: "The white man may, and often does, forget the burial place of his fathers; he sometimes ceases to remember those he should love, and has promised to cherish; but the affection of a parent for his child is never permitted to die" (*Mohicans* 115). While Native affective energies are eternally focused on mourning ("a red skin never ceases to remember") that justifies violence towards others, whites situate parental care as that which is "never permitted to die." Whereas Magua's use of the word "never" unwittingly forecasts the group's coming extinction, in which only memory remains, Heyward's "never" focuses on perpetuation. In Heyward's nearly perfect crystallization of the ideology of reproductive futurity, the child's life not only compensates parents with a fantasy of continuance after their own deaths but creates an emotional state ("affection") that metaphorically reproduces the experience of immortality *within* a single life ("is never permitted to die").

Cooper presents Colonel Munro as an archetypal, if imperfect, representative of white paternal affection. Heyward attests to Munro's devotion: "I have known many fond and tender parents, but never have I seen a man whose heart was softer towards his child" (*Mohicans* 115). Munro's "soft" heart leads to a disjunction between sentimental affect and heroic action after two concurrent blows: the massacre of his troops by the Iroquois and the capture of his children by Magua. Within a matter of days, Munro transforms from a capable military leader to an enfeebled old man. Overcome by undying parental love and too emotionally overwrought to participate in his daughters' rescue, he is reduced from a state of action to one of pure affection. Nonetheless, Munro has a clear rationale for not attending to his daughters during the retreat; namely, his equivalent paternal duties to each of the men under his command. He tells Heyward that as a military commander "All that you see here, claim alike to be my children" (194). During the massacre, Alice even cries out to him: "Come to us, father, or we die!" but Munro declines "in disappointment, and proceeded, bent on the high duty of his station" (194). In making Munro's commitment to military duty equivalent to paternal duty, Cooper seems eager to forgive him, or at the very least, elevate him to a position of heartrending dignity. A modified Lear, his tragic flaw is his refusal to distinguish between his biological and figurative children rather than choosing poorly amongst his daughters. Munro's capacious paternal feeling hints at his participation in a broader project: the geopolitical and ideological struggle to secure the British colonies as a proto-nation consecrated to parental attachment and reproductive futurity, akin to what Elizabeth Dillon calls "marital nationalism" (qtd. in Rifkin 79).[233] When posed as a counterpoint to the Natives, who are seen as lacking in sentiment, reproductive capacity, and futurity, Munro's decision suggests not a dereliction or rejection of

[232] With the exception of the climactic battle with Uncas, Magua is not depicted directly killing others. Nonetheless, Cooper portrays his rhetorical prowess as inciting the Hurons to several violent acts throughout the narrative.

[233] Rifkin expands on Dillon's point by arguing that "In the wake of the Revolution… the idea of the single-family home, in its affective self-sufficiency and enclosure of a sphere of intimacy, also bore the burden of signifying the territorial integrity of the nation" (79).

fatherly duties, but instead their *over*extension: he is not insufficiently paternal, but excessively and promiscuously paternal.[234]

Cooper stages an equivalent scene with Munro's opposite number, the French General Montcalm. Montcalm talks with Magua but fails to anticipate or prevent the coming massacre. During the encounter he refers to a soldier as "mon enfant" and then calls Magua "my son" (*Mohicans* 190-91). His sentimental, paternalistic pretensions cause him to miss the signs of the violence to come. The mistake warns that parental instinct can blind as well as enlighten. Cooper also indicts Montcalm for not being racially essentialist enough, essentially condemning him for being *the wrong kind* of racist. Montcalm's culpability in the massacre emerges from his failure to recognize that Magua is essentially an agent of death, not an innocent child to be managed through paternalistic gestures.

Whereas Munro and Montcalm's militaristic paternalism suggests that parental feeling might be miscategorized or overextended, Magua criticizes white consumption and reproductive futurity for concealing a self-defeating death drive.[235] Magua structures his much-analyzed speech about the respective character of races around animal metaphors. He compares European-American settlers to ermine and presents them as "dogs to their women, and wolves to their slaves" (*Mohicans* 340). In his most extended analogy, he associates them with pigeons: they have "wings that never tire; young more plentiful than the trees, and appetites that devour the earth … His gluttony makes him sick. God gave him enough, and yet he wants all" (340). In Magua's speech, Cooper cleverly reverses the roles in the famous scene in *The Pioneers* when the settlers' environmental destruction was epitomized by their "wasty" slaughter of pigeons. Formerly the indiscriminate killers of whole flocks, the settlers now *become* the birds. Ironically, the shift in positions reinforces a similar message, suggesting that white greed is both animalistic (natural, but debased) and opposed to divine sanction (unnatural). By conjoining the birds' gluttony and infamous reproductive drives, Magua accuses the whites of being unable to moderate their appetites (notably, this is the same vice he was flogged for after drinking to excess). Magua's imagery is foreboding, as passenger pigeon flocks were famous for decimating entire ecosystems, leaving little alive capable of growth. Thus, Magua implicates the production of white children—and the ideologies of familial affection used to sanctify high birth rates—in environmental catastrophe. Sentimentalized monsters of fecund overconsumption, the settlers' neglect of the past paradoxically imperils their future. Similarly, Chingachgook describes a time when tribes lived in sustainable bio-cultural harmony but is only able to reminisce about it in the past tense: "The salt lake gave us its fish, the wood its deer, and the air its birds. We took wives who bore us children" (530). By implication, Native fertility vanishes alongside a set of ecological relationships imperiled by white contact and overconsumption. By framing a dialogic contrast between Chingachgook and Magua's moving speeches and Munro's parental affection, Cooper (without fully abandoning his allegiances to white sentimental culture) presents a frontier out of balance: a realm with no reliable continuity between past, present, and future; where whites and Natives maintain destructive commitments to diverging temporalities.

Only in a few brief moments does Cooper comes close to presenting characters capable of both venerating the past and protecting the future. On at least three occasions in the

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[234] For a counter-perspective see Chapman, who maintains that Munro and Tamenund (who claims to be father "of a nation" represent "men who use political alliances to replace biological ones dependent on the participation of mothers" (411) thereby enabling "violence to offspring" that "signifies a kind of mother-killing" (409).

[235] Valtiala argues that "The tremendous progenitive capacity of nature, materialized in the flowing maple sap and flying passenger pigeons in *The Pioneers*, is conspicuously absent in the Gothic woods of *Mohicans*" (121). By contrast, I find it not only present, but problematized.

Leatherstocking series, a Native character (Chingachgook, Uncas, or Hist) unites deathly fixations with sentimental futurity. Chingachgook's role as a forbidding emblem of death fades only once in *The Last of the Mohicans*: when he interacts with his son Uncas after a narrow escape. As he speaks with Uncas "in the soft and playful tones of affection… under the influence of these gentle and natural feelings" his appearance shifts and he loses all "trace of ferocity." At this moment, even "his figured panoply of death looked more like a disguise assumed in mockery, than a fierce annunciation of a desire to carry destruction and desolation in his footsteps" (*Mohicans* 227).

In the dark melodrama of *The Last of the Mohicans,* where even the title forecloses Uncas's ability to stand for futurity, such moments of possibility are necessarily fleeting. By contrast, in *The Deerslayer*—the last volume published, but the first in chronological order—Cooper allows Chingachgook to dally in romantic and familial possibility at greater length. There, Chingachgook's future bride Hist (of the Lenni Lenape tribe) offers an extended vision of the way that Indian tribes *previously* grounded their culture on parental graves in order to unite past, present, and future. Hist frames her objections to being held captive by the Hurons (or marrying one of them) by focusing on having been alienated from her home territory. She declares,

> Among my people, the rose dies on the stem where it budded, the tears of the child fall on the graves of its parents; the corn grows where the seed has been planted. The Delaware girls are not messengers to be sent, like belts of wampum, from tribe to tribe. They are honeysuckles, that are sweetest in their own woods; their own young men carry them away in their bosoms, because they are fragrant; they are sweetest when plucked from their native stems. Even the robin and the martin come back, year after year, to their old nests; shall a woman be less true hearted than a bird? Set the pine in the clay and it will turn yellow; the willow will not flourish on the hill; the tamarack is healthiest in the swamp; the tribes of the sea love best to hear the winds that blow over the salt water. (*Deerslayer* 877)

Hist's reliance on animal and plant metaphors extravagantly performs Native speech patterns as Cooper understood them, but at the same time, the passage leans heavily on familiar sentimental tropes from antebellum literature. Somewhat strikingly, it is the "rose" (the ornamental plant associated with white romance) that "dies on the stem," while the "corn" (emblem of Native life and agriculture) represents vitality. But more is at play than a simple inversion of cultural signifiers (white life vs. native death). Because "tears" of mourning linguistically join and symbolically nourish *both* growths, Hist undoes the life/death dichotomy itself, supplanting it with a vision of rootedness, continuity, and cyclicality. By incorporating an affective display that his audiences would associate with white mourning practices and graveyard elegies, the figure of the Delaware girls as wild honeysuckle comes to signify not Native cultural autonomy/wildness so much as cultural and artistic hybridity.

Through Hist's speech, Cooper presents a thorough re-reading of the image of the bones of the fathers, and thus, his account of Native temporality. Once allowed an infusion of white sentimental culture, the Native fixation on the dead becomes a means to vivify old traditions and carry society forward, effectively fulfilling Burke's "partnership" between the dead, the living, and the unborn. There is an important difference between the homosocial paternalism of a warrior honoring the graves of his fathers (indeed, it is almost always the *fathers*), and a young woman evoking an ungendered child who mourns both parents. In Hist's account, parental graves transform from stoic emblems of the past into loci of sentimental domestic continuity. By focusing on floral imagery and tearful "Delaware girls," Hist shifts the focus from unattached, death-bound male figures in *The Last of the Mohicans* to young women whose fertility gestures toward generations yet to come. Because the scene takes place in a prequel, it implicitly allows readers to imagine Hist and

Chingachgook's as-yet unborn son (Uncas) not as the tragic "Last of the Mohicans," but as representing futurity—even if we know how Uncas will eventually die.

Additionally, Hist—like Burke—validates cultural complexity and continuity by deploying botanical metaphors that emphasize environmental interconnection and situatedness. Burke felt that social institutions should be defended when "they have cast their roots wide and deep, and where by long habit things more valuable than themselves are so adapted to them, and in a manner interwoven with them, that the one cannot be destroyed, without notably impairing the other" (*Reflections* 157). Similarly, Hist envisions girls figuratively emerging from graves as honeysuckle: a twining vine that grows best when entangled with and supported by other structures. In Hist's concluding catalog of trees and soils, she echoes Burkean criteria by suggesting that ecological fit trumps discrete valuations of worth. It is not that the soil of "the hill" is better than "the swamp" or vice versa; what matters is their respective relationship to tamarack and willow. Such moments serve as environmental analogues to Burke's sentiment that the customs that emerge in a particular place over time should not be forcibly disturbed from outside. This sensitivity to historical context motivated Burke's view that revolution might be justified in America as a means *of preserving* its gradually solidifying and culturally distinct traditions, whereas revolution in France could only upset a carefully wrought balance.

While Hist's speech constitutes Cooper's most seductive vision of Native futurity—a possibility he usually excludes—there are ominous conditions attached. As Mark Rifkin observes, Cooper—like most of his contemporaries—usually presented his Natives as stoics who exhibit "a racialized incapacity for sentimental affect that brands them as lacking any true sense of home" or domesticity (38). If one reads Hist or Chingachgook's displays of "gentle and natural feelings" generously, they suggest that Cooper's Natives are more affectively multifaceted than critics habitually imagine. It is possible that Cooper—who by this stage in his career was working with George Copway to defend Native rights—gradually evolved a capacity for representing Native subjectivity in less culturally stereotypical terms. But another interpretation seems equally likely; namely, that Cooper's Natives purchase a stake in reproductive futurity by surrendering cultural autonomy. Only by assuming a paternal affect typically associated with normative white domesticity can Chingachgook even briefly step outside the oppressive conjunction of Native bodies and the *telos* of death. Similarly, botanical and biological possibility can only proceed from parental graves when Hist affectively and aesthetically *assimilates* into sentimental literary conventions.

Equally troubling, Hist voices her poetic and surprisingly life-filled graveyard elegy in order to object to inter-tribal marriage. Hist associates herself with "the willow [that] will not flourish on the hill" less to validate biological complexity or interconnection than to naturalize oppressive social structures. Her objections against being forced to marry a man whom she does not choose are entirely valid, but her quasi-ecological defense of unbridgeable tribal difference seems more suspect. As in *The Last of the Mohicans,* Cooper makes his vision of intergenerational continuity depend upon a heterosexual marriage between a couple "without a [racial] cross" (*Mohicans* 143 and *passim, ad nauseum*). The fact that Cooper could imagine a children-producing marriage between Natives like Chingachgook and Hist loosens the cords tying reproductive futurity to whiteness. However, the fact that he refuses to validate such a union between a Lenni Lenape woman and a Huron man uses the slack in the cords to choke off other appendages, condemning certain forms of intra-racial (but inter-*tribal*) relations alongside interracial sex and marriage.

Cooper draws an even bolder demarcation between the intercultural transmission of sentimental affect (which he approves of) and interracial Native/non-Native romance (which he disapproves of) through his depiction of Uncas and Cora. At one point, Uncas rescues Alice and "denying his habits, we had almost said his nature, flew with instinctive delicacy" and "placed her in the arms of Cora." At this moment, his eyes are "beaming with a sympathy, that elevated him far

above the intelligence, and advanced him probably centuries before the practices of his nation" (*Mohicans* 132). During the same incident, Alice calls Cora "my more than sister, my mother" (131). Uncas's delivery of Alice into Cora's arms accentuates Alice's child-like innocence and infantile frailty as well as elevating Cora from potential mother to symbolic mother. In effect, he helps *produce* Cora as reproductive subject through sympathy that supposedly belongs to an "advanced" stage of society: white settler culture. Thus, his sudden "advance" "centuries" forward in stadial status (from primitive "savage" to some unspecified later stage) depends upon not only his general embrace of sentimental culture, but his particular role in reinforcing the relation between sympathy and the regime of reproductive futurity. "Sympathy," however, is as far as Uncas and Cora's relationship proceeds. While Cooper portrays Native accession of white sympathy as necessary to racial assimilation and survival, *The Last of the Mohicans* portrays white (or more specifically, mixed-race)/Native romance as an overreach with fatal consequences. Despite mutual attraction, Cooper never allows Uncas and Cora overt romantic gestures and kills them off together in the novel's climactic scene. Even the barest possibility of sex seems to pull Uncas back into the death spiral that Cooper insistently associates with Natives' regressive temporality, dragging down Cora as well.

However, by imagining a romance for Cora and Uncas in the afterlife, the Delawares call into question Cooper's general disavowal of interracial coupling. They fix their hopes on two factors: first, the supposition that Uncas was attracted to whites only because *the settlers* now reside close to "the graves of his fathers," and second, the idea that Cora's noble bearing betrays "a blood purer and richer than the rest of her nation" (*Mohicans* 386). Each premise is more complex than it may appear. Whereas the graves of the fathers generally serve as one of Cooper's quintessential markers of the incompatibility between a (supposedly) necrotic culture and reproductive futurity, the Delaware women's account of the origins of Uncas's interracial attraction weaves together sexual desire and absorption with the past. In their telling, the connection between the individual and parental graves is less biologically inherited than a transracial matter of physical proximity: the whites become *more like Natives* by residing in the territory demarcated by the presence of ancestral bones. Meanwhile, while Cora's "blood" might be "*richer* than the rest of her nation," given that she has both African and white ancestry it is not "purer" by white nineteenth-century standards. This, in turn, serves as a reminder that criteria for purity are culturally specific. However, in order to keep readers from giving too much credit to the transgressive possibilities raised by the Delaware women, Cooper shows Natty's response to the elegy: he "shook his head, like one who knew the error of their simple creed" denying Uncas and Cora the possibility of romance even in the afterlife (387). Readers too often make the mistake of reading Natty's pronouncements as Cooper's own. But in this case the supposition seems almost unavoidable. Unless we view the subordinate clause ("like one who knew the error of their simple creed") as shifting into free-indirect discourse, it seems to affirm that Cooper shares Natty's judgment.

Many commentators (following D.H. Lawrence and Leslie Fiedler) continue to use the fatalistic conclusion to *Mohicans* as Exhibit 1A in their prosecutions of Cooper's racial attitudes. Such trenchant critiques risk oversimplification. As James D. Wallace observes, Cora and Uncas's thwarted romance has played an overdetermined role in marginalizing Cooper in recent decades: "people who know nothing else about Cooper know that he 'couldn't' allow Cora and Uncas to marry because of the miscegenation taboo" (190). But Cooper's novels have many instances of interracial couples. Cooper may stack the odds against them, but not all of them come to tragic ends and some of them even embody hopes for the future. For instance, in *The Prairie* (published just a year after *Mohicans*), Natty helps to enable the relationship between Inez de Certavallos and Duncan Middleton. Because Middleton is the grandson of Alice Munro and Duncan Heyward, his marriage to Inez (who is Creole) restages and revises the Uncas-Cora relationship (Middleton's middle name—Uncas—drives the point home). As Keat Murray notes, since *The Prairie* is set nearly fifty

years after *Mohicans*, Natty's loosened attitudes serve as a marker of *progress* from the colonial era to the Early Republic (Murray 493). Rather than register immutable opposition to interracial marriage, Cooper suggests that social mores should change as the nation-state evolves and expands.

Additionally, Cora—who is herself mixed race—is undeniably an odd choice if Cooper intended to launch a screed against interracial sex. As Mark Rifkin queries, "[i]f Cora already represents the melding of white and nonwhite 'blood,' why does her union with an Indian (whether Magua or Uncas) produce such dismay?" (82).[236] It could be that Cooper makes Cora mixed race in order to portray her as already "flaw[ed]," and therefore to allow "readers to speculate in a positive way, because in a 'safe' way, on the racial issues in its more delicate and volatile dimensions" (Robinson 21). But for a character who supposedly represents the unforgivable flaw of interracial union, Cora is uncommonly admirable. Throughout the novel, Cooper leans heavily on the dark/fair maiden stock types, differentiating Cora from Alice, who is beautiful and innocent, but also passive and at times almost imbecilic. By contrast, Cora is by far the most capable, active, and (by today's standards) likable of the women in the Leatherstocking books. Though Cooper at times implies that Cora's fiery independence emerges from her "richer" blood, he never impugns her feminine virtues. Unlike Judith Hutter in *The Deerslayer* (who is white, but still fits the dark-lady stereotype), Cora is not associated with promiscuity, but heroic self-sacrifice. Cooper does not allow her attraction to Uncas to come to fruition, but he nonetheless portrays it as tragic and noble, not lustfully excessive.[237]

Taken together, Cooper's depictions of interracial romance in other novels and Cora's unfailing virtue suggest that Cooper's objection to Cora and Uncas's coupling emerges not from a general aversion to interracial sex, but specifically from the incompatibility of *settlers* (who are not necessarily white) and Natives *at a particular stage of social and political development*.[238] By condemning Cooper for his distrust of so-called "miscegenation," we miss something important; namely, that Cooper (at least in the 1820s) was more invested in demarcating stages of civilization than in race as a biological category. Whereas eighteenth-century European thinkers like Buffon defined human difference primarily in terms of a climatically determined "civilized"/"savage" axis (observable through bodily exteriors), Americans did not begin to theorize race as an ingrained and inheritable trait (observable within deep physiological structures) until the emergence of so-called racial science in the late 1830s. At times, Cooper anticipates (and even helps shape) these mid-century racialist dynamics, especially when Natty describes white and Native behaviors as the product of essentialist "blood" and "gifts."[239] But more fundamentally, *The Last of the Mohicans* fatalistically condemns Native-settler coupling because Cooper cannot resolve the disjunction between their respective stages of civilizational development in 1757, when the novel is set.

It is not that Cooper cannot imagine white and nonwhite blood mixing without tragic consequences; he clearly can, as he does several times in other novels. However, by suggesting that sympathy can only temporarily advance Uncas "centuries" forward from "savagery" to civilization, Cooper contests not so much the inherent morality of amalgamation, but its timeliness. Reviewers picked up on these temporal strands. While some of them took offense at even the *possibility* of a

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[236] Rifkin argues that "The issue must be less preserving the unsullied integrity of whiteness than the threat posed by crossing with Indianness" (82). While this contention is unarguably correct, the threat of "crossing with Indianness" coexists with—and is inextricably tied to—the threat of *sinthomo*sexuality.

[237] As Allan M. Axelrad observes, "no fair reading supports D.H. Lawrence's intimation that Cora, the dark woman, is sinful; her character and behavior are beyond reproach" (39).

[238] By contrast, Cora's African ancestors have already been forcefully and traumatically coopted as servants buttressing the regime of white futurity.

[239] Tawil explores these dynamics at length in *The Making of Racial Sentiment*.

mixed-race future, others tied the larger question of moral right to social timing. The *United States Literary Gazette*'s 1826 anonymous review of the novel maintained that "Uncas would have made a good match for Cora, particularly as she had a little of the blood of a darker race in her veins,—and still more, as this sort of arrangement is coming into fashion, in real life, as well as in fiction" (qtd. in Dekker and McWilliams 100). The review's author hedges his or her bets by saying that the "match" is "particularly" suitable given that Cora is mixed-race. At the same time, the "particularly" suggests that their romance would still be *relatively* acceptable even if she were entirely white. By explicitly referencing contemporary shifts in public opinion, the review registers increasing acceptance of interracial coupling and even the ephemerality of the "fashion" world, where *everything* depends upon timeliness.

Such critical responses anticipate Cooper's broader efforts to stitch mixed-race possibilities into the fabric of socio-historical development. In his 1828 political commentary *Notions of the Americans: Picked Up By a Travelling Bachelor*, Cooper's bachelor narrator notices that "As there is little reluctance to mingle the white and red blood (for the physical difference is far less than in the case of the blacks, and the Indians have never been menial slaves), I think an amalgamation of the two races would in time occur" (II:380-81).[240] Given Cooper's relative acceptance of Cora's mixed European and African heritage and deep skepticism of Uncas and Cora's pairing, the preference Cooper expresses in *Notions* for white-Native over white-black pairing seems to flatly contradict *Mohicans*. While the bachelor's focus on "physical difference" between whites and "the blacks" anticipates racialist logic, his insistence that there is no meaningful difference between "white and red blood" draws attention to social and temporal difference, not biology. The key limiting phrase is "in time": natives are seen as *not yet* ready for "amalgamation." This logic of timeliness also inflects the bachelor's notorious defense of Indian removal. Attempting to justify the unjustifiable, he argues that separation from white civilization would allow Natives to "continue to advance in civilization to maturity" (II:380). Taken together with *The Last of the Mohicans*, the bachelor's remarks seem to imply that Cooper imagines a period of spatially distant racial segregation is necessary to eventually enable the types of relationships that he denies to Cora and Uncas.[241]

More forcefully, Cooper uses the villainous Magua to suggest that Natives are not ready for the type of consensual, interracial relationships that Cooper uses to doubly define futurity: first, by locating it somewhere beyond the temporal horizon; and second, by democratizing the production of children who represent the promise of futurity. I wish to argue that Magua's particular mode of untimeliness is more complicated than it initially appears. Neither early nor belated, he is violently atavistic, trying to bury white women in the necropolitical and homosocial spaces demarcated by the bones of the fathers and fields of labor. By contrast, most scholarship reads Magua as conjoining Cooper's fears of rape and "miscegenation" by trying to thrust his way into the regime of reproductive futurity that reduces white women into child-bearing bodies.

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[240] The persistent use of the term "miscegenation" in scholarship loads the deck in such discussions. As J.D. Wallace and Ezra Tawil have each highlighted at length, the word did not appear in American English usage until the 1860s. Cooper and most of his contemporaries preferred the morally positive term "amalgamation" or the relatively morally neutral term "intermingling of blood" (Wallace 192). According to the OED, amalgamation can actually imply mixing "so as to form a homogenous or harmonious whole." Even if some of Cooper's descriptions of the "intermingling" of blood are not entirely positive, they do not carry the weight of judgment and specific racist history that the word "miscegenation" implies.

[241] In the foregoing readings of *Notions of the Americans*, I am deeply indebted to Wallace's "Race and Captivity in Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*." Wallace notes that "The Bachelor makes no reference to 'the horrors of miscegenation' nor, indeed, to any moral issue at all" (195) and refutes Fiedler's claim that Cooper believes "that 'the color line is eternal and God-given'" (198).

In fairness, it is worth noting that Cooper certainly deploys Magua to activate his audience's salacious fears of forceful violation. Magua feels "some passion more sinister than avarice" when he stares at Cora with "an expression which no chaste female might endure" (*Mohicans* 119). When "laying his soiled hand on the dress of Cora," he leeringly reminds her that "the wigwam of the Huron is still open" (201). While certain sexual implications are unavoidable, Cooper's diction leaves space for ambiguity. The qualifier "some" leaves the exact nature of Magua's "passion more sinister than avarice" deliberately undefined. Critics seem to have almost unanimously interpreted it as rapacious intent. However, there were few, if any, documented historical instances of Native rapes of captives during the period.[242] Additionally, such assumptions are challenged within the text. When Duncan Heyward calls even the "thought" of rape "worse than a thousand deaths" (125) and goes so far as to hint that the whites should kill Cora if necessary to "avert" violation (92), Natty reprimands him for being ill-informed. While Magua's kidnap of Cora represents sexual violence *in its own right*, Natty's response suggests that the threat of forcible rape is Heyward's projection rather than a realistic threat.[243] "I know your thoughts," Natty says, "and *shame be it to our colour, that you have reason for them*; but he who thinks that even a Mingo would ill treat a woman, unless it be to tomahawk her, knows nothing of Indian natur', or the laws of the woods" (244, emphasis added).[244] Far from reinforcing the mythology of rape that suffuses captivity narratives of the period, Natty dispels fallacious accounts and chalks them up to transferences of white male desire.[245]

At the same time, Natty's response to Heyward is hardly a thorough defense of Native morality. Even while he dismisses the threat of rape, his mention of "ill treat[ment]" with a "tomahawk" suggests that Magua may well murder Cora and Alice. Natty is right: Magua does not threaten a fate "worse than a thousand deaths" so much as death itself. He is less interested in procreative rape than in destructive revenge. Whereas Cooper's "good Indian" Chingachgook wears his association with danger as a "terrific emblem of death" on his "nearly naked" body but serves as a caring father, the deceptive Magua ("Le Renard Subtil") *seems* motivated by a desire for children, but ultimately causes both Uncas and Cora's deaths. He wants to bring Cora into "the wigwam," to be sure, but he imagines stabbing her in her sleep far more explicitly than he suggests the possibility of phallic penetration.[246]

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[242] As Axelrad notes, "although Indians in the East seldom raped their captives, the threat of rape was embedded in captivity mythology and widely believed" (44).

[243] A long history of such distortions exists. As early as Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), writers often expressed wide-eyed amazement that the Natives did not rape their white captives. Rowlandson, establishing what would become a pernicious narrative convention, attributes blame to Natives for their moments of violence. However, rather than reevaluating her suppositions about Native rapaciousness, she elaborately credits *God's* grace for protecting her from sexual violation.

[244] Cooper also describes natives as "commonly chaste" in his 1831 preface to *Mohicans* (7). Additionally, the scene in which Magua abstains from "gorging himself" like the other Natives suggests an uncommon "abstinence" from desire that even Heyward notices (*Mohicans* 114).

[245] Like Axelrad, Person contests the accounts of rape that suffused the captivity narrative genre (677). He argues that while male-written captivity novels (including those by Cooper and Robert Montgomery Bird) reinforce the rape mythos, works by women such as Lydia Maria Child and Catherine Maria Sedgwick more fully imagine the erotic and sentimental possibilities of "willing marriages between white women and Indians" (677). While Person's contrast usefully illuminates a gendered trend in depictions of consensual relationships, he oversimplifies the way that Cooper aims to both activate the threat of rape and reveal that it is a racist projection.

[246] While it might be argued that the knife is a clear phallic symbol, and thus stabbing Cora and raping her are synonymous, the end of the novel makes clear that they are dichotomous alternatives. Magua offers Cora a final (constrained) choice between "the knife" and "the wigwam" just before he kills her. They both

Most importantly, not once does Magua mention *fathering or raising children* with Cora (unless I am mistaken).[247] By contrast, he repeatedly references his plan to have Cora perform agricultural and domestic labor after she is taken back to "the wigwam." When Magua was first whipped on Colonel Munro's orders, he hatched a plan to displace his pain onto Cora: "The daughter of Munro would draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison" (*Mohicans* 119). These are far from arbitrary punishments. White settlers often described Native women's agricultural labor in order to demonize Native men as lazy, unproductive, and exploitative. For over a century, whites mobilized criticisms of the gendered breakdown of Native labor practices, particularly the so-called "squaw drudge" stereotype, to justify the theft of Native lands (Rifkin 83). They planned to domesticate the frontier through the strict gendered mapping of space, displacing gender non-normative Natives westward and policing indoor labor as female and outdoor labor as male (Cronon, *Changes* 53).

Additionally, Cooper's brief references to Magua's plan for Cora recall the earlier infamous Jefferson-Buffon debate. In articulating the influential theory of climatic determinism, which maintained that differences in climate caused differences of race, Georges-Louis Leclerc (Comte de Buffon) attacked Native masculinity. In arguing that "The savage is feeble and small in his organs of generation; he has neither body hair nor beard, and no ardor for the female of his kind," Buffon maintained that Native infertility and disappearance was the inevitable outgrowth of America's deficient environmental conditions (qtd. in Tawil 63). In response, Jefferson was most irked by the implication that in time white Americans would also "degenerate," losing their own reproductive capacities. According to Buffon's interpretation, the future of American civilization—and the democratic project itself—would diminish and disappear in proportion to men's increasingly "feeble and small … organs of generations." Jefferson answered Buffon by rejecting climatic determinism, claiming that Native labor divisions were responsible for low rates of fertility: "The women are submitted to unjust drudgery. This I believe, is the case with every barbarous people … The same Indian women, when married to white traders, who feed them and their children, plentifully and regularly, who exempt them from excessive drudgery, who keep them stationary and unexposed to accident, produce and raise as many children as the white women" (*Notes* 65).[248] Of course, both Jefferson and Buffon's arguments miss (or willfully occlude) the historical reality: there was no fertility crisis imperiling Native populations, which were devastated by disease, forced removal, and armed conflict. Invoking infertility to explain Native "disappearance" allowed settler colonialists to avoid responsibility for their complicity in genocidal practices.

Jefferson and Buffon's shared role in displacing white responsibility onto fertility proved unfortunately influential, but the *differences* between their positions particularly influenced Cooper's characteristic anxiety about the possibilities of reproductive futurity among Natives or mixed-race couples. Jefferson tried to refute Buffon's notion that racial/civilizational differences were mutable

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constitute violations, and for Cooper, each signifies a kind of death. Nonetheless, *for Magua*, they fulfill different desires that he is torn between. The order of the substitutive logic is key: sex is not presented as a kind of sublimated violence, but instead violence displaces sex.

[247] The Native character who hints most explicitly at Cora and Magua's reproductive perpetuation is Tamenund. "A great warrior takes thee to wife," he intones, "Go—thy race will not end" (*Mohicans* 353). However, Tamenund's promise that the "race will not end" is undercut by the general tenor of his speech, which portrays Native disappearance as natural and inevitable even as he subversively hints of a later cultural resurrection after whites have exhausted the land. His vision serves as a reminder that stadial rises are followed by falls and a renewed tribal stage.

[248] Jefferson argues that this is "not a difference of nature, but of circumstance" and concludes, "were we in equal barbarism, our females would be equal drudges" (65). As Mark Rifkin notes, Jefferson expresses far more openness to interracial marriage than Cooper, even suggesting that it "remedies the conditions that heretofore have been misinterpreted as a congenital lack of fecundity" (46).

and environmentally determined. But it would be a mistake to read Jefferson's accounts *of Natives* as therefore presaging nineteenth-century racial science, for he rejects the ideas that infertility is either climatic or an immutable biological fact with equal determination (infertility, obviously, is paradoxically that which *cannot* be biologically inherited).[249] In blaming *cultural* practices ("drudgery," nutrition, gendered lifestyles, and marital norms), Jefferson argues *for* amalgamation as the pathway to Native procreation, thereby conditioning biological continuance on cultural assimilation. As we have seen, Cooper defers Jefferson's openness to white/Native amalgamation into a distant and indefinite future. But he follows Jefferson's focus on gendered labor norms and cultural propagation in *The Deerslayer*. There, Natty forcefully maintains that Chingachgook's marriage with Hist can only be productive, equitable, and fertile if confined to a domestic space; he will only approve of it if Chingachgook assiduously keeps the "hoe" out of the hands of the "wife of yourn," (*Deerslayer* 846).[250] Cooper's implication is that Chingachgook must give up hunting for farming, thereby fundamentally altering his relationship to the natural environment. Only by moving into the next phase of stadial development can Natives partake in the national project of reproductive futurity; only by altering their environment through farming can they help disprove Buffon's belief that environment determines human destiny.[251]

The looming presence of the Buffon/Jefferson debate helps reveal the psychosexual and cultural stakes underlying Magua's threats to force Cora to "draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison." When Magua intends to bring Cora into his wigwam and its environs, he suggests working her to death, or at least to infertility. According to the Jeffersonian logic that Cooper references, forcibly induced agricultural labor makes natal labor less likely. In other words, the potential threat of rape and forced *bio*political consignment to the feminized space of the nursery coexists with a second form of patriarchal domination: consignment to a homosocial *necro*political spaces (the graves of the fathers and the fields of female labor).[252] Perhaps the reason that "no chaste female" can stand Magua's gaze, then, is not because it portends sexual violation, but because

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[249] As Tawil observes, by arguing that African-American slaves were biologically inferior to whites, Jefferson's response to Buffon seem to strikingly anticipate "the development of later [mid-nineteenth-century] racialism" (66). However, the emphasis on infertility suggests that in at least some regards Jefferson not only treats Natives differently than African-Americans, but also uses logic that is fundamentally inconsistent with antebellum racialism.

[250] Somewhat surprisingly, Cooper's take with regards to racialized labor relations is less essentialist than Sedgwick's in *Hope Leslie*. Whereas Natty imagines Chingachgook and Hist as *capable* of altering foundational modes of labor in order to assimilate into white norms, Sedgwick's Mrs. Fletcher views an "Indian girl" like Magawisca as fundamentally unable to adapt to "household labor," comparing her to a "wild doe" being used to plough fields instead of an ox. See also Tawil (124).

[251] Because Cooper depicts Natty as incapable of intimate or sexual relationships, his dogmatic intervention into Chingachgook and Hist's domestic life is particularly galling. It also serves as a potent example of Rifkin's point that Natives are often portrayed as "needing to be trained in the ostensibly natural kinds of privatized intimacy organizing bourgeois family life" (34).

[252] Cooper was not alone in imagining an encounter with the graves of the fathers as inherently fatal for white maiden "captives." In Elizabeth Oakes Smith's *The Western Captive* (1842), Margaret is taken by Tecumseh and renamed The Swaying Reed (despite the title, it is more an adoption than a captivity). Margaret thrives with the Natives and falls in love with Tecumseh. Though she does not wish to return to white society, she eventually offers her life in exchange for her sister's. Before the sacrifice, she and her sister visit a ghostly Native burial mound. Margaret takes ill; it is as though the burial ground saps her spirit and bodily energy. Even though Tecumseh saves her from sacrifice, she goes into a coma and dies. In Smith's text—which claims to hold out the possibility of interracial romance as a source of hope, not menace—the encounter with the burial ground still fatefully interdicts the possibility of a white-Native baby signifying futurity.

it denies the reward that maidenly chastity is supposed to inevitably produce within sentimental culture: the promise of eventual conjugal fertility, a baby, and the opportunity to reproduce social norms by dispensing maternal affection.[253]

In light of these strains, other moments that signal sexual violation also begin to disclose homosocial and necrotic dimensions. For instance, when Magua arrests Cora by laying his "soiled hand" upon her, the source of the stain is "red" gore that "comes from white veins"—an infection transmitted through blood, not sex (*Mohicans* 201).[254] Begotten by slicing into white male bodies without permission, Magua's bloody hand may be "soiled" and "reeking" but it is sterile in at least one sense: it is capable only of conveying more death, not producing babies. It represents not a *promise* of miscegenation so much as the *accomplishment* of "missangregation": not the creation (*-gen*) of a mixed-blood child that combines racial identities, but the mixing (*-greg*) of blood (*-sang*) on the battlefield (or through cannibalism) that erases racial identity.[255] At a minimum, then, the threat of miscegenation (again, an odd threat given that Cora is already interracial), coexists with another threat: the denial of reproductive futurity that Cooper inextricably associates with white identity. At its heart, the scandal is that for Cooper, miscegenation, infertility, and death conspire to produce the same ends: life with no future.

Queerer twists await. Magua's most intense and determinative emotional relationship in the novel is not with Cora at all, but with her father Colonel Edmund Munro. Immediately after threatening Cora with agricultural labor, Magua builds to his ultimate aim: "The body of the gray-head would sleep among his cannon, but his heart would lie within reach of the knife of le Subtil" (*Mohicans* 119). This revelation constitutes an admission that revenge is as important to Magua as sexual desire. Magua contemplates a blow that would leave Cora's body dead. But what he *really* desires is to have his knife's thrust penetrate the "heart" of Munro, thereby violently severing Munro's children from his affective core. It is no coincidence that Magua's fantasies so quickly turn from Cora to another man sleeping beside him, nor that Magua dwells on Munro's violently phallic "cannon." Magua wants Munro not only to suffer (as many a sadist wishes a spurned lover's pain

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[253] Here, I build upon but also aim to distinguish my argument from Harry Brown's excellent article, "The Horrid Alternative." Brown tracks the nineteenth-century belief that interracial relationships caused "diminishing fertility" across subsequent generations, as well as noting that sex between white women and Native men "is punished in the novels of Child, Cooper, and Sedgwick by disease and madness" (138). In some regards, I believe that Cooper exceeds Brown's claim, implying that fertility does not gradually diminish upon interracial sexual contact, but immediately brings one into a disjunctive, even queer, relationship with the reproductive futurity associated with civilization. At the same time, I find that Cooper is less racially essentialist than in Brown's take, offering characters at least the possibility of revising labor relations in a way that promises eventual stadial advancement and amalgamation.

[254] If there is a Burkean parallel to this moment, it is the most famous passage in *Reflections*: the invasion of Marie Antoinette's bedchamber by French revolutionaries. After killing Marie's "centinel," "A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked" (Burke 71). This breathless portrait, which culminates in Burke's exclamation that "the age of chivalry is gone," bears clear stock similarities to Cooper's account of Magua—the "reeking" hand, the threat of violent phallic penetration—but by placing these elements in close and causal conjunction, by portraying the woman as "almost naked," and by alluding to a threat of gang rape, Burke sexualizes and sensationalizes to a degree that surpasses Cooper.

[255] While I depart from her lack of differentiation between miscegenation and what I herein call missangregation, I am indebted to Shirley Samuels for her observation that the Huron's drinking of blood in the massacre scene is *like* miscegenation in that each constitutes, for Cooper, another "'unnatural' mixing of blood" (104).

prolonged), but specifically to suffer the pain of *childlessness* that is the consequence of an intimate relation with another man. In other words, while Magua seeks to make Munro experience the pain of his own childlessness, as a consequence, his actions produce and perform the lack of reproductive futurity that heteronormative culture reductively stigmatizes as the inevitable result of gay coupling.

Anticipating many modern feminist theorists, Cooper suggests that sexual violence (insofar as it is invoked in the novel) is not primarily about sex, but about exerting power. But he adds a twist: the murder within a bedchamber that Magua threatens is not *only* about men's power over women, but more fundamentally about a man's power over another man. Thus, Magua—who, to be clear, Cooper still constructs as literally heterosexual—foregrounds his homoerotic, child-annihilating relationship with Munro even at the moments that he discusses sleeping with (that is, in proximity to) Cora.[256] He not only sexually objectifies her, but also treats her as a disposable object whose life exists primarily to be acted upon in a theatrical battle of patriarchal power. In the process, Cooper transforms Cora from an admirable and active woman into a bare signifier of femininity huddling in the darkest, most reductive imaginable corner of the relational triangle Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick famously identified in *Between Men*. Most troubling of all, Cooper compels Cora to participate in radically devaluing her own life. After Magua describes stabbing her, Cora responds by calling him a "Monster!" in "an ungovernable burst of filial indignation" (119). Confronted with the prospect of her own demise, she seems most horrified by how it will make her father feel.

Cooper was far from alone in expressing what Ezra Tawil calls "transracial sympathy" in response to the supposed "disappearance" of Natives. However, he played an unusually large role in associating the perceived anachronism of racial others with non-heteronormative gender relations. Lee Edelman's *No Future* helps illuminate Cooper's construction of Magua's "monstrosity," and in turn, allows us to begin to notice the more pervasive relationship between homophobia and settler colonialism. One of Lee Edelman's central contentions is that mainstream society has almost invariably read homosexual subjects as not only outside reproductive futurity, but as a threat to it. As Edelman notes, because they are seen as unable to produce children, queers are imagined as unable to participate in the social order whereby marriage constitutes citizenship. Thus, queers are made to represent the "death-drive" and thereby "appear as a threat not only to the organization of a given social order but also, and far more ominously, to social order as such" (11).[257] Cooper's depiction of Natives as embodiments of the death drive reverses the order. By *first* being construed as outside reproductive futurity (through the emphasis on parental graves and cultural disappearance), they subsequently accrue homoerotic and homophobic signifiers.[258]

In a manner that helps elucidate Cooper's repeated narrative necessity for "bad Indians" like Magua, Edelman explores the way that society creates scapegoats in order to justify defending the

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[256] As Mark Rifkin notes, an individual can be straight while situated as structurally opposed to the social order of reproductive futurity: "heterosexuality refers less to attraction between men and women or the conditions of reproductive intercourse per se than to a kind of social formation in which coupling, procreation, and homemaking take on a particularly normative shape exemplified by the nuclear family" (7).
[257] Rifkin makes a similar point by noting how similar threat constructions have been applied to communities of color in especially pernicious ways (5).
[258] As Edelman writes: "Whatever voids the promissory note, the guarantee, of futurity, precluding the hope of redeeming it, or of its redeeming us, must be tarred, and in this case, feathered, by the brush that will always color it queer in a culture that places on queerness the negativizing burden of sexuality" (149). Edelman contends that all sexuality *as such*—that is, sexuality experienced as *jouissance*, or pleasure within the moment that elides (or at minimum, exceeds) the aim to produce of children—is fundamentally against futurity. Society, unwilling to countenance this scandalous threat to the perpetuation of its order (embodied in and through children), instead projects the burden of sexual pleasure for its own sake primarily onto queer sex.

regime of reproductive futurity: "If … 'it takes a village to raise a child,' then, we might add, it takes, albeit perversely, a villain too" (45). In Edelman's account, such "villains" often appear in the stock narrative type of childless men who exert direct or indirect violence upon children, women, and other bearers of reproductive futurity. Situating *A Christmas Carol* as a case study, Edelman notes how Scrooge's "stingy, reclusive, and anticommunitarian ways express themselves fully when he stands exposed" (within the vision of Christmas future) as responsible for Tiny Tim's death because of his miserliness. While Scrooge bears certain markers of potential homosexuality, his sexual object choice is largely irrelevant to Edelman's conception: instead Scrooge's tendency to foreground his own ends over the needs of a child reveals him as "that criminal by criminals themselves reviled: as the dreaded pedocide" (42).[259]

For Edelman, the fly in the figgy pudding is Dicken's ideological slippage; not the fact that Scrooge is miserly or even that Scrooge is wicked, but in the presumption (shared by author and readers) that a single, older man's decision to focus on his own ends/his own self *is tantamount to child murder*. Unwilling to participate in the ritual annual celebration of *A Christmas Carol*, Edelman revalues the miser as he was *before* being re-educated and redeemed through love of Tiny Tim. Edelman creates a term for characters such as Scrooge: they are "*sinthomo*sexual."[260] Necessarily queer (but not necessarily straight or homosexual), they embody less an ossified sexual orientation than a capacity for "radical negativity": a refusal to sacralize the construct of "the child." Prioritizing Lacanian "pure jouissance" located outside the "temporality of desire," Edelman's *sinthomo*sexuals not only reject reproductive imperatives, but actively resist the ideological conflation of children and futurity itself (86). Edelman urges queers to reclaim the radical potential of *sinthomo*sexuality rather than mimicking the bourgeois heterosexual family structures.[261] But he also explores how social fears of *sinthomo*sexuality have justified violence against queers. Homophobia enters the equation when society reflexively or reductively conflates *sinthomo*sexuality (with its emphasis on pleasure beyond meaning, located in the present) and homosexuality more generally with threats towards women,

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[259] Edelman goes on to read both Leonard, the villain in *North by Northwest*, and the avian antagonists in *The Birds*, as *sinthomo*sexual forces that threaten lives more directly than Scrooge. Each villain bears an uncanny resonance with Cooper's presentation of Natives in *The Last of the Mohicans*. In the climactic scene of *North by Northwest,* Leonard suspends Thornhill and Eve over a cliff. In a brilliant frame-by-frame reading, Edelman tracks how Leonard, after being shot, falls to his death, and—through Hitchcock's playful jump cut—Thornhill lifts Eve "from the face of the cliff directly into the upper berth of a bedroom coach on a train" and thereby into the realm of reproductive futurity (93). In the uncannily similar scene at the end of *Mohicans*, Magua stabs Uncas and Cora just before Natty's rifle shot sends the Huron plummeting to his death. Meanwhile, just prior to the massacre scene, Cooper describes the Natives as foreboding birds "hovering, at a distance, like vultures, who were only kept from stooping on their prey, by the presence and restraint of a superior army" (*Mohicans* 197).

[260] Edelman italicizes the first half of the word to draw attention to its derivation from, and relation to, the writings of Jacques Lacan.

[261] Edelman notes that society depends on producing the *structural position* of the *sinthomo*sexual. If some people exit the category, others will be stigmatized as society shifts "the figural burden of queerness to someone else" (27). Therefore, Edelman argues that queers should embrace and reclaim the category. Rather than try to assimilate into bourgeois family life, he pushes for a radical opposition to the "oppositionality" of politics as such, with a particular rejection of the reverence of children. Most notoriously: "Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie, fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net …" (27).

children, and the reproductive futurity underlying the social order itself.[262] In such cases, the figure of the child becomes a pretext for "endless blows" against *sinthomo*sexuals and queers alike (154).

In *No Future*, Edelman says little about intersections between race and reproductive futurity. However, in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper depicts certain Native characters as something akin to *sinthomo*sexuals in order to justify colonial violence against Native tribes. Cooper re-imagines the French and Indian war as not just a military campaign between professional warriors, but as an existential struggle between white heteronormative futurity and nonwhite *sinthomo*sexual violence. Even Native children—in the rare occasions Cooper portrays them at all—do not appear as emblems of futurity.[263] When Heyward infiltrates the Huron camp, he finds "children of the devil:" an undisciplined, ungendered, undifferentiated "juvenile pack." They seem to emerge from the landscape itself rather than human sexuality or society: "it seemed as if the earth had, in truth, swallowed up their forms" (*Mohicans* 264). With the exception of one moment, they are never in the presence of their parents. Even then, instead of a sentimental hearthside scene, Cooper presents a lurid gathering of the tribe in a gauntlet. Sons symbolically castrate their fathers at the very moment that they try to claim their legacies: "boys, little able to wield their instruments, tore the tomahawks from the belts of their fathers" (269). With their unwieldly phallic weapons, they proceed to inflict blows on Uncas, who is busy trying to save fair maidens. Cooper's dehumanized presentation of the children anticipates Native Studies scholars who complain that Edelman's privileged youth is implicitly always a "white Child" and that "in the context of genocide… the Native child *may already be queered*" (A. Smith, "Queer Theory" 48).[264] Cooper's Huron children are not icons of innocence but apprentices in the arts of violence—already queered, indeed, but as *sinthomo*sexual trainees rather than as homosexual.[265]

Cooper portrays destructive *sinthomo*sexuality and reproductive futurity directly clashing during the novel's most famous scene—the massacre outside Fort William Henry. *Mohicans* reproduces elements from documentary sources that described the battle's infanticide and cannibalism in even more sensational terms than Cooper uses. But Cooper offers a distinctive, if perverse, invention: he makes the killing of babies and mothers emerge directly from Native practices of (potential) cross-dressing and gender fluidity that horrified white settlers. The massacre only starts after "a wild and untutored Huron" is "attracted" by "the gaudy colors of a shawl" in "the female crowd." He demands a sartorial article that signifies not only femininity within white culture, but also vulnerability to the elements that Native men were supposed to be impervious to. In response, the mother initially "wrapped her child in the coveted article, and folded both more closely to her bosom," causing the Huron to snatch the baby—without securing the shawl—and demand a trade (198-99).

In a heartbreaking response that contrasts the Native warrior's fetishistic prioritization of a feminized object over female and infant lives, the mother begs that the native take "Here—here—

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[262] "This conflation of homosexuality with the radical negativity of *sinthomo*sexuality continues to shape our social reality" (Edelman 74).

[263] "Racialized kids, queer kids, are not the sovereign princes of futurity," Muñoz maintains (30).

[264] Andrea Smith proceeds to observe how "Colonel John Chivington, the leader of the famous massacre at Sand Creek, charged his followers to not only kill Native adults but to mutilate their reproductive organs and to kill their children because 'nits make lice.' In this context, the Native Child is not the guarantor of the reproductive future of white supremacy; it is the nit that undoes it" (48).

[265] The touching scene between Chingachgook and Uncas does something to counterbalance this demonization of the Hurons, though it does not, of course, change their status as death-bound subjects. Cooper presents a direct inversion of the Uncas-Chingachgook scene in the account of a Huron father who disowns his son "Reed-that-bends" for cowardice (*Mohicans* 280).

there—all—any—every thing!" in exchange for her child. As Chapman notes, this impassioned plea is the only time that a mother directly speaks in the novel.[266] Her offer of "all—any—*every* thing" seems even to suggest the possibility of sexual exchange. But tellingly, the Huron is entirely uninterested in either heterosexual genital expression or kidnapping/forcible adoption. Cooper seems to depicts not the warrior's desire to *possess* the woman's body—or even her baby—but instead his effort to *appropriate* her ability to present as female.[267] When a second Native grabs the shawl, the disappointed warrior "dashed the head of the infant against a rock, and cast its quivering remains to her very feet." He then kills the mother with his tomahawk. She perishes "grasping at her child, in death, with the same engrossing love that had caused her to cherish it when living" (198-99).[268]

In this passage, Cooper suggests that the *slightest* deviation from heteronormativity dramatically destabilizes the unwritten norms that otherwise effectively regulate Native behavior. In this context, it is important that the Huron warrior's desire for the shawl is far from flamboyantly—or even conclusively—gay, in any stereotypical sense. The Huron man may or may not have intended to wear the shawl himself. Even if he did, within Iroquois culture's more capacious conceptions of gender expression, wearing such a garment would hardly have been seen as a destabilizing act. The fact that Cooper nonetheless depicts it as a spur to violence shows the limited imagination of binary-driven white heteronormativity, which is only capable of interpreting the Huron's desire as a gender-disordered fetish for a feminized object (at minimum) or a frustrated, transgressive act of cross dressing.

Additionally, the scene serves as a compelling demonstration of white society's tendency to construct non-heteronormative desire as necessarily threatening. In Edelman's reading, Scrooge seeks only self-serving ends but is eventually held culpable for the death of an innocent child. In the infanticidal and matricidal Huron man, Cooper compresses the ideological leaps white society takes to depict *sinthomo*sexuals as not only outside reproductive futurity, but as violent threats to it. Cooper removes all doubt about culpability and dramatically condenses the transitional process that mis-represents *sinthomo*sexual pleasure as inevitably leading to *sinthomo*sexual violence. By portraying the Huron's vaguely fetishistic desires as slipping into murderous rage almost instantaneously, Cooper constructs him as a subject *dangerously* outside what Edelman calls the "*temporality* of desire." The warrior's *sinthomo*sexual aspect does not mean that he is beyond desire: he is, instead, *all* desire. But his desire is so intense that it brooks no temporal compromise. He either has the shawl or he does not; lacking a conception of a possible *later* moment of fulfillment, thwarted present pleasure can only be expressed through precipitous wrath.

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[266] Chapman describes the mother's offer of trade "as a kind of striptease" which is revoked by "giving away" the shawl to another warrior, offering "in microcosm the dilemmas of the novel itself: it offers the romantic appeal of inter-racial union but prohibits its consummation at the last moment" (412).

[267] Here, I differ from Chapman, who suggests that we imagine the Huron "as adopting the child as his own" and as initiating "bartering" as a "dysfunctioning" "moment of potential equality" (412-13). The mother may wish to barter, but the Huron has no interest either in exchange or in adopting the baby.

[268] In distinction to those who argue that Cooper is presenting a fantasy of "regeneration through violence" (Slotkin) or "male parthenogenesis" in a frontier cleansed of women (Chapman), I feel that Cooper often depicts instances of catastrophic violence to *deplore* the absence or marginalization of female influences, even as he remained incapable of reliably presenting convincing female characters. While Chingachgook and Natty's bond has great homosocial appeal, it is counterbalanced by nightmarish scenes where feminine absence or killing of women leads to destructive cycles of violence. Additionally, these "heroes" are themselves doomed to death or sterility, only narratively redeemable insofar as they shepherd heterosexual couples through the deadly frontier terrain and into the valleys of futurity.

In order to show how this singular act of violence becomes a massacre in which hundreds are killed, Cooper's passage relies on a certain logic of acceleration: a homophobic game of domino-theory and hyperbolic containment strategies. Even before the drama begins in earnest, Magua plays a crucial role in preparing Natives for the possibility of violence by "gliding among his countrymen, and speaking with his fatal and artful eloquence" (*Mohicans* 198). The scene is just one of many where Cooper presents Magua less as a paradigm of stout courage and deadly bellicosity than as a coward who kills at secondhand, inciting others to desperate acts through the un-masculine arts of rumors and whispers. Later, the fact that a *second* warrior actually claims the shawl reveals that the first Native's desires were not idiosyncratically deviant, but culturally representative. Following this revelation, Magua's "fatal and appalling whoop" causes all hell to be unleashed (199). Even though the people killed in the Fort William carnage are exclusively white, the scene's exponential amplification (bounding from one discordant desire to two, from innuendo to deadly battle cry, from murder to massacre) unwittingly parallels historical patterns whereby *whites* justified violence against Native collectives because of a few tribal members' deviations from white standards of heteronormative masculinity.[269] As Scott Morgensen argues in "Settler Homonationalism," imperial traders and soldiers often labeled Natives who did not conform to strict masculine gender roles as "berdache, 'warrior women' … persons so marked were less often singled out for violence than subjected with their communities to military attack, containment, or removal" (Morgensen 113). Even though he disperses responsibility for the massacre among many actors, including Montcalm and Munro, Cooper constructs just such a *sinthomo*sexual scapegoat in the shawl-snatching Huron: an individual man whose non-normative sexuality validates interventions on an imperial scale.

Additionally, Cooper presents other Native men—and even whole tribes—as possessing fragile, disordered, or imperiled gender identities. The Hurons disparage the Mohicans as "a race of women" for entrusting their collective security to a treaty. When Uncas is captured, a Huron woman taunts him: "The Huron girls shall make you petticoats, and we will find you a husband" (*Mohicans* 272). Magua, too, is ungendered. After his initial struggles with alcohol, his tribe gives his wife to another warrior. When he is whipped by Munro's deputies, he is physically scarred, so that "he must hide, like a squaw, under this painted cloth of the whites" (118). Backed into a corner by history, white gender binarism, and heteronormativity, these men are left with neither viable options for romantic relationships nor means to peacefully construct positive modes of masculinity without wives. Accordingly, they prove their masculinity through violence, which either causes them to die heroically (Uncas) or turn into archetypal *sinthomo*sexuals who perish during villainous deeds (Magua). In modern terms, we might say that Cooper queers them in order to disappear them—or at a minimum, in order to produce them as death-bound subjects.

By presenting a vision of an entire race disappearing at the same time that their heteronormative masculinity is depicted in a state of crisis, Cooper reads queerness and race as linked signifiers of temporal regression. Valerie Rohy critiques such specious, but persistent analogies between homosexuality as a mode of "regression in individual development (to immature stages in life)" and racialized primitivism (ix). While Rohy focuses primarily on ways that African-Americans were constructed as regressively primitive, Morgensen tracks a "colonial necropolitics that framed Native peoples as queer populations marked for death" that settlers used as they

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[269] For instance: Scott Morgensen recounts that in 1513, after Balboa claimed to find "the king's brother and about forty other men dressed in women's apparel or living in sexual relationships" he "threw them to be eaten alive by his dogs." Morgensen concludes that "Linking ascriptions of savagery to transgressions of sexual nature defined European rule as sexual colonization and justified its violences" (111). Meanwhile, for Jonathan Goldberg, "post-facto, the body of the sodomite takes on an originary status, as the cause for what was done to the Indians in the first place" (6-7).

attempted to impose "sexual modernity" (106).[270] Neither critic could ask for a clearer case study than Cooper's efficient conjoining of homosexuality, regression, and primitivism in the character of the unnamed Huron who precipitates the Fort William massacre. Initially, it is hard to tell whether Cooper intends for the Huron's desire for the shawl to index queerness or a childish desire for shiny objects.[271] But both factors collapse onto one another insofar as adult queer men are understood as simultaneously violently hypersexual (the *sinthomo*sexual) and *outside of* sexuality in historical contexts that suppress all mention of sexuality that does not lead to reproduction (the child-*like* nineteenth-century bachelor). Accordingly, Cooper overlays psychosexual regression and historical atavism into a singular moment that renders them almost indistinguishable. The quest for *sinthomo*sexual *pleasure* seems to lead inexorably not only to violence, but into *pre-civilizational* violence. These transitions from affective state to atavistic act are legible on the face of the Native warrior whose "savage" act incites the massacre: "his bantering, but sullen smile, changing to a gleam of ferocity" as "he dashed the head of the infant against a rock" (*Mohicans* 199).

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If white/native pairings appear as affronts to the civilizational promise of reproductive futurity in *The Last of the Mohicans*, then what do we make of a novel like *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829)? In this brief excursion outside the Leatherstocking series, I pause to consider a novel that seems, in almost every structural regard, to reverse Cooper's conclusions in *Mohicans* and *Notions of the Americans*. Published only three years after *Mohicans* and a year after *Notions*, *Wept* not only portrays a loving (if tragic) relationship between a captive white woman (Ruth Heathcote/Narra-mattah) and an Indian chief (Conanchet) but also builds towards a revelation that they have produced a child. Set in the seventeenth-century during King Philip's War, the novel presents tender, procreative amalgamation not as a future promise, but as something accomplished long ago. The interracial union is also treated less sensationally than one might expect. When the Puritan woman's parents learn of their daughter's marriage, they are quick to forgive and they strive to reincorporate her into the community.[272] Even in more idiosyncratic ways, the novel seems designed to rewrite the sexual dynamics of *Mohicans*. Whereas the earlier novel begins with white soldiers becoming lost in a skeletal, deathly forest over-identified with Native bodies, *Wept* begins with a sexualized entry into arboreal embraces that prefigures a successful merger of differently racialized bodies.[273] Instead of Magua's menacing male gaze at Cora, Cooper presents sexualized gazes that are

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[270] Morgensen concludes that "Modern sexuality arose in the United States as a method to produce settler colonialism, and settler subjects, by facilitating ongoing conquest and naturalizing its effects" (117). See also Andrea Smith's *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*.

[271] Given the context of the massacre, it seems particularly unlikely that Cooper is behaving like a cultural relativist at this moment. Within Huron culture, there likely would have been nothing queer—that is to say, *unusual*—about a man wearing a shawl. The problem arises precisely *because* Cooper imposes white standards of gendered behavior onto Native people.

[272] Peaceful reincorporation into white society was no given, either in reality or in fiction. In James Hall's "The Pioneer" (1835), for example, the first-person narrator describes himself as unable to look upon his sister, her Indian husband, or their children with anything but scornful aversion (*'The Indian Hater' and Other Stories*).

[273] "Enterprise and a *desire* to search for still more *fertile* domains, together with the *temptation* offered by the vast and unknown regions that lay along their western and northern borders, soon induced bolder adventurers to *penetrate* more deeply into the forests" (*Wept* 1; emphasis added). As with the Bush clan's deforestation in *The Prairie*, this language of entry into the woods is far more sexually frank than Cooper's

reciprocated by Native men and white women.[274] But in regards to the question of Native futurity, *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wisht* serves as the exception that not only proves the rule but also clarifies it. In fact, in *Wept* Cooper enacts a more totalizing and insidious kind of erasure by portraying Native life *outside* regimes of reproductive futurity and mixed-race assimilation *within* them as divergent paths to the same destination: oblivion.

Recent criticism on captivity novels has identified ways that *Wept* (along with Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok*, 1824, and Catherine Maria Sedwick's *Hope Leslie*, 1827) responded to the nonfictional captivity narrative *A Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison* (co-authored with James Seaver, 1824).[275] Jemison, a white woman captured during the French and Indian War, chose to marry and assimilate into Seneca culture. Over half a century later, she told her story to James Seaver. The resultant *Narrative* became a publishing sensation with sales on par with Cooper's early novels.[276] Jemison not only described a generally happy life, but also set out to refute Jeffersonian rhetoric about "squaw drudgery" and reproductive incapacity. She said that Native women's work was "probably no harder than that of white women" and maintained that "their cares certainly are not half as numerous, or as great" (qtd. in Wallace 201). As proof that mixed-race relationships did not degenerate into infertility across generations, Jemison "ends with a summary of the meaning of her life: 8 children, 39 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren" (Wallace 202). Despite celebrating her immersion in Seneca life and her reproductive legacy, Seaver's narrative still portrayed Jemison as fundamentally white, thereby presenting race as immutable.[277]

Similarly, in *Wept*, the titular captive Narra-mattah (née Ruth Heathcote the second—she who is "wept" over) is never *fully* absorbed into the "drudgery" whites associated with Native life because she is spared the kind of physical labor that Jefferson imagined as causing infertility. During her absence, her Puritan family obliquely hints at fears of sexual violation while explicitly lamenting that she will be forced into physical labor. They imagine her subject to the pressures of the field as well as the "wigwam": "shivering in the wintry blasts, or sinking beneath the fierce heats of the climate, cheerless in the desolation of female servitude" (*Wept* 224) and picture her as "the bond-woman, the servitor, the wife of a savage" (*Wept* 259). The family may consciously dread that she *will* bear a child, but given the Jeffersonian rhetoric, they seem to also fear that she will *become incapable* of bearing a child. When young Ruth eventually reappears (as Narra-mattah), to their relief, she does not exhibit bodily signs of labor that were thought to characterize Native life. They celebrate finding "her whole movements freer and more decided than those of a race doomed, from infancy, to subjection and labour" (*Wept* 311). Her skin color reveals that she has spent time outdoors, but not too much (as opposed to Whittal Ring, another white captive in the novel who is so tanned that the Heathcotes initially mistake him for a Native and who *never* stops believing that he is a Native brave).

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accounts of human sexuality. But it is far less violent—and more procreative—than the equivalent scene in *The Prairie*.

[274] Tawil notes that "it is not Conanchet's gaze so much as his exchange of looks with Ruth that is threatening" (144). If Conanchet's gaze prefigures Ruth's absorption into captivity, a second reciprocal gaze between Narra-mattah and her mother restores her to awareness of her white origins.

[275] For a representative selection, see Rifkin (38), Wallace (191), Person (677), Brown (137), and Tawil (121).

[276] Harry Brown compellingly argues that the "popularity of the narrative" implies that "audiences were perhaps more receptive to Jefferson's idea of a racially mixed American future than were romance writers and reviewers" (137).

[277] See Tawil (101-107 and 121) for a reading of how Jemison, Child, and Sedgwick use captivity to "forge a specifically sentimental racial logic" whereby the extremity of immersion into Native cultures paradoxically proves that whiteness is an immutable biological fact (121).

A few chapters after Narra-mattah has been reintroduced to her white family, her mixed-race infant child appears on the scene. The clear, Jeffersonian suggestion is that Ruth has been spared infertility because she has been spared outdoor labor. While Ruth/Narra-mattah's mother (also named Ruth) initially feels "mixed emotions" of "joy" and "prejudice" in response to this revelation, within a page maternal sentiment causes her to embrace her grandson (*Wept* 344). Shortly thereafter, Ruth/Narra-mattah's father Content Heathcote, calling the restoration of his daughter and appearance of his grandson an "over-bountiful gift," bows in "meek" but willing "submission to Providence" (*Wept* 354-5). Thus, the child is quickly accepted into the white community—seemingly absorbed into the realm of reproductive futurity. The Heathcote family's begrudging but quick acceptance of the child obliquely recasts Natty Bumppo's totalizing objections to interracial coupling as a personal idiosyncrasy—or even a close-minded flaw—rather than Cooper's version of the only reasonable white response. However, all does not resolve smoothly. Bowing not to providence but to the demands of narrative teleology and social prejudice, Cooper follows the surprisingly well-received revelation of the mixed-race boy's existence by exacting a price: the death of his parents. Conanchet honorably submits to execution after being captured by another tribe, and Ruth/Narra-mattah's sympathetic attachment to her husband causes her to succumb in the same scene.

Before these deaths, Conanchet and Narra-mattah debate the morality of their relationship and the fate of their child. With the Puritans ready to incorporate the mixed-race child into their settlement, Cooper leaves the tasks of relinquishment and repentance to Conanchet. Ironically, it is the Native chief who insists on the inviolable immutability of his wife's whiteness. In a rapidly blooming canopy of botanical metaphors, Conanchet attempts to distinguish differences of degree from differences of kind in order to reaffirm the color line. Arguing that "the Great Spirit was angry when they grew together," Conanchet compares himself to a wild hemlock tree and Narra-mattah's father Content Heathcote to "a tree of the clearing, that bears the red fruit." Though "The leaf of the hemlock is like the leaf of the sumach; the ash, the chestnut; the chesnut, the linden; and the linden, the broad leaved tree which bears the red fruit in the clearing of the Yengeese; but the tree of the red fruit is little like the hemlock!" (*Wept* 381). Conanchet figures the apple tree and the hemlock as distinct, even fundamentally dissimilar species, thereby maintaining that differences in degree create a fundamental difference in kind. His judgment does not sound that far removed from Natty Bumppo's remarks on being "without a cross." But Cooper does not end the discussion with Conanchet's metaphor. Narra-mattah extends Conanchet's appeal to nature but rejects his interpretation, substituting engraftment for seeds: "But the Yengeese have put the apple of their own land on the thorn of our woods, and the fruit is good" (*Wept* 381). When combined with an appeal to Conanchet's fatherly affection, Narra-mattah's appeal to the graft's merger of nature and culture seems to settle the matter.

However, the graft metaphor is ambiguous. Conanchet and Narra-mattah may embrace it for different reasons. Whereas Narra-mattah's invocation of the graft seems to emphasize a kind of queer bond that subverts the racialized politics of seminal filiation, Conanchet's acceptance of Narra-mattah's graft metaphor may simply reaffirm his belief that both the child and Narrah-mattah should be seen as fundamentally white rather than mixed race. For "apples," when grafted "on the thorn of our woods," propagate identically to the scion (metaphorically, Narra-mattah's white parentage) rather than the root stock (Conanchet's Native heritage).[278] The second apple (the child) will be the same variety as the first (Ruth/Narra-mattah). Conanchet extends such readings in a second round of botanical allegories that try to read his wife and child not as hybrids, but as

[278] See the introduction for an extensive discussion of apple seeds and grafts, as well as chapter one for further observations on grafting.

plants that will flourish in white civilization. He calls the child "a blossom of the clearings" and Narra-mattah a "Flower of the open land!" Reaffirming the association of forests with death and of clearings with life and futurity, he warns that the boy "will not live in the shade." Only if Narra-mattah's "mind" can "forget the dream it dreamt among the trees" can she be restored to health and vigor. Thus, Conanchet frames transplantation back to "the *fields* of *thy* fathers" as the antidote to life and death near the graves of his fathers (*Wept* 388).

Conanchet's metaphors seem to reaffirm that Ruth/Narra-mattah is immutably white, thereby extending the lesson of Mary Jemison's *Narrative* that race is intrinsic and unchangeable. Little wonder then, that Ruth (the older) latches on to Conanchet's metaphors as she tells Narra-mattah that "the seed may yet quicken, though it hath been cast where the glory of the promise hath so long been hid" (*Wept* 395). Just before she dies, young Ruth seems to come around to this point of view. Forgetting the entirety of her captivity, she cries out, "Mother, why are we in the forest?" and wishes to return to the clearing. However, her almost immediate demise suggests Cooper's belief that reincorporation is a fantasy. The ending revises the novel's opening passage, which figured the forest as a site of fertile sexual possibility rather than a realm of otherness and death. In fact, Ruth's fatalistic expiration implies that for a flower of the clearings to bloom in the forest *is indistinguishable* from death. The passage goes on to fully erase Ruth's existence as a sexual or reproductive being. As she calls out to her mother, "The sound was soft and low; *perhaps infantile*" (*Wept* 396; emphasis added). At the moment of death, doubled names and grammatical ambiguity initially conflate Narra-mattah and her infant: "Ruth raised the form of her child, and saw that the features bore the placid look of a sleeping infant. Life played upon them, as the flickering light lingers on the dying torch." On a first reading, it is unclear whether a death has yet occurred and whether Ruth/Narramattah or the baby is the one who dies. Thus, Cooper suggests that like homosexuality, heterosexual interracial sex is as likely to result in atavistic, death-bound, infantile regression as in the production of an actual infant. [279]

At the same time as they reaffirm the immutability of Narra-mattah's whiteness, Conanchet's botanical metaphors seem to hold out a radical possibility, albeit one that Cooper turns to chilling ends. Though he at one point calls his son "neither red nor pale" (381), the graft metaphor and Conanchet's construction of the boy (who has only lived with Natives) as a "blossom of the clearings" inverts what would later be called the "one-drop" rule, even while replicating its binary logic. Conanchet argues, in short, that the child *is* white and should be absorbed into Puritan culture. Particularly after his parents' death, the child bears an overpowering symbolic burden. Will he live in the clearings or the forests? Will he be accepted in either society? Will he assimilate? How will he identify himself racially? Will he pass, or forever be marked by difference? And will he, in fact, *live* at all, or do his parents' sins against the order of reproductive futurity spell death?

Cooper responds with deafening silence. The moment of Narra-mattah's infantilized death might just as well signify the death of her infant son as well, for the child is never mentioned again. While many readers have assumed that he is adopted by his white grandparents, there is simply no evidence for this speculation—or any other—about the child's fate. This absence is no oversight on Cooper's part, as the novel does not simply end with Conanchet and Narra-mattah's death scene. Without so much as a chapter break, he goes from Narra-mattah's regressive infantile demise to a description of the valley of Wish-ton-Wish in the 1820s. By transitioning to this conclusion without paratextual demarcation, Cooper suggests that questions of legacy, inheritance, and continuance are essential parts of the tale's meaning, not ancillary epilogues. He lavishes description on the

[279] This return to infancy serves as a clearer example than anything in *Mohicans* of Harry Brown's thesis that historical romance almost inevitably depicts "insanity or atavism, the gradual mental decline of vibrant white heroines" as "following their sexual contact with Indians" (138).

environmental state of the valley, the ruins, and the orchards. All the apple trees which once "were young and thrifty, are now old and decaying" (*Wept* 398). In distinction with those ambiguous engrafted apples, Cooper reassures the reader that white reproductive futurity continues unabated by noting that a descendant of the Heathcote family is still "proprietor of the estate" (398).

By contrast, Conanchet's tombstone encapsulates the Native legacy more broadly. Labelled only "The Narragansett," he is reduced to an emblem of his tribe's fate. His wife's individuality is likewise effaced. Her grave simply reads "The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish" (*Wept* 400). In refusing to name her, the stone takes no stance on whether she should be remembered as white or Native, as Ruth or Narra-mattah; only that she belongs to this place in the clearings and that she is mourned. Most of the other characters' graves are likewise described. But the child—the unnamed, deracinated, mixed-race child—is simply forgotten, unassimilable into memory or history. He is not memorialized, not remembered, not wept over. Schrödinger's infant, he both had and did not have a future. But with no record of a life lived, he has no past, and thus, we cannot know whether he *ever* had *futurity* to begin with.

He simply vanishes. This *truly* vanishing, mixed-race child should place pressure on the way we talk about Cooper's construction of the so-called "vanishing Indian": the archetypal figure who disappears "into the mists." For too long, critics have conflated Cooper's accounts of "the last of his race"—that is, his active, elongated narrative *descriptions* of particular Natives' deaths—with his occasional, more mystical description of bodies evaporating "into the mists." Cooper also sometimes conflated these two categories. But for the most part, we *see* Cooper's Natives *die*. They do not, in fact, vanish at all. Uncas and Chingachgook and Conanchet have names. They have graves. Their deaths reaffirm that they *had bodies to begin with*. Their material remnants not only give them a home within a culture Cooper reductively symbolizes in the graves of the fathers but also within white sentimental and literary culture. Their embodiments—even in death—activate what Ezra Tawil calls "transracial sympathy" even while they participate in the marginalization of still-extant Native peoples (128).

But in the unnamed child, Cooper does not simply portray a person "vanishing" out of life and into death. Instead, Cooper vanishes him entirely and invisibly. By leaving the disappearance unnarrated, Cooper denies the mixed-race child the closure the Mohicans receive.[280] In the end, Cooper does not even give us an unmarked grave (or a thorn, a pond, a hill of moss) to project the child into. His vanishing is designed *not* to be noticed, and indeed, it often has gone unremarked upon. In the context of reproductive futurity, the enactment of the mixed-race child's true disappearance suggests something beyond Cooper's failure to commit to a tidy symbolic ending. Namely, it suggests that vanishing "into the mists" (the fantasy of a genocide completed without white complicity or violence) and vanishing through assimilation and "amalgamation" amount to one and the same thing: a limbo without *either* death or futurity; with limitless ambiguity but entirely without potentiality.

Towards an Ecosexual Orientation

As a transculturated individual who nonetheless defiantly defends his own whiteness, Natty Bumppo stretches Cooper's often deterministic links between non-reproductive sexuality and civilizational anachronism to the breaking point. In the later novels, Cooper punishes Natty for his

[280] There *is* an unmarked grave in the cemetery, but Cooper specifies that it holds the victims of a prior massacre.

homosocial attachments to Native men—and to nature itself—by denying him a wife and causing him to degenerate from a stoic, self-righteous killer into an "infantine" being (*Pathfinder* 287). But something peculiar happens in the very moments when Cooper tries to exile Natty from domestic bliss and white civilization. Scenes seemingly designed to naturalize Native disappearance and bury bones in the forest sprout seeds of co-paternal possibility. Meanwhile, when Natty rejects the imperatives of the marriage plot, he does not foreswear sexuality. To the contrary, his surprising interspecies eroticism displaces masculine aesthetics and stadial temporality with extravagant, sentimental prose that affirms pure absorption in the present. This section—which is shorter than the others because it focuses on an erotic energy that is *almost* entirely suppressed within the text—considers the largely unrealized queer potentiality that glimmers through in Natty's fleeting moments of environmental absorption. Cooper seems afraid to develop the consequences of such moments at length. Nonetheless, the Leatherstocking's projection of erotic opportunity beyond the human runs against the text's main grain, hinting at the author's underlying reservations about the regimes of settler colonialism, reproductive futurity, and Burkean conservatism that he usually helped reinforce. In turn, I hope to use these faint and forgotten glimmers of transgressive possibility as a provocation to those who have unwittingly replicated Cooper's values by adducing Natty's supposed sterility as proof that his philosophical and erotic commitments have no future.

Though I am suggesting that some dimensions of Natty's sexuality are queerer than has been acknowledged, I hope to largely bypass older debates about whether Natty was gay, or, in Barbara Alice Mann's terms, "too waif to wife" (57).[281] As a brief summary: Leslie Fiedler's influential argument in *Love and Death in the American Novel* was much more than a reductive outing of Natty and Chingachgook's supposed homosexuality. But by locating Natty and Chingachgook as the first in a lineage of literary interracial male pairs who end up in one another's arms in the woods after fleeing feminized civilization, Fiedler lent a voice to many a reader's suspicions that *something* more was afoot between the Leatherstocking (whose very sobriquet now seems to suggests lightness of the loafers) and the Big Serpent.[282] Since Fiedler, commentators have exhaustively explored—and occasionally overemphasized—the homoerotic undertones uniting these protagonists. But my interest is in something different than the status of sexual desire between Natty and Chingachgook. Instead, it is in the ways that they serve as homosocial partners whose individual and shared capacity for *parental* feeling towards Uncas serves as a counterpoint to the conflation of same-sex emotional fixation and the death drive which Magua represents.

In each of the first four novels, Natty rescues maidens in distress and propels them towards their romantic destiny with young men.[283] Neither a father nor a lover (at least of women), Natty serves as avuncular adjunct to the regime of reproductive futurity: always a bride-saver, never the bride-taker. Natty's existence adjacent to, but outside of, reproductive futurity encapsulates his relation to white civilization as a whole. Like the protagonist of many a Western to come, Natty's

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[281] Mann also argues that the discussion over whether Natty was gay is misplaced, although for different reasons. She claims (with a surprising degree of certainty) that Cooper intended for readers to recognize Natty as a mixed-race son of a Moravian missionary and a Native woman: too repressed and self-denying to wed a Native woman, and too afraid of social backlash and/or violence to pursue white women.

[282] Characteristically, Fiedler built on D.H. Lawrence. As Schweitzer reviews, most major Cooper critics have identified Natty's relationship with Chingachgook as a flight from "repressive, Europeanized civilization symbolized by 'the wife'" (136). By contrast, Rohy critiques Fiedler's supposition that such relationships with homosocial or homoerotic undertones are necessarily a "juvenile and regressive" alternative to the linear (and feminized) order of civilization (15).

[283] Natty repeatedly saves Mabel in *The Deerslayer*, as well, but her looser sexual mores make her an unfit representative for Cooper's fairy tale endings.

violence makes him unfit for advanced society. But, as has been noticed many times, his actions facilitate stadial transitions in the first-place (albeit in a not-entirely linear fashion). A sort of sexual Moses, he wanders the wilderness for forty (or fifty) years guiding his chosen people, but he dies having only seen their promised land from afar.

Long before he questions Natty's capacity for reproductively focused relationships in *The Deerslayer*, Cooper hints that Natty's vexed relationship to paternal sentiment flows from his characteristic mix of transculturation and racism. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Natty incessantly reminds the reader that he has no racial "cross," but he precariously straddles the boundary between white reproduction and Native associations with death. At times, Cooper seems to tie Natty too closely to Native necropolitics to make him even a father-*figure* to Uncas. In a particularly telling passage, Natty says that he knows the sound of Uncas's gun, "as well as a father knows the language of his child, for I carried the gun myself" (*Mohicans* 221). Here, Natty's language comes close to avowing a paternal interest in Uncas and the weapon's inheritance (or at least status as a hand-me-down) and thereby suggests a familial tie to Uncas by proxy. Yet the gun also *displaces* the youth. Natty has known Uncas since he was born, but it isn't the young Mohican whose voice he would recognize anywhere. Instead, he recognizes Uncas from afar vis-à-vis an instrument of death—a gun that Natty has both fathered and (if it isn't taking the issue too far) "carried," as if *in utero*.

This sly substitution of deathly instrument for living child shows how easily Natty's heroic agency could slide into death-dealing *sinthomo*sexuality, but the sentimental side of his homosocial relations seems to promise redemption. Just as Magua's most intense emotional relationship is with Colonel Munro (not his daughter Cora), Natty's deepest human connection in the Leatherstocking tales is with Chingachgook, not his potential romantic partners. Each male pair's relationship achieves peak emotional intensity when it becomes triangular: when a third figure (a son or daughter of one participant) is imperiled. Because Magua's conflict with Munro sets in motion the chain of events that results in the death of Cora and Uncas (who were potentially romantically linked to one another), the two triangles intersect in complex ways. But whereas the Magua-Munro bond was sealed with threats of intimate violence directed towards Cora's body, Natty and Chingachgook draw into closest bodily and emotional proximity in the reparative act of mourning Uncas's corpse.

The graveside scene between Chingachgook and Natty belatedly suggests that sentimentality can create a kind of metaphorical co-parentage between men, in a sense queering a relationship that Cooper usually reserves for same-raced but differently-gendered couples. Natty admit that Chingachgook's "blood was nearer" to Uncas than his own, but the phrase implies an emotional relationship that is tantamount to a biological connection—Chingachgook may have a "nearer" connection to his son, but Natty implicitly places his own "blood" in relation to Uncas as well. The fact that Natty only acknowledges his role as father after his figurative son's death seems to reaffirm the "procreatively dead-end domesticity of Chingachgook and Hawkeye's relationship" (Rifkin 50).[284] On its surface, then, this scene offers the clearest proof that queer interracial bonds can only draw white characters into the orbit of death and disappearance. But Cooper ends with a lingering image of Natty and Chingachgook holding hands over Uncas's grave: "Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in that attitude of friendship, these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while

[284] Tompkins also makes sure to specify that Natty and Chingachgook's "sexual boundary remains uncrossed and they remain social isolates, for within a social structure even such a union as theirs cannot be tolerated" (126).

scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas, like drops of falling rain" (*Mohicans* 394).[285] Rather than austerity, the scene offers tears.

These watery effusions draw the men temporally forward from associations with Native stoicism into the realm of sentimental domesticity. Cooper encapsulates the sense of almost reproductive possibility—the surprisingly fertile possibility of biotic regeneration—in the phrase "watering the grave." These teardrops do not merely *fall*; by "watering," they enable the possibility of plant life springing forth from death, thereby subsuming the desolate Native sepulcher into the romantic conventions of graveyard poetry which look forward as well as back. Though its fate is uncertain, the Native grave becomes a marker of potential futurity and intergenerational possibility, at least in a metaphoric sense. The scene anticipates Hist's more explicit account of children's tears watering plant life on parental graves in *The Deerslayer*. Hist's reverie makes the images of verdant growth much more certain. But what makes the *Mohicans* scene more counterintuitive is that instead of children's tears watering parental graves, same-sex, interracial quasi-parental tears water the grave of a child. The fact that such associations *hint*—however obliquely—at regenerative possibility atypically suggests that a queer bond (be it homoerotic or homosocial) might be productive so long as it laments death from above and outside, rather than participating in its production. In what will become a pattern, the entanglement of the human and the nonhuman allow Cooper to poetically elide the usually deterministic association between queerness, death, and racialized primitivism, at least for a passing moment. It may be small compensation that the mourned subject produces only plant life rather than biological offspring, but it does connect the process of mourning to some kind of futurity.

As it turns out, that narrative moment proved particularly fleeting due in part to historical pressures. In *Men Beyond Desire*, Richard Greven argues that the precipitous decline of birthrates in the antebellum period caused "fears that America was unable to generate its future" (2). At the same time, Andrew Jackson—famous for his hyper-masculine persona and for dueling—took on a powerful "symbolic function as purger of American effeminacy" (5). For Greven, these historical trends help explain why it became increasingly difficult for Cooper to gloss over the tensions between Natty's general heroism and genital unproductivity during the interim between the 1826 publication of *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder* in 1840.[286] Whereas in *The Last of the Mohicans* Cooper seemed content to portray Natty and Chingachgook as symbolic co-parents so long as it was clear that their partnership was sexless, Cooper portrays Natty's lack of wife and children as the central problem of *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*.[287] By pathologizing Natty's inability to

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[285] While Cooper makes sure to specify that this embrace constitutes an "attitude of friendship," it is far more intimate than a handshake or "handclasp" that signifies "similarity or equality," as Schweitzer has it (139). Schweitzer argues that the theme of friendship has been under-explored in comparison to the "courtship, marriage, and miscegenation plots in *The Last of the Mohicans*" (141) and astutely attributes this "critical myopia" to "the powerful totalizing effects of heteronormativity" (143). Nonetheless, in attempting to avoid Leslie Fiedler's famous focus on the potential romantic/homoerotic significations in Cooper's text, Schweitzer risks missing out on the ways that Natty and Chingachgook are much more than typical friends.

[286] *The Prairie*, published in 1827, portrays Natty shortly before his death. Viewing the old hunter (now a trapper) as a man beyond sexual desire, *The Prairie* focuses less on reproductive futurity than the books that precede or follow it in the series.

[287] As a further sign of Cooper's shifting priorities, it is worth remembering that the Andrew Jackson presidency not only strove to eliminate effeminacy but also normalized the displacement (as opposed to the deathly *disappearance*) of Native tribes. Thus, Cooper, who in the 1826 *The Last of the Mohicans* portrays Native desire to stay close to parental graves as a mark of death-bound nobility (creating an essential relation between Native morality and place), wrote in an 1831 preface to the same novel that the Tuscaroras were leaving "by removals to scenes more congenial to their habits" (*Mohicans* 25).

romantically bond with white women, Cooper unsuccessfully attempts to slam the door on the flickers of queer and interracial possibility that glimmered through the tragic ending of *Mohicans*. In *The Pathfinder* (1840), Natty (now middle-aged) falls in love with Mabel Dunham, who rejects him. *The Deerslayer* (1841), a prequel, intensifies the dilemma by portraying a youthful Natty as not only an insufficient or unattractive partner but as *incapable* of romantic attachment to women. Greven calls this pair of works (which he demarcates as the Jacksonian novels) the "great *anti*-marriage plot in American literature… a two-pronged escape from homosocial bonding and heterosexual love" (89-90).

But these novels do more than just flee from femininity and heterosexual attachment. To push Greven's point farther: Cooper actively *punishes* Natty for his "homosocial bond" with Native men by retroactively making him incapable of "heterosexual love." With the exception of *The Prairie*, Natty grows progressively younger as the series continues. But as Natty approaches an age that should signal peak libido (early adulthood), Cooper converts his existence outside sexuality from a marker of his purity into a fatal flaw that discredits his legacy. These later Leatherstocking novels deny Natty the possibility of Native *and* white women as sexual partners. Fiedler argued (with characteristic flair) that for Natty sex always "would have meant in short a kind of emasculation, since the virility of Natty is not genital but heroic and cannot survive in the marriage bed any more than beside the hearth" (211). In *The Pathfinder* in particular, Cooper suggests that heterosexual encounters threaten to undo not only Natty's "genital" virility but also his supposedly "heroic" capacity for death and destruction. Natty's dream epitomizes this emasculation:

> The very last night we staid in the garrison, I imagined I had a cabin in a grove of sugar maples, and at the root of every tree was a Mabel Dunham, while the birds that were among the branches, sung ballads, instead of the notes that natur' gave, and even the deer stopped to listen. I tried to shoot a fa'an, but Killdeer missed fire, and the creatur' laughed in my face, as pleasantly as a young girl laughs in merriment, and then it bounded away, looking back, as if expecting me to follow. (*Pathfinder* 285)

With his phallic gun misfiring, Natty proves unwilling or unable to follow the sexualized fawn/Mabel into sweet, bowery bliss among the sugar maples. Natty not only fails in his (deeply disturbing) effort to kill the deer, but also does not commit to pursuing her (either sexually or in order to tame it).[288] As a result, his dwelling remains a solitary cabin rather than becoming a bourgeois family household. We might expect him to prove incapable of sexual pleasure or biological reproduction, but the failure of his violent masculine efficacy—epitomized by the gun that never misses—is virtually unprecedented.[289] By making the two failures (sexual and violent/heroic) synonymous, Cooper shames Natty and attempts to disassociate himself from his most famous creation.

Shortly after Natty narrates his dream, Cooper depicts Natty in increasingly childlike terms and even describes him as possessing "a mind that was almost infantine in its simplicity and nature" (*Pathfinder* 287). In her pioneering ecofeminist reading of the scene, Annette Kolodny says the dream reveals that "Natty has been, all along, presexual" (108). The diagnosis of "presexuality" is astute. However, *the change* in the way Cooper characterizes Natty's sexuality matters. Natty has not "been, *all along*, presexual." There is a crucial difference between Natty's asexual, homosocial bond with

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[288] In *The Prairie*, Natty describes how he tried many times to "make a companion of" bear cubs and "speckled fawns" but laments that "the bear would bite, and the deer would run" (1150). Women and wild animals are ultimately beyond Natty's grasp, in linked ways.

[289] Kill-deer also misfires during the turkey shoot in *The Pioneers*, but only as a way to ratchet up dramatic tension before Natty's successful follow-up shot.

Chingachgook in the earlier novels and this "infantine" pre-sexuality. The delayed revelation of presexual childishness figures Natty as not only a character who fails to develop, but who *regresses*; who becomes not merely anachronistic but atavistic.

Though Cooper portrays Natty as assiduously avoiding interracial sex, his long affiliation with Chingachgook (and Delaware culture more generally) proves suspect enough to imperil his ability to stand for adult competency. As Mark Rifkin notes, racial identity is often "coded as a capacity for sexual normality, largely defined in terms of conjugal domesticity." By contrast, "the appearance of perverse deviance signifies in racial terms, positioning homosexuality in whites as a kind of racial retardation" (Rifkin 32). Additionally, as Andrea Smith observes, when Natives are not defined as violent killers opposed to European colonization, they are "rendered permanently infantile" (A. Smith 51). By associating Natty's lack of heterosexual desire with his "infantine" status, Cooper comes close to suggesting that, at least in terms of psycho-sexual or civilizational development, Natty does in fact "go Native." In Cooper's view, becoming symbolic co-parents with Chingachgook condemns Natty to *being* an infant rather than fathering one. Not merely left behind, he moves backwards to an earlier stadial era, inverting the way that Uncas's sentimental affection for Cora momentarily propelled him "centuries before the practices of his nation" (*Mohicans* 132).

By suggesting that an individual's place in the stadial cycles of history depends not entirely on race but also on sexual practices, Cooper moderates his usual essentialism. But ironically, the same critics who have protested Uncas and Cora's tragic fate most loudly have sometimes replicated Cooper's criteria of value by portraying Natty's objections to civilizational progress as proof that he *deserves* to be treated as a relic of a bygone era. By harshly judging Natty Bumppo for his inability to fit into advancing society and treating historical progress as linear and inevitable, such critics modernize Cooper's belief in stadialism rather than subjecting it to due scrutiny. Similarly, even those who are deeply critical of Cooper's racial values tend to reflexively (if unconsciously) propagate his endorsement of reproductive futurism as an unquestioned social good.[290] Casual references to Natty's sexual failings or his lack of children become means to dismiss Natty's criticisms of settler society: the fact that he cannot have children, the thinking goes, serves as proof that his *ideas* have no future. By failing to register critical distance, such accounts reaffirm, rather than critique, Cooper's belief that an existence outside heterosexual coupling must necessarily be childlike and simplistic.[291]

Even in *The Lay of the Land*, one of the most extended and astute accounts of Natty's failed relationships with Mabel and Judith, Annette Kolodny's commitment to a Freudian model of psycho-sexual development leads her to reaffirm Cooper's dismissive judgment of Natty's non-normative sexuality. Whereas Fiedler (and others) read Natty's wilderness adventures as a flight from the feminine, in Kolodny's ecofeminist reading, Natty displaces the feminine onto nature. For Kolodny, the fundamental psychodrama of male American pastoral fiction is a tension between viewing the land as a nurturing mother or as a sexualized lover. Either situation is fraught, as the former risks incest (transgressing the "precarious balance between intimacy and exploitation," 73)

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[290] The exception to these trends come from scholars who bring queer and Native perspectives into conversation. Native Studies scholars often fiercely contest the inevitability or uni-directionality of historical change, unmasking the concept of the civilizational stages as a socially constructed fiction designed to normalize violence against marginalized groups. See, for example, Mark Rifkin and Andrea Smith.

[291] This is especially the case in work on *The Pioneers* that treats Natty as naïve and Judge Temple as an admirable realist. For example, Zoellner writes that Natty exhibits "moral infantilism" while "the other inhabitants of Natty's forest world, from Judge Temple to Judith Hutter, are morally complex" (qtd. in McGregor 131). For Slotkin, Natty's rejection of Judith Hutter reaffirms his "moral purity" but is also a "self-defeating" reminder of his "impotence" (502-3).

and the later risks violent phallic assertion (the "brutal raping of nature's precincts, 104).[292] For Kolodny (who, as established, views Natty as "always, already presexual"), Natty's dream of Mabel Dunham as a deer represents his unsuccessful effort to transform nature from mother to lover. However, the gun's misfire suggests Natty's incapacity for a sexualized relationship with nature, causing his "infantile regression" (90) into a relationship with a mother who "*will* not be violated" (107).[293] Here, Kolodny does not so much situate Natty's renewed relationship with Mother Nature as oedipal as she recasts his place in a Freudian drama: no longer a romantic child of nature, he becomes an unthreatening, suckling infant. His ultimate childlessness, in other words, stems directly from his childishness.

By reading nature as a site that human femininity is projected onto, rather than as a source of autonomous erotic energy, Kolodny tends to downplay the delightfully transgressive elements of Natty's engagements with the nonhuman world. In *The Deerslayer*, Natty expresses a wish to get "back to my own sweet-heart." When Judith Hutter asks "where, then, is *your* sweet-heart?" Natty responds "She's in the forest, Judith—hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain—in the dew on the open grass—the clouds that float about in the blue heavens—the birds that sing in the woods—the sweet springs where I slake my thirst—and in all the other glorious gifts that come from God's Providence" (*Deerslayer* 616-17).[294] Here Kolodny focuses on the fact that nature takes on sexualized feminine attributes to argue that Natty is quickly pulled from this moment of romantic possibility "back into the infantile presexuality he had known in all the previous novels" (112-13).

While Natty certainly genders nature as female here, more is at play.[295] It makes little sense that Natty would project feminine elements onto nature in order to make nature more appealing at the very moment that he justifies his lack of interest in women. Reading this striking scene as just another instantiation of the nearly universal "nature as female body" trope undercuts the strangeness of Cooper imagining a typically hyper-masculine individual turned on by dewy grass and floating clouds. Here, Cooper combines shifts in tone and affect with profound stylistic transformations of Natty's speech patterns. Natty—instead of barking forth clipped, declarative, judgments and orders—intones loftily and languorously. As he moves from image to image, his nouns and adjectives float by with pillowy softness. His discourse becomes suffused with clichés associated with the softest strains of the romantic lyric: the sentimental speech patterns imagined as proceeding from, produced for, and consumed by female bodies.

Compared to Natty's usual utterances, his linguistic reverie shows hallmarks of the "sensuous and extravagant" or "highly wrought style" that Dorri Beam has reclaimed and revalued for its capacity to create "a mode of pleasure and a way of being that is not rooted in gendered anatomy" (6). It would be a mistake to read the passage as an allegory, imagining (for instance) that the clouds are motes in a lover's eyes, or that the birdsong is the lovers voice. Even though such

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[292] Cooper does portray characters who habitually project feminine characteristics onto natural objects and even behave rapaciously, such as the Bush clan in their scene of deforestation. But such depictions are far from idealized or endorsed.

[293] On the plus side, this means that Natty, alone (within the novels) is able to have a non-exploitive, rape-free relationship with nature.

[294] In *The Deerslayer* Natty also declines to marry a Huron woman.

[295] Catrin Gersdorf summarizes Peter Quigley's argument that Kolodny's project "ultimately fails because" it replicates, rather than proposing an alternative to "the cultural paradigm of configuring the land as female body and the female body as either nurturing mother or seductive lover" ("Ecocritical Uses of the Erotic" 176). Gersdorf herself argues that Kolodny's reliance on "male writers" whose "topographies suffer from symbolic overkill" limits the scope of her project (188). Herein, I argue that Kolodny's object of study—Cooper—already imagined nature's erotic potentiality as exceeding the dimensions of the human female body.

imagery is often deployed metaphorically, when Natty describes how he "slake[s his] thirst" in "sweet springs," he does not pronounce a euphemism for sex between people. Instead, Natty defamiliarizes a cliché in which the vehicle (the spring) is usually less charged than the hidden tenor (sexual intercourse) and declares the tenor extraneous because the vehicle already contains a surplus of erotic charge in and of itself. To drink from a spring is not *like* sexual play, it *is* sexual play. Similarly, the pleasures of description become their own kinds of erotic fulfillment, albeit in particularly queer ways. In Natty's elongated sentence filled with em dashes, "experience is being created in the language in a way that does not map precisely onto bodily acts" (Beam 47).[296] The passage both syntactically and symbolically *diffuses* pleasure rather than concentrating it in a particular phrase or image. If any single characteristic encapsulates Natty's erotic energy, it is dispersal rather than concentration. His "sweetheart" is not so much an anatomized organism as an ecological assemblage.

The spring is obviously a feminine archetype; equally importantly, it derives its power by flowing through—by existing in relation to—the other phenomena named throughout the sentence. It does not serve as an indirect symbol of fertility because it is reminiscent of sexual lubricants or of mother's milk; instead, it directly and literally nourishes a host of growing plant and animal forms (birds and dew and clouds and boughs—oh my!). To open one's body up to its liquid is not to treat it as unitary partner, but as an entry point into a network filled with fertility that can be both heterosexual (birds) or involve nature's many, queerer modes of parthenogenesis and reproductions. The passage thus produces what Catrin Gersdorf describes as "*an ecology of intimacy*, in which language functions as an instrument that articulates ideas of interrelatedness and interdependency as well as experiences of pleasure and joy" (179). In entering into such a space of plenitude, Natty opens himself up to a network that *simultaneously* contains reproduction, growth, life, and death.

While the passage where Natty describes nature as his "sweet-heart" is soaked in images of liquidity and fertility, in another passage where Natty discusses finding "God" in the woods (and which we can retrospectively read with new charge), Natty describes again how he can hear a divine voice "in the song of a bird," but locates it equally in "uproar and gales" and even "the creaking of a dead branch" (*Pathfinder* 96). The "creaking of a dead branch" is especially important. Like Thoreau rejoicing even in the face of a dead horse's head at Walden, or Whitman crowing "Behold this compost!" Natty's description of his environmental sweet-heart offers a Burkean vision of continuity/regeneration between past, present, and future.[297] As in Hist's account of the parental grave, the facets of death, life, and futurity Cooper cannot reconcile with his schematic dichotomy between white and Native society already flourish within the binary-busting, more-than-human world.

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[296] In *Style, Gender, and Fantasy*, Beam's phrase describes a moment in Margaret Fuller's "The Magnolia of Lake Pontchartrain," a text that tries to "imagine what it is like to be a flower and what such an imaginative leap might have to offer to Fuller's project of rethinking 'woman' in the nineteenth-century" (44). As Beam's analysis of Fuller indicates, the notion of erotic interplay *between* people and plants (as opposed to between people, with flowers as instruments) was far from unthinkable at the time Cooper wrote. As Mary Kuhn recounts, one of the bestselling novels of the 1830s in America was *Picciola* by X.B. Saintine, "about a man [Charney] who falls passionately in love with a flowering plant," thereby producing "a conflation of scientific and sexual desire in the context of a plot that becomes increasingly sentimental." Whereas Charney ultimately redirects his erotic energies towards human courtship rather than his plant lover, Natty moves in the opposite direction as the Leatherstocking tales progress.

[297] Other moments that bear comparison—despite containing significant differences—are when Whitman's speaker is "mad to be in contact" with the river bank in "Song of Myself" and Ishmael's playful, if ironic, suggestion in *Moby-Dick* that the boundaries of personal identity and heteronormativity might best be loosened through the mediating lubricant of whale spermacetti.

It would be reasonable to interject that Cooper—conservative, codgy, stodgy old Cooper—cannot possibly have *intended* such extravagance. It is not clear, in fact, whether Cooper intends Natty's environmental fixation to be read as an *alternative to* his dangerous intimacy with Chingachgook or as an *outgrowth of* his close association with Native culture.[298] In either case, it is important to keep in mind that for Cooper over-identification with nature produces *the same results* as homosocial identification with Natives (themselves seen as nature's doomed children): infertility and obsolescence. Nonetheless, by calling the forest Natty's sweet-heart and introducing eroticism, with all its inherent unruliness, into what would otherwise be a description of Natty's religious ecstasy in the forest, Cooper unleashes energies beyond strict authorial control. Natty's description of erotic potential beyond human limits thrills precisely because its ecstatic abundance seems to elide Cooper's disciplinary regime of racially classed reproductive futurity. In fact, even though such erotic "God-in-nature" passages contain fertile green imagery, within them futurity is not the point, nor should it be re-inscribed as the sole criterion of value. They are moments of reverie, of all-in-all absorption that cause the machinery of plot to halt and grow silent. Signifying, on the one hand, the possibility of Burkean, intergenerational continuity, they also achieve something totally outside what Edelman calls "the temporalization of desire" (9).

In fact, such moments exist so far outside (and even opposed to) the realm of human baby-making that, to riff upon Edelman's terms, they might be seen as instances of pure *jouissance*. Unlike Natty's harangues of "wasty ways," such introspective celebrations of nature do not even promote environmental sustainability but exist in an elongated present. For Edelman, the *jouissance* associated with queerness "is never a matter of being or becoming, but, rather, of *embodying* the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order" (25). While Edelman uses these terms for their specifically Lacanian significations, "real" might equally well describe the more prosaic materiality of the nonhuman world: the stubborn presence of objects and beings that resist the operations of constructivism. These brief visions of both temporal continuity and *jouissance* disrupt Cooper's efforts to celebrate futurity by casting Natives as *sinthomo*sexuals and death bound subjects. Thus, by the end of *The Deerslayer*, Natty Bumppo contains critical contradictions. His glimmers of ecosexuality complicate but do not displace his continued racism. He still participates in genocidal violence as often as he critiques it. But if we deemphasize either Natty's homosocial relationship with Native men or the queer potentiality of Natty's eco-erotics, we risk once again casting him as regressive. This, in turn, risks reaffirming the reproductive futurism wherein the (white) child becomes the ultimate—and in some cases, the only—signifier of social value.

As an alternative, we might locate eco-eroticism as Natty's *orientation*, in at least one fairly literal sense: namely, his tendency to access erotic possibility by *turning away from* human society and *turning towards* the forest.[299] By mapping desire onto the land rather than the body, Natty revivifies

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[298] This conundrum is further complicated by Cooper's stubborn tendency to treat Natives *as* part of nature—components of the natural landscape rather than distinct human subjects, or at least as beings in which instinctual ("natural") desires triumph over cultural inhibitions.

[299] As Sara Ahmed argues in *Queer Phenomenology*, spatial environments can become "the starting point for orientation… the 'here' of the body and the 'where' of its dwelling" (8). Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands summarizes and expands upon Ahmed's position: "that 'here' does not mean that a particular orientation is given in or naturalized by that environment. Instead, orientation is an iterative body/environment directional relation shaped by sedimented past and compelling present desires, environmental affordances and contours, actions and prohibitions" (67).

the etymological connections between orientation and orienteering.[300] Viewed in this light, Natty's profound ability as a "Pathfinder" does not reflect only intellectual knowledge produced over time. In addition, Natty's desires have been shaped through iterative *affective* relationships to place and space. There is a direct parallel between Natty's ability to follow winding paths through the forest and his avoidance of the "straight" and narrow path towards "compulsory heterosexuality that privileges some attractions and directions over others" (Mortimer-Sandilands 67). Natty's relationship to the landscape and his own desire evolves over time just as someone orienteering engages in motion that rearranges a relationship to spatial particulars.[301] In the process, he gives new meaning to an old cliché: finding his way helps him find himself, even if Cooper seems afraid to let him truly accept what he's found.

[300] As Dorri Beam explores, Margaret Fuller's "The Magnolia of Lake Pontchartrain" also enables "experience… that does not map precisely onto bodily acts," and validates "this sort of unmapping, the willingness to relinquish a known destination in order to succumb to the experience of the journey and the flower itself" (47-48). Natty re-maps rather than unmaps, but to somewhat similar effects.

[301] See Schranz's article "From Orientation to Orienteering" for a modern description of a combination of religious belief and sexual orientation much like Natty's. Schranz states "Rather than hold the relationship between my spirituality and my sexual orientation as the static snapshot of a landscape, I prefer to use the metaphor of orienteering—of finding my way through an evolving/shifting/emerging landscape" (118).

Part III: Compost, Revolution and Tradition, 1776-1899

Chapter Five
A Compostable Past: Agricultural Practice and Revolutionary Memory

Seemingly unrelated thinkers throughout the Age of Revolution—from George Washington to Edmund Burke, Thomas Jefferson to Herman Melville, John Adams to Walt Whitman, Robert Montgomery Bird to Karl Marx—wrote about the humble, somewhat off-putting topic of compost with startling frequency. Throughout their writings, compost often appears as literal material mixtures and as a synecdoche for a broader system of progressive agricultural reforms. But these writers also at times represent compost as a solution to political problems, as a figure for the unfolding process of history itself, or even as a metaphor to work through the near paradox of maintaining a tradition of revolution, particularly in the fraught dozen years separating the European Revolutions of 1848 and the Civil War.

While this chapter considers forms of decay other than compost (especially aging, mossy structures), it primarily tracks the historical process whereby compost moved from mere material to politicized substance to a metaphor that helped Americans reimagine their relationship to the past, present and future. The gardeners, farmers, statesmen, and writers in this chapter experienced firsthand how planting the same crops year after year leeched the soil of essential nutrients, necessitating the application of compost (or, as it was primarily referred to at the time, animal, vegetable, or mineral "manure").[302] This chapter begins with a survey of the history of American composting and agricultural reform from early settlement to the 1850s. I dwell at length on the period of the American Revolution and the Early Republic, when leading American agricultural reformers and producers of manure recipes included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison. Collectively, the founders promoted agricultural reform in order to sustain the intergenerational agrarian communities where political knowledge circulated and elections were held. However, their reform plans also expose deep political divides between them, particularly regarding the perils and potential of geographical mobility and revolutionary recurrence.

The bulk of the chapter attends to more figurative fruits that grew out of well-fertilized soil during the Antebellum period. The chapter's trajectory generally moves from compost as material substance to compost*ing* as metaphoric process: from manure to manurance (a term denoting cultivation of both the land *and* the mind). But the division between matter and metaphor is never absolute: political leaders treated compost metaphorically from the beginning and the antebellum literary figures considered herein got their hands dirty collecting rotting scraps and digging through manure piles in order to inspire new growth. For instance, James Fenimore Cooper served as "corresponding secretary" in the early, influential Otsego County Agricultural Society. Herman Melville toured Berkshire farms and wrote an agricultural field report. And in Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Sophia Hawthorne all planted and harvested in the *same* garden plot at the Old Manse.[303]

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[302] Despite this seemingly scatological appellation, agricultural "manure" could be composed of many substances. The droppings from livestock ("animal manure") were often the primary ingredient, but reformers promulgated elaborate recipes that also included heavy helpings of leftover plant stalks, dried leaves, and scraps ("vegetable manure") as well as calcium carbonate buildups referred to as lime or marl ("mineral manure").

[303] There is a broader story to be told about nineteenth-century intersections of compost and literature in novels written (and set) beyond American borders. Manurance is one of Homais's (the over-attentive neighbor) many quasi-scientific preoccupations in *Madame Bovary*. Levin mentions it in *Anna Karenina*. Those who are not farmers by trade also engage with it at great length. As the last chapter explored, in *The Crater* Cooper turns a narrative about sailors in the Pacific into an extended account of creating soil from scratch on

Hawthorne and Melville, in particular, built upon their direct experience of agricultural practices as they wrestled with the question of America's revolutionary legacy. A consideration of their efforts to curate the decay of revolutionary monuments (in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Israel Potter*) forms the central part of this chapter. Helping to create a narrative sub-genre I call "parables of decay and undecay," Hawthorne and Melville explore the consequences of failing to let old bodies decompose in peace. They treat remnants of revolution as neither relics to be worshiped nor refuse to be discarded. Instead, by suggesting that both material bodies and political structures are best renewed through a process of regenerative decay that transmutes the energy residing in old structures into new forms, they construct what I characterize as "a compostable past." My new materialist focus on their engagements with lively matter ultimately enables a reconsideration of their political visions, and particularly their efforts to mediate the memory of the American Revolution. I argue that Hawthorne, in particular, looked to the unfolding natural processes in his garden in order to balance his conservative desire for Burkean continuity with his fears that intergenerational stagnation would cause America to lose its revolutionary force.

The final sections of the chapter consider two authors for whom Hawthorne and Melville's version of a "compostable past" was flawed or incomplete, albeit in opposing ways. Walt Whitman was far more interested in facilitating revolutionary recurrence than in managing revolutionary energies. In poems like "Resurgemus" and "This Compost," his references to decaying bodies mix together Justus von Liebig's biochemistry and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's evolutionary biology in order to compost the blood of martyrs, spiritualizing material essences in the name of a future revolutionary triumph. The chapter ends with Charles Chesnutt, whose *Conjure Tales* reflect good reasons to be skeptical of the promises made by agricultural revolutionaries and revolutionary agriculturalists. Retrospectively reevaluating a century's worth of land-use reforms, Chesnutt's protagonist Julius McAdoo draws attention to the role that seemingly progressive scientific breakthroughs played in maintaining the environmental and labor relationships of plantation slavery. Chesnutt asks not how particular modes of agriculture might be made sustainable, but who benefits from them and *whether they should* be sustained. By contrasting local Reconstruction-era African-American economies with broader systems of slavery, he partially synthesizes two positions that otherwise often seem incompatible: Burkean ecologies and environmental justice.

Sustaining Democratic Communities through Agricultural Reform

This section seeks to establish the centrality of discussions about agricultural reform to American life in the early national and antebellum periods. Accordingly, it briefly tracks unsustainable early farming practices that caused demographic upheaval, dwells upon the American founders' advocacy for composting, identifies the widespread adoption of what I call a "compost paradigm" around 1820, and recounts how new laboratory-made synthetic fertilizers signaled the

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a volcanic island. Compost even appears in urban spaces. In "Buried in Guano," Jennifer James particularly analyzes the "historical detour" into the sewers in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. There, Hugo argues at length that human fecal waste should be used to revitalize agriculture: "Science, having long groped about, now knows that the most fecundicating and the most efficacious of fertilizers is human manure… There is no guano comparable in fertility with the detritus of a capital. A great city is the most mighty of dung-makers." As James notes, Hugo was inspired by French Socialist Pierre Leroux, who published a manifesto urging Parisians to "MAKE BREAD WITH HUMAN EXCREMENT" (qtd. in James 131-32). Today, some waste treatment plants actually turn human excrement into fertilizer, albeit only after using an extensive purification process for health and safety reasons (Stewart 175-200).

end of the compost era in the 1840s and 1850s. Although American farmers came to care more deeply about soil stewardship as the period progressed, they did not engage in a straightforward march towards environmental consciousness. By briefly adopting composting practices in the early decades of the nineteenth-century, many farmers moved in the direction of ecologically-minded permaculture practices, but they largely abandoned those commitments after Justus von Liebig's bio-chemical revolution.

As the later sections of this chapter explore, American writers tended to take up compost and associated figures of generative decay as potent metaphors at the very moment when farmers abandoned it as an active practice. In order to understand why Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman, and others turned to compost in order to thematize tradition, reform, and their changing views on America's revolutionary origins, I particularly focus on the founders' earlier role in granting unlikely political inflections to manure. The fact that so many of them (including Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Madison) all directly commented on the matter suggests their shared presumption that agricultural reform was a matter of the universal public good. But their opinions were far from unanimous: in fact, each of the founder's expressions about agriculture carried characteristic politicized inflections that reflected their divergent visions for America's future. Whereas Adams and Madison imagined composting practices that would help farmers set down lasting roots and bring them into closer, even co-dependent, contact with their human and nonhuman neighbors, Jefferson found compost appealing largely as a metaphor for transformation and saw it as fully compatible with a politics of individualistic self-determination, revolutionary recurrence, and westward expansion.

Long before the founders were born, most European-American agrarians did not so much establish farms as excavate and abandon the soil.[304] Along the expanding Northwestern frontier, family farms passed down from fathers to sons were exceptions rather than the rule. In fact, the standard farming process closely resembled extractive industries like logging or strip-mining, making permanent settlement less common than restless mobility. These pioneers typically began by clearing away the forest as aggressively as possible. Rather than harvest lumber to construct permanent dwellings, backwoods farmers girdled trees and then burned their trunks. The ashes were collected and hauled away for sale as potash, a key ingredient in the production of textiles, soap, glass, and other common products. Though destructive, this clearing and burning pattern did not necessarily make farms unsustainable; instead, commodification did. If the farmers had returned the ashes to the soil, it would have helped renew the soil. But by marketing the charred biomass remnants, the settlers alienated chemical outputs from natural cycles of decay and regeneration, thereby inaugurating a ruthless pattern of nutrient extraction.[305]

Cooper's Otsego County typified this pattern of exploitation. Initially, the backwoods farmers took advantage of the rich forest topsoil that "was covered with vegetable manure formed

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[304] As this chapter explores, not all farmers behaved this way. Timothy Sweet notes that "even bracketing the question of slavery, Americans did not agree about the nature of agriculture itself. Farming was not a single, uniform activity, but rather included diverse and conflicting practices, complicated in both class structure and environmental orientation" (9).

[305] European-Americans destroyed soil fertility on an unprecedented scale, but it is worth noting that most Native tribes also only planted in given locations for a few years at a time. Montgomery notes that "there is emerging evidence of substantial local soil erosion from Native agriculture" (117). However, while "few [early] societies managed to conserve their soil" (50) early white settlers almost invariably expressed amazement about the rich loam they found in American forests.

by the yearly putrefaction of the leaves of the forest, accumulated for ages past on its surface."[306] This bountiful "putrefaction" allowed settlers to plant grain crops in the same fields for successive years. By consuming or selling the crops, they leeched the soil of its nutrients while giving nothing back. Within a few years, or perhaps decades at best, they were forced to abandon the land, leaving behind "Piles of charred or half-burned logs; fields covered with stumps, or ragged with *stubs*; fences of the rudest sorts, and filled with brambles; buildings of the meanest character; deserted clearings; and all the other signs of a state of things in which there is a manifest and constant struggle between immediate necessity and future expediency" (Cooper, *Chainbearer* 100). These environmental realities should alter our ideological histories of what motivated frontier expansion. Most early settlers' peregrinations were not manifestations of Tocquevillian democratic energy or some mystic restlessness of spirit. Instead, they were impelled by material necessity: the Earth would only take so much abuse before refusing to cooperate.

Many farmers repeated this extractive process again and again. It was simply more economically efficient to move to the next potash sale and initial bumper crop than to invest time and materials in restoring nutrients to the soil.[307] It was not that the settlers were ignorant or that they failed to learn from experience: instead, economic factors impelled their settlement patterns. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to Arthur Young (the preeminent British agricultural reformer of the era) "manure does not enter into this because we can buy an acre of new land cheaper than we can manure an old one" (qtd. in Montgomery 125). Because of the cheapness of land and the high cost of hired labor, settlers rationally chose to ignore the methods necessary to slow (if not halt) the process of soil degradation. Even millennia earlier, Roman authors such as Cato, Varo, and Columella had dispensed relatively specific advice on collecting and spreading "manure from oxen, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, and even pigeons" in addition to using "marl" (crushed limestone) and "ashes to enrich their fields" (Montgomery 61). The Romans' failures to follow these strictures were one of the causes of their civilizational collapse.

Such reforms were applied more assiduously in Europe, and particularly in England. In early modern Europe, the burgeoning population increase between 1550 and 1700 coincided with the so-called "Yeoman's agricultural revolution." During this period, farmers adopted more intensive practices such as increasingly complex crop rotations and dissemination of compost. In fact, such reforms worked in tandem to revolutionize the entire agricultural system and European society. By planting nitrogen fixing fodder crops such as clover in off years, English farmers ensured feed for increasingly large herds, whose manure, in turn, helped to sustain grain crops. Such practices necessitated fencing off the commons not only in order to keep interloping animal grazers and human gleaners *out*, but to keep herbivores *in*, where their manure could be easily gathered (Montgomery 94). Given the lack of new land in England, the damaging hallmarks of enclosure (population displacement, rampant inequality, and creation of an urbanized proletariat) proved to be the price of a relatively sustainable agricultural system.

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[306] Paschal Franchot, president of the Otsego County Agricultural Society, *Watch-Tower*, October 7, 1822 (qtd. in Taylor 387).

[307] In *The Chainbearer*, Cooper describes how deforestation became a matter of economic speculation rather than domestic settlement: "the very labor that was expended in clearing away the trees meeting with a return so liberal by the sale of ashes manufactured, as to induce even speculators to engage in the occupation" (205). By contrast with the backwoods farms, the Littlepage family's coastal estate "has two miles of beach, and collects a proportionate quantity of seaweed for manure" (*Satanstoe* 7).

In America, not all farmers disregarded English and European methods.[308] But the farmers who tried to replace "extensive" agriculture that unfolded *across space* (the "backwoods method" of clearcutting, planting for a few years, and then abandoning farms) with "intensive" agriculture that persisted *across time* (the so-called "Yankee method") faced different challenges than their English brethren.[309] Most essentially, the surplus of available land and shortage of affordable labor made it difficult to care for significant herds of cattle, harvest tillage crops for feed and plough them under the soil for nitrogen-fixing properties, collect manure, and sustain a farm with enough land to rotate five or more crops. Pioneers tried to produce large families to make up for the labor shortage, but their children were tempted by the opportunity to become independent homesteaders—or extractive backwoodsmen and women—in turn. Rural groups tried to band together to meet these challenges, even engaging in evocatively termed "communal dung frolics," but their efforts could only slow the inevitable process of soil degradation (Merchant *Ecological*, 156).[310]

By the middle of the eighteenth-century, the agrarian dilemma began to take on political dimensions. Despite the practice of common farmers, educated Americans were well aware that "soil depletion and erosion have contributed to the demise of many civilizations" (Fuhrmann 151).[311] In 1758, the Philadelphia based *American Magazine* published a writer calling himself "Agricola," whose pen name (the Latin word for "farmer") seemed to hint at the role that environmental degradation played in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. He prophesied that unless more intensive agricultural practices were implemented (including "cover crops, animal manure, and mineral dressings to restore fertility") worn out farmlands good only for pasturage would "revert to 'common[s]'" (Sweet 100). During the same period, it became increasingly clear that American agricultural practices, writ large, could only continue their current trajectory by securing access to a seemingly limitless frontier. As a result, British attempts to limit western expansion in the run up to the French and Indian War exacerbated inchoate fears about a soil fertility crisis.

By granting the British access to more Western frontier lands, the 1763 Treaty of Paris relieved some of the most pressing demographic and environmental pressures. However, they left open the question of how *social* stability, traditions, or institutions could be established when so many American farmers were forced to periodically uproot their families. Because of the public and political dimensions of these issues, politicians took a leading role in discussions of land-use practices.[312] It is little exaggeration to say that from 1763 until around 1820 (when formal agricultural societies began to play an important role), the leading American agricultural reformers were the all-too-familiar founding fathers. They not only drew inspiration from the world of nature but

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[308] In fact, "early travelers complained about the stench from fields where farmers used salmon as fertilizer" (Montgomery 117).

[309] For a delineation of the "backwoods method" and "Yankee method," see Sweet (110).

[310] Merchant also notes that many Northeastern farmers adopted a hybrid system of Native and English techniques.

[311] Montgomery offers an extensive history of the correlations between soil loss and social collapse in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Montgomery concludes that "soil degradation" did "not directly" "destroy these early civilizations but rendered them "increasingly vulnerable to hostile neighbors, internal sociopolitical disruption, and harsh winters or droughts" (49).

[312] "The literature of agrarian improvement developed a discourse of rural virtue that linked economic intensification (sedentary farming methods and market embeddedness) to national political stability" (Sweet, 99). In *Founding Gardeners*, Andrea Wulf adds that "With the elevation of the small farmer as the guardian of liberty, seemingly mundane tasks such as collecting manure, planting seeds and devising crop rotations became elemental parts of nation-building" (117).

considered themselves farmers and gardeners first and reluctant politicians second.[313] For the founders, agricultural reform was not a side hustle, but an indispensable component of America's revolutionary and national projects.[314]

During the Revolution, founders such as Benjamin Franklin and Patrick Henry framed agricultural reforms as matters of paramount urgency or even as matters of national security. For instance, Benjamin Franklin promoted sustainable farming practices to make it easier to boycott British goods during the Revolutionary War (Wulf 9). The creation of stable ground was more than a metaphor: during the Revolutionary period, many Americans (particularly Southerners) saw the earth literally collapsing beneath their feet. Tobacco and cotton monocultures leeched not only African-American sweat and blood, but also soil nutrients at unprecedented rates.[315] Without deep roots to hold the soil in place, heavy rains transformed abandoned farms and overworked plantations into ravine-filled crevasses almost overnight. With the soil disappearing underfoot, it was easy for thought leaders to point to indissoluble connections between environmental stewardship and citizens' duties to the emergent nation. In a 1777 speech to the Virginia Assembly, Patrick Henry predicated the continuance of American liberty on sustainable land-use practices, arguing that, "Since the achievement of our independence, he is the greatest patriot who stops the most gullies" (qtd. in Montgomery 115). The timing of Henry's quote suggests that soil stewardship took on as much urgency as the war against the British: the revolutionary pace of land transformation was undermining the Revolution's still-embryonic achievements. However, Henry did not stop to consider whether sustaining Virginian plantations (and with them, the system of slavery) was truly in the larger interest of liberty, establishing a tension in Southern agricultural practices that Charles Chesnutt would take up over a century later (and which I take up at the end of this chapter).

Where Franklin and Henry implied that composting practices would help win the Revolutionary War, Thomas Jefferson and Hector St. John de Crèvecœur—the two writers most responsible for creating agrarianism as a peculiarly American ideology—had wildly divergent feelings about the American Revolution. Jefferson, of course, was one of the architects of American separation, while de Crèvecœur portrayed the conflict as an unnecessary and damaging rupture. Nonetheless, in their works published in the later years of the Revolutionary War (Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and de Crèvecœur's *Letters from an American Farmer*) each produced iconic descriptions of rural farmers as models of self-sufficiency, treating composting as a means to

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[313] Wulf tracks several of the founders' affinity for Cincinnatus—the Roman farmer turned dictator who resigned his office to return to his farm. According to Wulf, Cincinnatus served as a particular inspiration for Washington's decision not to become an American monarch, but he also epitomized Adams, Jefferson, and Madison's frequently expressed desires to escape the world of politics for the peace of their Georgic homes. Most adorably, when he (wrongly) believed he faced electoral defeat in 1796, Adams looked forward to a domestic life of "Frugality and Independence. Poverty and Patriotism. Love and a Carrot Bed" (qtd. in Wulf 122).

[314] It is no surprise to find Washington, Jefferson, and Madison playing leading roles at the points where agrarian, economic, and political development converged, but Adams, Franklin, and Rush—Philadelphians and Bostonians typically remembered as urban denizens—also fervently crusaded for Americans to adopt more sustainable land-use practices. Wulf offers the most thorough account of the founding generation's engagement with agricultural reform (including Franklin). Sweet reads Rush's 1798 "Account of the Progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania" at length, focusing on the physician's efforts to diagnose three principal types of farmers based on their land-use policies and their relationship to emerging markets (109-114).

[315] In fact, tobacco "fetched more than six times the price of any other crop" but "strips more than ten times the nitrogen and more than thirty times the phosphorous from the soil than do typical food crops" (Montgomery 119).

buttress farmers' independence and inculcate moral righteousness through labor. In universalizing terms, Jefferson argued that "Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phaenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example." For Jefferson, the key benefit of agricultural labor was its ability to release farmers from oppressive social bonds. Farmers might sell their yields abroad, and yet, because they were not entrapped in a system of dependent relationships during the *production* of their goods, they were free from the "dependence" that "begets subservience and venality" (*Notes* 170-71).

Equating farmers' (often mythic) self-reliance and their capacity as ideal democratic subjects, Jefferson realized that intensive agricultural practices could generate the possibilities for less constrained choices about whether to move West or not. Accordingly, he joined Adams, Madison, and Washington in promoting reforms, including an increased reliance on compost (once even calling a tract on manure a "charming treatise"), and he showed an environmentalist's sensibility in his criticisms of tobacco monocultures (Wulf 120). But Jefferson seemed to see intensive agriculture primarily as a means of increasing yields rather than as a way to ensure the *social* stability of Eastern farming communities. Even while he promoted the conditions for free choice, he also often portrayed Westward expansion not as a problematic backup plan, but as a preferable solution. In a famous passage in Query XIX of *Notes*, Jefferson claims that "those who labour in the Earth" are "the chosen people of God" and maintains that a perpetually agrarian society is essential to "the happiness and permanence of government." This passage—which is ubiquitously referenced as the central articulation of what would come to be known as Jeffersonian agrarianism—seems to place emphasis on permanence and continuity. But in almost the same breath, Jefferson argues that America is suited to agriculture precisely because "we have an immensity of land courting the husbandman" (170-71). Jefferson's appeal to "immensity" suggests that the real basis for the "permanence" of agrarian government is demographic mobility, not settled communities and intensive farming. Only the freedom to start over after exhausting the land secures the farmer's ability to imagine agrarianism as synonymous with self-sufficiency. Through the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson aimed to secure such freedoms for generations to come.

By deemphasizing the enduring bond between people and places that composting helped maintain, Jefferson scatters the seeds of the "agri-expansion" model that would dominate the nineteenth-century.[316] He moves towards a world where geographical and generational mobility would displace agrarian labor as determinative components of American character: where Alexis de Tocqueville could plausibly posit that American democratic character depends less on the young farmer's labor *on* his parent's farm than on his move *away from* it. By contrast, de Crèvecœur aimed at long-lasting settlement and stability. In fact, while Jefferson and de Crèvecœur's visions of agrarianism are often lumped together, their divergent attitudes towards geographical stability demonstrate how the figure of compost could be manipulated to serve divergent political agendas. They both celebrated agrarian labor as the foundation of American virtue and even American identity. But whereas Jefferson emphasized internal re-migration within America to new land, de Crèvecœur emphasized rootedness over time, famously framing emigration to America as a singular, salubrious transplantation. In *Letters from an American Farmer*, Farmer James says of European settlers in America: "here they become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetable mould and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war" (69). Meanwhile, in the less-read middle chapters of *Letters*, de Crèvecœur's *most* exemplary American laborers are not frontier farmers, but the residents of Nantucket who have built a settlement—and a community—on a sandy strip of ground where nature provided them

[316] For the history of "agri-expansion," particularly later in the nineteenth-century, see Dolan's *Beyond the Fruited Plain*.

with nothing. "It is but seldom that vice grows on a barren sand like this, which produces nothing without extreme labour" (125).[317] For de Crèvecœur, it is the work that goes into *making* the soil fertile that secures American virtue—not the encounter with the land's already fertile "immensity."[318] It is no accident that de Crèvecœur's idealized representatives for soil stewardship (and other forms of commercial activity) are Quakers who were early adopters of abolitionism. At the opposite pole, de Crèvecœur suggests that the *excess* fertility of Southern soils causes the disconnect from labor and moral decadence that combine to enable slavery.

Ultimately, it is not soil degradation but the American Revolution that forces de Crèvecœur's royalist Farmer James, who speaks approvingly of composting methods, to uproot his family from their thriving farm and live with a Native tribe.[319] Where James's attempts to create an intergenerational future through soil stewardship are disrupted *by* revolution, Jefferson later reconfigured compost into a metaphor *for* revolution. In fact, Jefferson's notorious "tree of liberty" letter is by far the best-remembered mention of manure in the period (even though the line is sometimes truncated in quotation). In the November 13, 1787 epistle to William Stephens Smith, Jefferson responded to negative press coverage of Shay's Rebellion by suggesting that the rebels were ill-informed, but that their actions would still renew the nation through an act of violent manurance.

> I say nothing of its motives. They were founded in ignorance, not wickedness. God forbid we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion … And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon, and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure. Our Convention has been too much impressed by the insurrection of Massachusetts: and in the spur of the moment they are setting up a kite to keep the hen yard in order. (*Papers* 12:355-57).

For Jefferson, rebellion's function is purgative. But as he evokes cleansing acts of bloodletting, he appeals to agrarian imagery rather than using the metaphor of the body politic. Trees often serve as important metaphors for historical change and continuity because of their intermediate temporality. Jefferson's tree of liberty is *not* a seemingly eternal stone monument, disconnected from organic cycles of death, decay, and regeneration. It requires care and new inputs in order to continue thriving. But if well-tended, such a tree will outlast any citizen's lifespan. This connection to values that transcend the temporal scale of individual human lives enables Jefferson to justify the sacrifice of life to a higher purpose.

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[317] I concur with Kolodny that Crèvecœur aims at "the integrity of the human social community—nurtured by the landscape, but not, like the backwoodsmen or the indolent southerners, so totally dependent on it as to become … engulfed by its plenitude" (62).

[318] By contrast, Jefferson's attacks on soil degrading plantation monocultures are characteristically ambivalent.

[319] Here, my interpretation differs significantly from Sarver's in *Uneven Land*. There, Sarver argues that in moving to the Native tribe, Crèvecœur offers no solutions to environmental crises and that he affirms "the expectation that will become characteristically American: exhaust the land and move on" (15). While de Crèvecœur's Farmer James does not spend as much time discussing agricultural reforms as he could, he speaks approvingly of "Mr. Bertram's" [Bartram's] account of composting: "I throw old lime, ashes, horse dung, etc., and twice a week I let it run, thus impregnated" (192). Most importantly, his move is forced upon him—he clearly hoped to stay permanently on his farm, suggesting he probably adopted an intensive rather than extensive approach to agricultural management.

Like all plants, trees depend upon nutrient cycling—that is, upon death and decay—in order to thrive. But Jefferson's liberty tree seems to subsist *only* on "the blood of patriots and tyrants." Rather than growing without human intervention or emerging from a foundational act of planting and nurture, the liberty tree can only flourish when placed in an ongoing relationship with human bio- and necro-politics. Taken in isolation, Jefferson's stark mode of manurance may seem like an unnecessarily violent failure of imagination. Is "blood" really the only "natural manure" for liberty? Might not the tree be renewed with the dried-out husks of *other* plants grown by liberty-loving people? In order to balance and justify the violence within the tree of liberty metaphor, Jefferson ends the passage by appealing to a contrasting system of agricultural management. Jefferson's tree of liberty is not maintained by a single, central authority figure: instead, the people (as multiplicity or as mass) determine when it will receive a new infusion of bloody fertilizer. By contrast, Jefferson accuses the Constitutional framers of overreacting to Shay's rebellion and "setting up a kite in order to keep the henhouse in order." Because both metaphors involve bloodletting, Jefferson's binary opposition between the liberty tree and the use of a kite (a predatory bird) to establish "order" over vulnerable hens suggests that violence is an unavoidable fact of political life. Jefferson implies that one must choose *between* violence directed by a predatory central authority figure (the kite) against the people (the hens) or by the people (patriots) against authoritarian rulers (tyrants) in service of the higher ideal (the tree). What Jefferson never questions is the supposition that statecraft is fundamentally *similar to*—in fact guided by the same principles as—agricultural management. By framing two modes of farming against one another, he offers a binary choice, fundamentally eliding the question of which types of political power are "natural."

As these examples suggest, discourse about compost took on incontrovertible political dimensions during the American Revolution. As a representation *of transformation*, its political significations could shift quite dramatically to suit different purposes. Most basically, compost*ing* (regardless of the components of a given compost pile) is a process of breaking down old, used-up, digested, or decaying materials to allow the emergence of new forms. One can choose to put emphasis on the *destruction of* the old (the blood of tyrants, seeping away into the soil) or upon the *necessity for* old materials to enable new growth: on the *dissolution* of old forms or on the Lucretian *continuity* of atoms and energies moving from form to form. Like saltpeter—a substance once manufactured by preserving human and animal bodily waste products (urine) that could be an active ingredient in either gunpowder or fertilizer, *the metaphor* of compost can be either explosive or regenerative.[320] This intersection between metaphor and material continues to be volatile today—perhaps most troublingly signified by Timothy McVeigh's decision to wear a t-shirt with Jefferson's fateful phrase ("The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants") when he blew up a federal building with a fertilizer-based explosive.

These lines between the progressive/revolutionary and conservative political dimensions of agricultural reform were often quite blurred. Edmund Burke—who was at various times torn between reform and revolution, between critiquing oppressive institutions and maintaining social cohesion—embodied these contradictions. On the one hand, he privileged inherited and local knowledge, suggested that "the old way" was often "the best," and maintained that "one old experienced peasant" was likely more valuable than learned academies (*Reflections* 193). On the other hand, he participated in agricultural reform efforts, tested out new compost mixtures, and was praised by leading British agriculturalist Arthur Young (see Chapter One). Throughout the United States, the peculiar mixture of skepticism and enthusiasm about reform that Burke internalized was

[320] For saltpeter's utility as a fertilizer, see Montgomery (96). During the American Revolution, a major shortage of colonial gunpowder caused John Adams to send Abigail a request that women collect saltpeter for the revolutionary effort: an exchange most memorably reimagined in the musical *1776*.

sociologically *externalized* along lines of class and privilege. When George Washington vociferously advocated for agricultural reforms, he found common farmers "ever averse to novelty in matters of this sort, and much attached to their old customs" (*Papers* 4:196-200).[321] Thus, in order to ensure the social and environmental stability of Burkean communities, the founders had to combat farmers' Burkean prejudices: the overvaluations of custom and tradition that made them resistant to reform.

In response to set-in-their-ways farmers, George Washington tried to lead by example when he returned to farming after the Revolutionary War. In a 1785 letter that proposes a humble, earthy vision of monarchical rule, he described the wise, "knowing farmer" as a "Midas like" figure "who can convert everything he touches into manure, as the first transmutation towards Gold: in a word, one who can bring worn out & gullied Lands into good tilth in the shortest time" (*Papers* 3:90).[322] Washington also practiced what he preached: he was one of the earliest adopters of key reforms. Most visitors to Mount Vernon learn that Washington's innovative two-story sixteen-sided treading barn was designed to use horses to thresh wheat more efficiently. They may or may not notice a plaque stating that Washington's "stercorary"—a covered dung depository where manure could be stored, aged and mixed"—was the first of its kind in America (Wulf 120). In a 1796 letter, Washington recapitulated his orders for workers to "rake, and scrape up all the trash, of every sort and kind about the houses, and in the holes and corners, and throw it (all I mean that will make dung) into the Stercorary" (*Writings* 35:246).[323] Through such advocacy—which Washington framed as a kind of benevolent leadership from on high—Washington sought to inspire a new consensus among common farmers.

Meanwhile, in counter-distinction to Jefferson's famous association between agricultural labor and *individual* virtue in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Adams and Madison advocated for agricultural reform in order to foster the agrarian *communities* where political knowledge was circulated and elections were held. In their view, composting would not only revitalize the soil but also allow permanent settlements, creating stable ground for the social implementation of democracy across generations. For Adams, compost was tantamount to an obsession. His experimental efforts to create the most effective mixture of manure, plant trimmings, seaweed, and calcareous minerals constitute one of the most recurrent topics in his journals during some of the periods he was able to reside at home in Quincy (Wulf 119, 188). He also carried his interest abroad. While on a post-revolutionary diplomatic mission to England, he describes having "carefully examined" "several heaps of Manure, an hundred Loads perhaps in each heap." After detailing the ingredients ("Straw, and dung from the Stables and Streets of London, mud, Clay, or Marl dug out of the Ditch, along the Hedge, and Turf, Sward cut up") and the process of mixing, Adams decisively declared, "This may be good manure, but it is not equal to mine, which I composed in similar heaps upon my own Farm, of Horse Dung from Bracketts stable in Boston, Marsh Mud from the sea shore and Street Dust, from the Plain at the Foot of Pens hill, in which is a Mixture of Marl" (*Adams Family Papers* online).[324] In gloating about the superiority of his own compost over the British piles, Adams mixes notes of personal and patriotic pride. But even as he makes compost a matter of national importance, intimating that American economic independence depends upon equaling or exceeding Britain's intensive agricultural practices, he also emphasizes that national sustainability depends upon foraging for local materials: British and American compost recipes

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[321] George Washington to Arthur Young, 6 August 1786.

[322] George Washington to George William Fairfax, 30 June 1785. In a cynical mood, one can imagine a prosperous statesman in similar terms: a virtuosic figure capable of converting—and liberally re-distributing—the proverbial "B.S." of political discourse into nutritive and lucrative "gold."

[323] George Washington to Landon Carter, 17 October 1796.

[324] From John Adams diary, 8 July 1786.

cannot be identical because the chemical composition of mud from the British ditch differs from "Marsh Mud" from the Massachusetts sea shore.

Ironically, in his declaration of the superiority of American manure, Adams aims to reproduce Burkean social cohesion on American soil. His recipe has important implications given Early Republic debates about whether America's future should primarily depend upon international trade, domestic manufacture, or agricultural self-sufficiency.[325] Most strikingly, Adams's description of his compost pile hints that community participation, rather than capitalist division of labor and marketable production, might enable sustainable living conditions. His domestic, locavore agriculture relies upon barter and the symbiotic recycling of overlooked materials. His farm's success is not a testimony to Jefferson's virtuosic individualism, but instead suggests the necessity of social embeddedness (here indexed by his agreement with Brackett to harvest stable manure and the mix of written and unwritten agreements that allow free egress to the sea shore and the common gathering of "Street Dust"). In his modest Quincy gardening-plot, Adams does not seek to produce a commodifiable surplus that can be exchanged for English manufactured goods. Instead, he tries to use enlightened subsistence practices that will allow his family to continue to participate in civic life in Quincy for generations to come. The cohesion and stability of the local community depend upon a wise use of waste products. In other words, Adams's compostable future depends upon a community that agrees to reuse, rather than reject, those remnants of past life that a purely revolutionary mindset seeks to discard as polluted excrescences.

Adams's communally embedded account of small-scale composting is notable because the transition to intensive agriculture usually relied on the consolidation of farms and capital. Large numbers of laborers were often necessary to sustain sizable herds, plough fields, and mix compost into topsoil. The result was that the shift to sustainable farming often depended on wage or slave labor, creating rural economic stratification that sits uneasily with Jefferson and Crèvecœur's iconic descriptions of rural farmers as models of self-sufficiency. In the Early Republic, agricultural societies tried to produce communal forms of knowledge and modes of association that could compensate for these difficulties and support small farmers. The new societies actively spread the word about the renewing powers of compost to a broader population.[326]

Those founders who were still living by 1815 often took active roles in transforming agricultural societies into civic organs. For instance, recent retiree James Madison returned to Montpelier, where he delivered a widely republished, particularly influential speech on agricultural reform. In the "Address to the Agricultural Society of Albemarle" (1818), Madison proposed that nearly self-sufficient, permaculture farms might be created by establishing checks and balances between land transformation and the preservation of wildness. Madison's "Address" is full of language that evokes his more famous acts of governmental framing. In his telling, making a

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[325] As Sweet observes, Jefferson's agrarian vision was not so much a rejection of American participation in international trade as a preference that America export agricultural products in exchange for European manufactures rather than engaging in domestic manufacturing (101).

[326] According to Rodney H. True, the first American group promoting agricultural reform was the New York Society for Promoting the Arts, which began operations in 1766. However, it took time before such societies were popularized. For the success of agricultural reforms in many Eastern counties by the 1820s, see Sarah Phillips (802). Agricultural reform societies were especially influential in the region extending outwards from Albany, New York. Cooper lived at the outer edge of the Mohawk Valley region, Irving followed reform developments down the Hudson at Sunnyside, and later, Hawthorne and Melville first met one another in the Berkshires. Particularly after the Erie Canal opened in 1825, farms in Upstate New York had to adopt intensification strategies to compete with grains exported from less exhausted midwestern soils. In 1832, Jesse Buel founded the New York State Agricultural Society in Albany; two years later he founded *The Cultivator*, arguably the most influential American agricultural magazine of the era (Rossiter 6-9).

sustainable farm comes to sound a great deal like creating an enduring government. The farm both contains and is contained within "organizations, constitutions, and characters" (*Papers* 1:9). To adapt general best practices to the multiplicity of nature's "constitutions," the farmer must think like a federalist, adopting certain broadly applicable principles while leaving room for local difference and autonomy in regions' inevitably varied "organizations" and "characters." By attending to the particular characteristics of one's own environment, the farmer becomes ready to compose a contextually appropriate document. Madison compares this process to a compositor preparing a manuscript in a print shop. "The types of the Alphabet, apportioned to the words composing a particular book, when applied to another book materially different in its contents, there would be, of some a deficiency, of others a useless surplus" (10). Adapting to the local environment means realizing that greater quantities of some materials will be necessary than others. The elegant and effective regulatory document requires particular quantities of type just as sandy soils and loamy soils require different proportions of vegetable and animal manure.

Madison suggests that by attending carefully to these questions of balance, the individual farmer can avoid upsetting the "economy of nature." Madison urges farmers to preserve woodland plots (or even proactively plant trees) not only for future building materials or potash, but also for cattle to forage in. Madison's intuition that farmland and woodland serve as healthy complements to one another differs sharply from the many agricultural reform tracts that expressed no interest in preserving wild spaces.[327] For a statesman like Madison, economies (including the economy of nature) are never entirely local affairs. His account of deforestation warns that broad patterns of transformation risk destabilizing global balances. In a prescient anticipation of the possibility of anthropogenic climate change, he worries that the wholesale destruction of forests for the sake of agriculture would lead to a loss of transpiration, thereby rendering regions (or even the world) too dry for cultivation. More generally, the tract is informed by Madison's recent reading of Malthus and his sense that without checks and balances, human manipulation of nature would rebound to cause human suffering (Wulf 207). Articulating a non-hierarchic, but still anthropocentric, case that anticipates conservationism, Madison maintains that not all of nature should be "subservient" to human interests—even though his ultimate concern was still preserving human interests over time.

One of the most striking components of Madison's "Address" is the extent to which he imagines ideal farms as contained permaculture systems that rely upon the application of various forms of manure.[328] Madison suggests that the best materials for compost are those most readily at hand. He speculates that if all the remnants of plant bodies are "directly or indirectly"—that is, either as husks (vegetable manure) or as digested material (animal manure)—plowed back into the same soil where they were grown, land can be planted in perpetuity without either crop rotations or fallow periods. The platonic ideal that Madison strives towards is a totalized domestic recycling program: a sustainable system in its purest form. But in Madison's account, the independence of idealized farmers does not entirely cut them off from the world: in fact, the self-sufficiency enabled by agricultural reforms makes farmers better, more sustainable participants in civic life. Agricultural guilds themselves emerge as quintessential "patriotic societies" that both express and produce "the animation and intelligence *which characterize the efforts of a self-governed people*." Communal government

[327] Some earlier farmers also adopted methods of "agroforestry" such as using "leaf litter" for compost (Merchant 157-159).

[328] Madison did not always focus on promoting the local. In fact, in The Federalist No. 14, he praised Mother Nature for fortuitously providing the land not with rivers, but with "numerous canals" that could easily be connected by "art." At such moments, he adopts a tone more in keeping with Fulton and Imlay's technocratic imperialism (see chapter two) than with permaculture localism.

depends upon individual self-government, achieved first in agricultural labor and developed through participation in agricultural societies.

As much as the Madisonian farmer's self-reliance makes him an optimized participant *in civic life*, his methods tend to isolate him from commerce and market embeddedness. Madison knows that a hermetically sealed system would be impossible to fully achieve. Manure cannot be redistributed precisely where soil nutrients were harvested, rain causes erosion, and some soils may need an infusion of particular nutrients to achieve productivity to begin with. And, of course, even most subsistence farmers will desire some small marketable surplus in order to buy manufactured goods. Therefore, Madison also encourages farmers to educate themselves about crop rotation and different varieties of manure that can be bought and sold. But as Madison's farmer *tends* to isolate himself from the commercial world, he leans increasingly on a connection with nature. To supply nutrient deficits, Madison encourages farmers to turn to the fallen leaves from their forest preserves as a source of compost and loam. In other words, dis-embeddedness from the market economy depends upon transactions within the economy of nature. In allowing trees to grow and leaves to fall, the Madisonian farmer can use the given world's wildness to compensate for—and indeed to enable—his forays into the human world of exchange and his participation in civic life.

Like several of the other founders, Madison intuited that conserving woodlands could aid in preserving farms, thereby moving towards ecological thought characterized by a focus on interrelationship.[329] Though he was not fully aware of it, woodland plots preserve what we now call "ecosystem services": they provide habitat for the spiders, birds, and bats that feed on the insects that would otherwise devour crops, deep roots prevent erosion, tall trees serve as windbreaks, and hollow trunks hold honeybee hives that enable pollination. However, Madison's proto-ecological thought is different than Burke's. Whereas Burke's focus was on ungraspable complexity and entanglement—a multiplicity of organic forces interwoven with one another—Madison's account of agroforestry, like his Constitution, aimed to create something like a perpetual motion *machine*: engineered with specificity, but comprised of carefully balanced levers rather than entangled roots and branches. Woodland and cropland were not meant to be intermingled, but adjacent. The farmer's guiding hand selectively manipulates their proportions to check and balance one another, preserving "what Madison called the 'symmetry of nature'—the interrelationship between earth and mankind" (Wulf 205).[330] In Madison's view, a successfully engineered environment deploys a

[329] Other founders also spoke up against deforestation and urged landowners to keep some woodlands on their property. Most strikingly, the closest Jefferson—usually a resolute republican—came to wishing himself a monarch was to punish Federalists who cut down trees near the White House: tree-felling, he argued, was "a crime little short of murder," continuing "I wish I was a despot that I might save the noble, the beautiful trees that are daily falling" (qtd. in Wulf 148).

[330] Agriculturalists during the period often tried to blur the lines between utilitarian farm and picturesque landscape, striving towards the ideal of the "ferme ornee (a so called ornamented or ornamental farm), a style of garden that combined the beauty of a pleasure ground with the agricultural elements of a working farm" (Wulf 39). They also constructed "ha-has," or steep ditches that effectively fenced cattle in while allowing the appearance of seamless integration of grazing land and vegetable production. In philosophical terms, the split between the productive and the aesthetic could also be rendered by a split between the theoretical, on one hand, and the natural, on the other. In Joseph Heely's view, architecture (which should use more rigid geometric lines) and gardening (which should have more organic curves) were "sister arts, though diametrically opposed in their principles" (Breitwieser 321). Breitwieser suggests that Jefferson sought to transcend this dichotomy in the construction of Monticello, where the main body of the residence is classically rectilinear but includes a dome meant to serve as an extension of the mountain's organic form.

contextually appropriate ratio of wildness (unplanned but spatially contained forest growth) to cultivation in the service of familial stability and environmental sustainability.[331]

Even though he included many practical dicta for farmers, Madison's proto-permaculture was more idealized vision than implemented practice. Montpelier itself depended upon slave labor, and even most farmers who adopted intensive methods relied on wage labor rather than Madisonian self-sufficiency through harmony with nature. But Madison's speech was widely reprinted in 1818, and the more applied reforms he advocated for helped inaugurate what might be called the "compost era": a period of roughly thirty years when the emergent influence of agricultural societies caused an unprecedented number of American farmers to care about soil stewardship and implement sustainable practices. During this span, most composting practices involved locally-sourced recycled materials. Following Humphry Davy's *Elements of Agricultural Chemistry* (1813), farmers understood composting as primarily a vitalist process. According to Davy's model, mineral fertilizers (such as lime and marl) and even the soil itself only *indirectly* enable plant growth; instead, they served as activators for "humus" (or decayed organic matter). In this conception, lime did not "add anything to the plant. It merely 'acted upon' the organic manures" (Rossiter 17). However, the 1840 publication of Justus von Liebig's *Organic Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture and Physiology* produced a revolution in the understanding of soil chemistry. Liebig focused on pure nutrient exchanges. He argued, for instance, that tobacco fields did not need more humus, but more alkalies which could be supplied through potash. Liebig realized that manures most fundamentally "supplied the *inorganic* elements that were lacking in the soil" (Rossiter 25).

Whereas humus theory led farmers to think locally and proto-ecologically, Liebig's soil chemistry enabled a mechanistic model of nature where "problems can be broken down into parts, solved, and reassembled without changing their character" (Merchant 199). As Carolyn Merchant notes, the farmer's field essentially became a laboratory. Soil could be gathered, shipped to a processing facility, and tested to see which minerals were lacking. In turn, synthetic fertilizers were designed that would replenish those particular minerals. The process treated soils and manures as "scientific-technical objects" that could be "wrenched from their ecological contexts" (Merchant 211). Although the adoption of Liebig's approach was far from instant in America, by the end of the 1840s, composting traditions and systems of local exchange began to be replaced by mechanistic approaches dependent on significant capital to participate in national and international markets.[332]

Even in cases where farmers were slow to adopt Liebig's methods (or where chemical fertilizers were not immediately available), the sudden, dramatic emergence of the international guano trade also meant that farmers looked far beyond their communities to renew their soil. Pound for pound, seabird guano (accumulated droppings, generally collected from deep deposits on Caribbean or Pacific Islands) was a far more efficient form of nitrogen fixing fertilizer than any other compound available at the time. The "Great Guano Rush" inspired early forms of US imperialism beyond the North American continent. The 1856 Guano Islands Act declared that the US could appropriate "any island, rock, or key not within the lawful jurisdiction of any other Government, and not occupied by the citizens of any other Government'" (qtd. in James 119). As Jennifer James explores in her article "Buried in Guano," farmers who bought guano supported

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[331] Madison realized that there was no one universally applicable ratio of cropland to woodland: the farmer's task was to see what ratio would best fit local environmental conditions.

[332] Dolan cites "the 1846 mass production of the John Deere steel plow" and "the 1849 establishment of a Baltimore fertilizer factory" as central turning points (10). Rossiter notes that soil tests were not always accurate in America in the 1850s, meaning that farmers continued to voice substantial resistance, citing preference for "facts," "practice," "experience," and local "experiments" over what they called Liebig's unproven "theory" (133).

slave labor used to harvest the material and more broadly buttressed "economies built on the exploitation of humans and other parts of the natural world" that claimed miraculous renewal yet "[sought] to disavow histories of damage" (136).[333] Thus, by period of the American Renaissance, the cause of soil renewal—which represented national independence, self-sufficiency, a balance between individual virtue and community embeddedness, and local connection to environments for the American founders, at various times—transformed into a politically imperial and scientifically empirical venture dependent on international systems of exploitation and a mechanistic view of nature. Simultaneously, harvests increased exponentially.

Revolutionary Anxieties and Constructing a Compostable Past

Before beginning the shift within this chapter from politicians to literary accounts of compost, it is worth briefly addressing one particularly conspicuous absence: Henry David Thoreau. Despite his association with farming, Thoreau was not a fan of composting. In *Walden*, he notes that he works a "worn out" field (he blames Native agricultural practices) but defiantly proclaims that he gave the beans "no manure." Nor did he follow early nineteenth-century agriculturalist John Evelyn's advice (which he quotes) to substitute vigorous hoeing and "the logic of" "labor" and "stir" for composting. Instead, Thoreau simply accepts a diminished crop, concluding that we should "concern ourselves" less "about our beans for seed" and more about creating "a new generation of men" (113). The issue was not that Thoreau did not understand the power of compost: as Rachael DeWitt has recently drawn attention to, he apotheosizes a certain kind of proto-new materialist understanding in the "Spring" chapter of *Walden*, where he salutes the soil's "excrementitious" quality, thereby figuring the bowels (the source of animal manure) rather than the womb as the center of generative possibility within the Earth.[334] Thoreau's performative laziness in "The Bean-Field" has a parodic element, but it also serves as a serious rebuke to the agrarian notion that meaningful *moral* transformation would come about primarily through agricultural reform. Yet Thoreau's skepticism of the transformative powers of compost and agricultural reform is not the reason that he makes only fleeting appearances in this dissertation. Instead, two factors are at play. First, Thoreau is by far the most thoroughly parsed environmental writer. That does not mean there is nothing more worth saying about him, of course. But too often, early ecocritical writings situated *Walden* as the *first* environmental text. This dissertation's central project is to track an overlooked prehistory to ecological thought, focusing on conservative strands (and progressive responses to them) that *failed* to materialize in broader American political or environmental discourse, including the mainstream environmental tradition that Thoreau inspired. Secondly, and relatedly, there is simply *too* much worth saying about Thoreau, revolution, compost and tradition. To consider the complexities of his engagements with the topics (and the associated critical legacy) would demand an independent chapter—it is beyond the scope of the project at this stage.

Meanwhile, Hawthorne has been underappreciated as an environmental thinker, and may therefore seem an unlikely figure to take a key role in this argument about the history of agricultural metaphors. In fact, Hawthorne's well-documented skepticism of utopian projects extended to agricultural reform. He skewered transcendental efforts to regenerate human nature through

[333] James also notes that the potency of this new imported fertilizer led to the political imagination of "guanotopias" by thinkers as ideologically varied as French romantic socialists, white southern slaveholders, and even (for a time) Karl Marx.

[334] Rachael DeWitt, conference paper at INCS, 2018.

enlightened husbandry at length in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Similar concerns were on his mind half a decade earlier in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846). In "The Hall of Fantasy" sketch, Hawthorne claimed that "there is no surer method of arriving at the Hall of Fantasy than to throw oneself into the current of a theory." Alongside "the abolitionist, brandishing his one idea like an iron flail," Hawthorne presents the more ridiculous figure of "men whose faith had imbodied itself in the form of a potato." Hawthorne's image of an errant agrarian seems to particularly encapsulate his objections to reformers who "had got possession of some crystal fragment of truth, the brightness of which so dazzled them that they could see nothing else in the wide universe" (*Mosses* 139).

Taken at face value, Hawthorne's dismissal of reformers indicates that he, like Burke, believed that the broad application of abstract theories was unlikely to solve embedded, complex problems. In these regards, it is telling that Hawthorne expressed explicit admiration of Burke's support for the American Revolution. Burke's harsh reading of the French Revolution especially resonated with Hawthorne's sketches that portray revolutionary activity as sweeping conflagrations.[335] For instance, in "Earth's Holocaust," youthful would-be reformers systematically burn all emblems of governmental, religious, and aristocratic privilege before becoming carried away and hurling nearly everything of worth into the blaze. By contrast, in "Fire-Worship," Hawthorne suggests that the "domesticated" fire—the family hearth—was not only "the great conservative of Nature" but also capable of being "the tremendous agent of change." By expressing his preference for the contained domestic fire over the revolutionary "holocaust," Hawthorne suggests that there is no necessary contradiction between sensible reform and an individual's efforts to be true "to country and law, to the God whom his fathers worshipped, to the wife of his youth, and to all things else which instinct or religion has taught us to consider sacred" (*Mosses* 108).[336]

At such moments, Hawthorne can seem downright illiberal. But like Burke, Hawthorne articulated political positions full of both ambivalence and nuance. Hawthorne's accounts of agricultural reform help illuminate these productive tensions. Shortly after critiquing the reformer who puts all his faith in a potato, the narrator of "The Hall of Fantasy" says that even "the heart of the staunchest conservative, unless he abjured his fellowship with man, could hardly have helped throbbing in sympathy with the spirit that pervaded these innumerable theorists." Whereas the conservative's "intellect" rejects the reformer's faulty logic, the "heart" and the "soul" of the "wiser spirit" concur with the reformer's incessant urge to make a better world. Revealingly, Hawthorne's narrator returns to agricultural metaphors even as he rejects the viability of any particular potato-based "scheme." He remarks, "It could not be that the world should continue forever what it has been; a soil where Happiness is so rare a flower and Virtue so often a blighted fruit" (*Mosses* 139-140). In suggesting that the heart needs the reformist impulse *as a counterweight to the Earth's degraded soil*, Hawthorne brings the metaphor full circle. Invoking the favorite topic of contemporary agricultural reformers, Hawthorne validates the regenerative necessity of agricultural reform*ism* while rejecting the monomaniacal grandiosity of particular agricultural reform *projects* that attempt to impose one solution on a complex system.

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[335] As Colgan tracks, Hawthorne checked out Burke's works in 1828. In *Liberty Tree*, Hawthorne's children's history of the American Revolution, he calls Burke "one of the friends of America… one of the wisest men and greatest orators that ever the world produced" (qtd. in Colgan 169). Colgan concludes that in many regards, Hawthorne "fundamentally replicates" Burke's views of both the American and French Revolutions. Frederick Newberry also concludes that "were we to align [Hawthorne] with any political thinker, Edmund Burke would likely come closer than anyone" (207). Swann contests the association of Hawthorne and Burke (5).

[336] Hawthorne's sketch goes on to criticize society for "uproot[ing] the hearth" (*Mosses* 113).

Hawthorne's initial dismissal and optimistic reassessment of the potato enthusiast fits into a larger pattern within his work. In the autobiographical sketches "The Old Manse" and "The Custom House," Hawthorne appeals to agricultural reform discourse both to frame his own ambivalence about the oppressive weight of the past and to grapple with the pervasive, nearly paradoxical problem of establishing traditions in a nation founded upon revolutionary rupture. In these prefatory sketches, Hawthorne seeks to resolve two equal and opposite fears: first, that America's repressed revolutionary tendencies will violently resurface; and conversely, that without revolutionary renewal, traditions and families will collapse in upon themselves like plants in exhausted soil. To resolve these tensions, Hawthorne moves towards begrudging endorsements of decay as both degenerative and regenerative agent, imagining patriotic monuments that accrue meaning through structural dissolution and violent energies that can be sublimated into sustainable electoral cycles by being returned to their Puritan (rather than revolutionary) roots.

Hawthorne places his opposed fears about intergenerational exhaustion and revolutionary recurrence in close proximity in "The Custom House" sketch that introduces *The Scarlet Letter*. Before describing his anxieties about democratic upheaval, Hawthorne recurs to plant metaphors in order to represent his charged feelings about the privileges and perils of familial tradition. After admitting that his "feeling for old Salem" is arbitrary and partial—an accident of birth rather than a referendum on the town's merit—Hawthorne chalks his "affection" up to "the deep and aged roots my family has struck in the soil." Although Hawthorne maintains a gently satirical tone throughout the passage, the initial emphasis on rootedness suggests that his ancestors' emigration to America was a successful transplantation: an instance of Crèvecœur's "useless plants" in Europe having "become men" by imbedding themselves in the more hospitable American soil. Hawthorne even suggests that because so many consecutive generations "have mingled their earthly substance with the soil," his family has become an essential component of the Salem earth: "no small portion of it must necessarily be akin to the mortal frame, wherewith, for a little while, I walk the streets" (*Scarlet* 11). However much Hawthorne denigrates this "attachment" as "the mere sensuous sympathy of dust for dust," he hints at a radical (if also whimsical) capacity for transhuman relationships between individual subjects and their environment: a mode of inheritance and belonging that relies equally on genetic transmission and posthumous dispersal of identity, a process whereby the body's diffusion into "dust" makes the "natal earth" almost as life-giving as biological parentage.

Although Hawthorne feels fatalistically bound to Salem by this connection to the soil, he acknowledges that his family's continuous residence grants him certain privileges. Returning to the ur-figure for ancestral rootedness—the family tree—Hawthorne pictures himself as the "top-most bough" of a venerable arboreal specimen that was "planted deep, in the town's earliest infancy and childhood" more than two hundred years earlier. The combination of rooted solidity and lofty vantage point suggests that hierarchical elevation emerges from familial tenure. In fact, Hawthorne contrasts his position atop the family tree to a "new inhabitant—who came himself from a foreign land, or whose father or grandfather did." He insists that the more recent settler has "little claim to be called a Salemite; he has no conception of the oyster like tenacity with which an old settler, over whom his third century is creeping, clings to the spot" (*Scarlet* 12). Hawthorne's claim that even a third-generation resident is a "new inhabitant" *seems* to reek of the logic of aristocracy: duration trumps merit. Thus, by appealing to his ancestors' long-standing residence in the new world, Hawthorne fleetingly gives new life to memories of old-world social privileges.

However, throughout the passage, Hawthorne's rhetoric of composting undoes the automatic association between family trees and aristocratic purview. On multiple occasions, Hawthorne's knowing references to agricultural practices do more than unsettle the soil that the tree is planted in: they stir things up by suggesting that the soil is *too settled* to be sustainable. When Hawthorne states that "Few of my countrymen can know what it is" to walk upon ground filled

with their ancestors' bones, he does not claim invidious distinction for his own family. Instead, he contemplates the possibility that "frequent transplantation is perhaps better for the stock." Because the Hawthorne family has *not* been transplanted, the members which make up the "old trunk… with so much venerable moss upon it" look in horror at the "topmost boughs"—including the author himself! According to one of the accomplished Puritan Hathornes, to be "a writer of story books" is to be "a degenerate fellow." But if the Hathorne/Hawthorne family tree is prone to "degeneration," the cause is not the *climatic* determinism that Raynal and Buffon feared. Instead, it is improper soil stewardship: the consequence of a European-style lack of mobility and "transplantation" in the absence of intensive composting practices (*Scarlet* 13).

In the context of agricultural reforms, one of the striking features of Hawthorne's metaphors for exhausted soil is the fact that the decomposing corpses of the forefathers do not return the nutrients to the earth that their bodies metaphorically metabolized from it. Unlike Madison's permaculture *ideal* (as distinct from his more practical reform suggestions) that premised sustainability on a closed system of nutrient cycling, Hawthorne's spatially contained circulation of ancestral bodies tends to degrade the soil rather than renew it. Because the vehicle of exhausted soil functions as a hinge between Hawthorne's account of actual physical graves and the figure of the family tree, it easy to overlook the way that he mixes his metaphors: at one moment, familial bodies are *components of* the soil, and a page later, they are the tree trunk growing *out of* the exhausted dirt. There is something grossly over-intimate—perhaps even incestual—about the way that Hawthorne portrays his ancestors as *both* the plant and the soil: both the living growth and decaying bodies, source and substance, leaving Hawthorne himself naught but a "degenerate fellow."

Acknowledging his discordant desire to follow his fore-fathers in the "sentry-march" from graveyard to "main street" as "an evidence that the connection, which has become an unhealthy one, should at last be severed," Hawthorne returns to the figure of degraded soil to justify uprooting his family. "Human nature will not flourish," he concludes, "any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth" (*Scarlet* 13). Here, Hawthorne disguises uncharacteristically intense revulsion behind characteristically mellow imagery. The potato—previously seen in the hands of the misguided reformer in the hall of fantasy—reappears. Instead of representing the reformer's simplistic, totalizing theory, it now signifies particularity. It is the physical corollary that grounds Hawthorne's sweeping generalization about "human nature." Its lumpy, brown, prosaic, Heideggerrian *thinginess*—surely a potato is the most boring of foodstuffs! —misdirects the audience's attention away from the passage's political and rhetorical force, including the unusually violent verb choice. Hawthorne's children will not set down roots; they will not establish them; they will not nurture them; they will not tend them: they will "*strike*" them into "unaccustomed earth." The family's new settlement may be "unaccustomed" in two potential senses. Definitionally, the "unaccustomed earth" is hitherto outside the experience *of Hawthorne's children*: they are "unaccustomed" *to it*. But the modifier "unaccustomed" floats free from the children: grammatically, the earth is simply "unaccustomed," or *without custom*: a space not only free from the over-determinative influence of Hawthorne's ancestors, but from history, tradition, and socialization.[337]

By framing this break with tradition as a matter of soil health, Hawthorne rejects both the American founders' equation of local composting economies with the promise of democratic sustainability and Crèvecœur's vision of a singular and definitive rejuvenating transatlantic transplantation. In a surprisingly radical twist, Hawthorne suggests that old materials (here embodied

[337] Hawthorne's phrase ("Unaccustomed Earth") provides the title for Jhumpa Lahiri's outstanding short story collection that focuses on immigration and acculturation.

by his ancestors' bodies) sometimes cannot renew but instead accelerate decay. Thus, Hawthorne—so often figured as a homebody who valued domestic continuity above all else—moves towards Tocqueville's grounding of American character upon a generationally iterated process of ungrounding. He signals that just as he has to move away from Salem to recover his voice as a writer, his children may have to move to avoid being stifled by his own oppressive embeddedness in bygone ways. As he embraces a Tocquevillean perspective that equates geographical mobility with democratic possibility, his shift in plant metaphors takes on new significance. With soil still serving as the metaphoric crux, Hawthorne subtly slides from family tree to familiar tuber. In addition to being boring, a potato is also practical: capable of being planted by and sustaining the masses. And as Deleuze and Guattari would no doubt gleefully point out, as a rhizome the potato offers a horizontal multiplicity that directly counters the vertical, hierarchic arborescence of the family tree (*A Thousand Plateaus* 3-25).

If Hawthorne sounds surprisingly Emersonian at such moments, figuring geographical mobility as the antidote to "grop[ing] among the dry bones of the past" (Emerson, *Essential Writings* 3), an even more direct analog is Hester flinging away the scarlet letter into the "fallen leaves" of the forest while triumphantly declaring that "the past is gone!" (*Scarlet* 130). But just as Pearl, channeling Puritan society's function as externalized superego, accusatorily returns the letter, Hawthorne must face the consequences of his a-historical impetuosity. He finds that escape from Salem is not as simple as shifting metaphors or voluntarily repotting himself. Uncharacteristically imagining that he can flee from family, soil, and the past itself without consequences, he is turned about and toppled over by the inevitable intrusion of history, which arrives in the form of the 1848 election of Whig presidential candidate Zachary Taylor. Because appointments to cushy sinecures like Hawthorne's Custom-House job were distributed primarily through political patronage, Hawthorne and his fellow Custom-House residents experience Presidential elections as "periodic terrors." In Hawthorne's figurative take, the Custom-House officials view the prospect of unemployment less as a peaceful transfer than as the appearance of "the exterminating angel" who will "bring [their] white heads under the axe of the guillotine." Hawthorne extends this metaphor of decapitation, describing how after Taylor's election, "My own head was the first that fell!" (*Scarlet* 14).

Throughout the extended decapitation passage, Hawthorne maintains a jocular tone, comparing himself to someone who contemplated "suicide" and found instead "the good hap to be murdered" (*Scarlet* 33). He clearly delineates between his "politically dead … figurative self" and "The real human being … with his head safely on his shoulders" who takes the ejection from political office as a fortunate fall propelling him from the intellectually stifling atmosphere of the Salem Custom House back to his writing desk. Yet, despite this humorous detachment, Hawthorne still exhibits anxiety that real violent tendencies lurk just below the surface of democratic politics. As a result of the election, he encounters one of the "uglier traits of human nature": the "tendency—which I now witnessed in men no worse than their neighbors—to grow cruel, merely because they possessed the power of inflicting harm." He concludes that "If the guillotine, as applied to office-holders, were a literal fact, instead of one of the most apt of metaphors, it is my sincere belief, that the active members of the victorious party were sufficiently excited to have chopped off all our heads, and have thanked Heaven for the opportunity!" (*Scarlet* 32). According to Hawthorne's account, human nature is constant. Only the thin line between "metaphor" and "actual fact" separates the periodic election from bloody revolution. Here, Hawthorne exposes the true nature of elections: they are not *opposites of* or *alternatives to* political violence, but instead a *sublimation* of revolutionary energies. For Hawthorne, that sublimation is necessarily tenuous. The desire to "throw the bums *out*" every four years is not entirely detachable from the desire to throw the bums *under* (the ground). In Hawthorne's account, these destructive energies are not buried somewhere deep in the subconscious; they are barely subcutaneous, an itch awaiting only a scratch.

In terms of historical consciousness, Hawthorne's comic agitation seems to simultaneously look backwards, at the present, and towards the future. Gazing over the past, he invokes the specter of the guillotine, thereby suggesting that the outcomes of the American and French Revolutions (elections and terror) might all too easily *bleed into* one another. Simultaneously embedded in the historical present, Hawthorne responds directly to the crisis of the European Revolutions of 1848. As Larry J. Reynolds explores in *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance*, Hawthorne was far from alone in connecting 1793 with 1848 and Europe with America.[338] The Boston *Post* repeatedly published a cartoon featuring Zachary Taylor manning a guillotine and chopping off heads of his political opponents. Even Hawthorne's depiction of *himself* as headless was not the writer's invention: he borrowed the imagery from a June 11, 1849 editorial that lambasted his Custom House dismissal by deploring that "The head of the poet and the scholar is stricken off to gratify and reward some greedy partizan!" (qtd. in Reynolds 83). And proleptically, it is tempting to read Hawthorne's dismay at post-electoral violence as a prescient anticipation of the crisis of 1860. Amid all the debate about causes of the Civil War, it is easy to forget that the *trigger* for war was dissatisfaction with the result of a presidential election: an outcome that affirms Hawthorne's apprehension at the thinness of the line separating American electoral politics and internecine strife.

In suggesting that there is no absolute or permanent difference between democratic practices and political terror, Hawthorne builds towards an image of himself as a restless body: "the press had taken up my affair, and kept me, for a week or two, careering through the public prints, in my decapitated state, like Irving's Headless Horseman; ghastly and grim, and longing to be buried, as a politically dead man ought" (*Scarlet* 34). While Hawthorne suggested earlier that Americans were in danger of becoming too aristocratic (too English) because of a lack of geographical and social mobility, such images of headless-ness suggest that America also contains a competing strain that risks becoming too revolutionary (too French). This corpse that "careers" in ceaseless motion serves as a direct contrast to the Hawthorne family ancestors who decay in the same soil that they lived upon (and in the case of the family tree metaphor, grew out of). Whereas Hawthorne previously imagined geographical mobility (transplantation) as a means to avoid degeneration and decay, the description of the "Headless Hawthorne" portrays restless mobility as a compulsive problem; burial and decomposition as a solution.

These tensions between revolutionary mobility and violence, on the one hand, and rootedness and degeneration, on the other, are fundamentally unresolved within "The Custom-House." Hawthorne brings the sketch to a close by describing his return to literary productivity. But the gesture is necessarily incomplete. At the very moment that he dismisses the headless horseman as merely his "figurative self," "the real human being, with his head safely on his shoulders" revalidates fictionality by figuring his dismissal from the Custom House as the necessary jolt that enables him to write stories again after a long dry spell. His liberation depends as much upon the creation of romance, fancy, and figures as upon his literal move away from Salem to become "a citizen of somewhere else" (*Scarlet* 34-35).

If there is a resolution to these foundational tensions in Hawthorne's thought, it occurs within *The Scarlet Letter* rather than the "The Custom-House" frame narrative. Continuing to use the metaphor of rootedness as a central way to conceptualize political possibility and entrapment, Hawthorne's characters often strive for a moderate marriage of botanical opposites. Hester promises Pearl that Governor Bellingham's garden will offer a vision of "flowers… more beautiful than the

[338] In response to 1848, George Duyckinck wrote that "Human nature seems to be the same as it was sixty years ago. Heads were stuck on pikes or swords and women danced about them as they did then and who can doubt but that if the insurgents had succeeded the guillotine would have been as busily at work today as it was then" (qtd. in Reynolds 82).

ones we find in the woods." But in "a hard soil and amidst the close struggle for subsistence," the garden—a clear analog for the Governor's new-world statecraft—cannot replicate "the native English taste for ornamental gardening." Instead, more "manly" vegetables flourish: "Cabbages grew in plain sight; and a pumpkin…deposited one of its gigantic products directly beneath the hall-window as if to warn the Governor that this lump of vegetable gold was as rich an ornament as New England earth would offer him." Despite this emphasis on practicality, the garden is not without aesthetic delights such as red "rose-bushes" (*Scarlet* 72-73). There is just enough ornamentation to fulfill Hester's promise to Pearl. The passage thus figures the garden of American statecraft as a middle ground between the "ornamental" English garden and the forest's "luxuriant" growth.

However, the way in which Pearl is drawn to Bellingham's rose-bush also serves as a reminder of the flower's function as a representation of sin and wildness. It is no accident that Governor Bellingham's intentionally designed garden contains a plant that directly recalls the *wild* rose-bush that grows unbidden next to the prison door. Carrying narrative associations of sin, sexuality, and even connections to Anne Hutchinson, it serves as a kind of horticultural confession that the Puritan Governor is not above sinfulness—it is the "freely" shown "trait whereby the worst may be inferred" (*Scarlet* 163). The *open* display of the sign of sinfulness inoculates against hypocrisy, against the soul-leeching secrecy that torments Dimmesdale, against the furtive guilt that Hester (who openly displays the sign of her own sin) alone is able to fleetingly glimpse on the faces of other Puritan women.

In fact, *The Scarlet Letter's* rose-bushes crystallize Hawthorne's tendency to frame gardens as test sites for the interplay of binary oppositions. In "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hawthorne signals the failure to keep Rappaccini's poisonous meddling separate from Beatrice's innocence by deploying language of polluted hybridity: the text is full of terms such as "commixture," "adultery of various vegetable species," "monstrous offspring," and "commingling" (*Mosses* 85-86). What initially appears as a real opposition between father and daughter (sin and innocence, science and art) melts into a "lurid intermixture" that for Hawthorne contrasts with "Blessed… simple emotions, be they dark or bright" (*Mosses* 82). This "lurid intermixture" is precisely what Hawthorne avoids in the opening chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*. As Robert Milder notes, the contrast between the prison door and the rose-bush establishes a series of relatively conventional binaries: "black and red; civilization and nature; constraint and freedom; superego and libido" (Milder 93). As a variation, one might add wildness and lawfulness. In this tableau, the two symbols balance *against* one another. But that does not mean they are simple; in addition to the contrast between them, they present internal binaries within themselves. Save for the fact that the rose's redness signifies both beauty *and* sin (a potentially "lurid intermixture") they present miniature dramas of binary *containment*: the function of the black prison door is to keep sins locked within, and the wild rose-bush (like all roses) symbolizes both the pain of thorns and the beauty of the flower, but keeps the botanical structures of stem and blossom biologically segregated.

If rose-bush and prison-door thematize the vegetable biopolitics of balance, containment, and binary coexistence, it is no accident that Hawthorne "present[s]" one of the rose's flowers "to the reader… to symbolize some sweet moral blossom" and "relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (*Scarlet* 37). The "darkening close" of the narrative—and moments of moral redemption—pointedly occur upon a Puritan election day. *Something* about the event makes it a fitting site for the several kinds of "moral blossoms" to bloom, including Dimmesdale's confession, Chillingworth's diminution into "an uprooted weed that lies wilting in the sun" (164), Pearl's acknowledgement of her father and "pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow" (162), and the community's reevaluation of Hester. A great deal has been written about the way that each characters' arc reaches its apotheosis on the Puritan election day; my interest is more in the factors that allow this particular democratic holiday seems to heal a psychic rift *for Hawthorne*.

What differentiates it from the terrors of Taylor's election? And more broadly, what allows an election day to represent not an outbreak of barely sublimated violence, but serve as a figure for community cohesion and moral regeneration?

Two related factors are worth identifying: the role of the carnivalesque and Hawthorne's use of the Puritan election to present a prehistory to American democracy. Because the Puritans "were native Englishmen, whose fathers had lived in the sunny richness of the Elizabethan epoch," the election day procession takes on a surprisingly robust, innocently bacchanalian character. Hawthorne describes a boisterous scene filled with sporting displays and human diversity, including the presence of "Indians—in their savage finery" and "rough looking desperadoes" from Spain who "transgressed, without fear or scruple, the rules of behavior that were binding on all others." Rather than condemn these elements as excessive, Hawthorne suggests that the carnivalesque elements of the Puritan election day represent a "forgotten art of gayety" (*Scarlet* 147-148).

The election day revelry is all the more striking because in tales such as "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Hawthorne associated democratic masquerade with riotous excess. In that prefiguration of the American Revolution set in the 1730s, Hawthorne's accounts of a carnivalesque mob tarring and feathering Major Molineux seemed to suggest that revolution was grotesque precisely because it gives a stage to tragicomic demagogues—almost precisely the same argument Burke makes about the French Revolution as a luridly mixed genre.[339] But in the Puritan election day festivities, the tragic and the comic do not *merge*: they *coexist* as "the great, honest face of the people smiled, grimly, perhaps, but widely too." The grim side of the smile asserts the grinner's right to sit in more severe judgment if necessary: more theatrical "branches of jocularity would have been sternly repressed" (*Scarlet* 147). But this smile's most unique character is its capacity for holding onto opposites without forcing confrontation or symbolic resolution. It forms a stark contrast with the *composite*, rebellious faces of "grinning rascals" or duplicity of the diabolic masks that Robin encounters in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux."

The Puritan smile's ability to be at once wide and grim depends upon honestly facing up to reality, including the necessity of allowing periodic escape valves for rebellious energies. The Puritan can smile at small transgressions—wrestling matches, sailors drinking from flasks—because they know that they are contained within the temporal limits of the festival, fulfilling a medieval carnival function. By allowing such excesses precisely on election day, Puritan society vents the energies that could convert popular expression into mass protest. The carnivalesque scene achieves the same function as Hawthorne's satirical tone when describing his own symbolic "beheading" in "The Custom House," but the Puritan smile replaces Hawthorne's unresolved anxiety about the possible eruption of real violence with a community's confidence in its ability to contain dissent, if necessary. The Puritans are more confident in the power of their collective censorious frown than Hawthorne is in the moralizing efficacy of his pen.

The transatlantic context for the novel also helps to distinguish the election scene from more violent cousins of democratic practices. As Larry J. Reynolds points out, the events of *The Scarlet Letter* roughly parallel the English Civil War of 1642 to 1649. In light of this contrast, the election highlights the possibility of "orderly change, in contrast to the rebellion and regicide that has recently occurred in England" (Reynolds 95). Dimmesdale's desire to maintain community cohesion diverts him away from the role filled by dissenting Roundhead leaders. In fact, by feeling the full weight of his ministerial duty—namely, the responsibility of inspiring virtue in selectmen and elected

[339] Swann distinguishes Hawthorne's "tragic" view of revolution from a critique of the revolution as a whole. In Swann's view, Hawthorne laments that "justifiable revolutionary activity against the representative of the British imperialist state tragically involves the humiliating suffering of a private man" (15). By contrast, see Colgan (187-94) for a thorough account of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" as a Burkean parable.

officials—Dimmesdale helps to summon the courage to confess his own transgressions, thereby revealing that individual morality can at times *depend* upon civic and political participation.[340] Thus, whereas Hawthorne feared that the peaceful Taylor election of 1848 might slide *into* the violence that characterized Europe during the same year, the example of England in the 1640s serves as a silent but menacing contrast that throws the revelries in the Massachusetts Bay Colonies into sharp relief.

Ultimately, the fact that *The Scarlet Letter's* Election Day takes place at the same time as the English Civil War may be less important than the fact that it takes place *before* the American Revolution. Kathleen P. Colgan makes a compelling argument that Hawthorne followed Burke in provisionally approving of the American Revolution as a "conservative's revolution, an effort waged to preserve traditional constitutional liberties" (144-45).[341] In Burke's view, the American colonies possessed not only a century and a half of social cohesion, but also a long tradition of political practice that the King and Parliament had no real right to disrupt. In 1775 Burke argued that the colonists were "not only devoted to liberty, but to liberty according to English ideas and on English principles" (*Works* I:464). Similarly, Hawthorne justified the American Revolution by arguing that the King's tyranny destroyed the colonists' rights derived from "the English constitution" (qtd. in Colgan 156). In each author's view, the colonists' prerogatives *as English subjects* had to be protected from English interference. Ironically, they framed the American Revolution as a justifiable effort to conserve the rights of Englishmen.

With the election day scene in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne accomplishes a related goal: instead of suggesting that American rights descend from an English provenance, he reassures himself that the history of *elections* on American soil predates the history of American *rebellion*. For the conservative side of Hawthorne's temperament, this is no merely academic, chicken-and-egg distinction. If rebellion necessarily precedes election, then no process of sublimation can ever completely eliminate the anarchic violence inherent in the former. The troubling *prehistory* of rebellion in America was very much in Hawthorne's mind in 1832 when he published "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." But in the vision Hawthorne presents in *The Scarlet Letter*, the election not only precedes American rebellions and revolution, it successfully *reincorporates* rebellious and satirical energies into social cohesion through carnivalesque spectacle and religious devotion. Such a spiritually regenerated election encloses the possibility for violent upheaval *within* politically and culturally regulated structures. In its very form, it reproduces the coexistent but contained dichotomies of wild-rose bush and prison door. In other words, the periodic Puritan election day serves not only as the setting for redemption but is *itself* one of the "sweet moral blossom[s]" that can "relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow."

The interplay between Hawthorne's competing anxieties about revolution and sterile decrepitude in *The Scarlet Letter* echoes similar themes from his earlier story collection *Mosses from an Old Manse*. But where *The Scarlet Letter* focuses on whether elections maintain an appropriately moderate degree of revolutionary energy, in *Mosses* Hawthorne concerns himself with the question of how to best memorialize the American Revolution itself. In *Mosses*, he reveals the paradoxical

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[340] In smaller ways, too, the Election Day festivities seem designed to subtly contrast with Puritan practices in England. The New England allowance for wrestling seems like a subtle nod to English Puritans' hatred for the *Book of Sports*. Hawthorne notes that the colonists had "shared in" such sports "long ago" and seek to keep the traditions "alive on this new soil" (*Scarlet* 147). The "long ago" hints at the English Puritan prohibition on such activities in the 1640s. Hawthorne does not take the contrast too far: in "The May-pole of Merry Mount," he clarifies that the New England Puritans shared their British Brethren's disdain for May Poles, another practice encouraged by Archbishop Laud and the *Book of Sports*.

[341] Hawthorne and Burke were far from alone in their efforts to cast the Revolution as "an essentially conservative reaction" (McWilliams, *Hawthorne, Melville, and the American Character*, qtd. in Colgan 145).

nature of revolutionary monuments: their solidity functions as a testament to the permanent legacy established by revolution while they simultaneously consecrate the principle that people should not be governed by the tyranny of past generations. In order to mediate these contradictions, Hawthorne's turns to the titular figure of mosses: plants whose lush greenery testifies to the disuse or decay of old materials. By glorifying moss's tendency to age the same monuments it sanctifies, Hawthorne shifts between celebrations of benign neglect and efforts to curate decay. In the process, he suggests that far from undoing the work of memory, disintegration reveals and produces modes of relationship that inoculate against presentist and future-focused teleological histories.

When Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne moved into the Old Manse, they inhabited a dwelling as densely woven with historical associations as with moss. Hawthorne portrays the soil as filled with remnants of the past, including "the spear and arrowheads, the chisels, and other implements of war, labor, and the chase, which the plough turns up" (*Mosses* 9).[342] He exhibits acute awareness of the Old Manse's role in housing or witnessing three essential strands of Concord transcendentalism: liberal reformist theology, revolutionary rupture, and literary nationalism. In 1770 the Reverend William Emerson (a Congregational pastor) had the parsonage built on the Northern outskirts of town. The Old Manse's proximity to Concord but separation from its commercial activity granted the Emerson family something akin to what Thoreau found at Walden Pond: a dwelling of "near retirement and accessible seclusion" (*Mosses* 3) from which to comment on society without being ensconced within it. It also provided an unexpected vantage point on history in the making. On April 19, 1775, Emerson observed the "shot heard round the world" firsthand from an upstairs window overlooking the neighboring North Bridge, site of the Battle of Concord. Decades later, William's grandson Ralph Waldo Emerson lived in the house while drafting what would become the 1836 essay "Nature."

Rather than initially glory in the Manse's aged history, the newly wedded Hawthorne couple tried to figure themselves as a latter-day Adam and Eve, starting the world anew in an innocent pastoral paradise. The fact that they inherited an already planted garden during the fall harvest of 1842 aided their Edenic fantasy. The business of the fall was gleaning, not reaping what they had sowed. In Nathaniel and Sophia's Common Journal, Hawthorne deemphasized the labor of prior inhabits (and Henry David Thoreau, who helped plant the garden) and celebrated the bounty of fruits as a providential gift consecrating the lovers' new union. He describes leisurely harvesting as his "chief anxiety" and "only labor" of the fall. After Nathaniel spent afternoons picking vegetables and wild flowers, Sophia would use the botanical bounty to spruce up the dour interior of the aged parsonage (*Ordinary Mysteries* 71).[343]

In fact, in the autobiographical sketch that introduces the collection ("The Old Manse") Hawthorne indicates an initial zeal for interior renewal and redesign. As Robert Milder notes, the sketch states that Hawthorne's "first act as a householder is to brighten the walls of his residence with 'a cheerful coat of paint, and golden-tinted paper hangings,' and replace 'the grim prints of Puritan ministers' with pictures of a Raphael Madonna and Lake Como" (Milder 74). It is not difficult to discern connections between these blissful newlyweds' desire to elide the heavy hand of history by freshening up their environment and Hawthorne's sketch "The New Adam and Eve,"

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[342] When handling these Native American "relic[s]," Hawthorne experiences a feeling that anticipates the moment when he finds the frayed scarlet letter in "The Custom House."

[343] Time and again, Hawthorne describes the value of "observing" the garden, rather than laboring in it. In one telling passage, he laments that he does not feel the same affection for the plants "as if they had been sown by my own hands." He compares the phenomenon to "nursing and educating another person's children." And yet, he claims that the experience is still filled with wonder: "It is as if something were being created under my own inspection, and partly by my own aid" (*Ordinary Mysteries* 73).

where the parents of the human race wander through the wreckage of human civilization but maintain their innocence as they are "content to live and be happy in the present" (*Mosses* 210).

However, Hawthorne could hardly have chosen a less auspicious site to try to escape the looming presence of the past. The Old Manse—itself *a monument to the act of witnessing* revolutionary history—directly abuts a memorial to the opening salvoes of the Revolutionary War. Hawthorne's neighbors erected a twenty foot-tall "obelisk of granite" to memorialize the Battle of Concord. Like the Bunker Hill monument inaugurated by two of Daniel Webster's celebrated orations, the Concord obelisk aims to imbue America's revolutionary origins with solidity and permanence, drawing a straight line from independence to the coming triumph of manifest destiny. At first Hawthorne seems to participate in the process of naturalizing American sovereignty. Deliberately using passive voice, he de-emphasizes the monumentalizing agency of his fellow townsmen, stating that this "obelisk of granite has grown up from the soil that was fertilized with British blood." The monument momentarily appears as a corollary of Jefferson's liberty tree, organically manured with the blood of tyrants. But Hawthorne, who here portrays the Revolution less a triumphant harbinger of liberty than a "long and bloody struggle," accepts the memorial not because it is mighty, but because its relatively small size (compared to the much-celebrated Bunker Hill monolith) makes it more "suitable" as "a matter of local interest" than "an epoch of national history" (*Mosses* 7). The monument passes muster for Hawthorne precisely because of its un-monumental stature.

Additionally, Hawthorne quickly deflects attention from the "granite obelisk" to a "humbler" and "more interesting" "token:" "the grave,—marked by a small, mossgrown fragment of stone at the head and another at the foot,—the grave of two British soldiers who were slain in the skirmish" (*Mosses* 7). Hawthorne's yet-smaller memorial allows him to double-down on the value of humility. Additionally, Hawthorne's decision to dwell upon the fact that one of the British soldiers was killed with an "axe" complicates the sketches' seeming patriotism. This emphasis on the British grave is more than an acknowledgement that war always exacts a heavy toll to all participants or a case of "bothsidesism." The axe exists outside the usual iconography of the American Revolution, and Hawthorne associates it with the French Terror and the guillotine in "Earth's Holocaust," thereby suggesting slippage between the significations of the two conflicts (Colgan 175).

Additionally, the green growth on the smaller grave that signifies neglect and decay directly contrast with the larger obelisk, which attempts to present a fantasy of revolution as a monolithic achievement *that is perpetually relevant to the present moment*. To allow such a monument to be covered with moss would assign it to the past, making it a historic curiosity rather than testifying to its relevance to the living world. But Hawthorne finds the smaller "mossgrown fragment" "more interesting" because it hints at a larger, though necessarily incomplete, picture. He spends the following two paragraphs imagining the lives of the soldier and the boy who killed him as the subjects of a tale, even wishing "that the grave might be opened" so he could discern the truth (*Mosses* 8). However, he chooses not to spin a full story out of the material marker. As a result, the grave's mossy covering serves as the physical signifier of history's *suggestive* capacity—it serves as a kind of veil or shroud that seems to invite romantic speculation but foreclose historical surety. This connection between moss and storytelling reminds the reader that in Hawthorne's master metaphor, each of the tales contained within the collection is itself a "Moss" "from the Old Manse." By gesturing towards a tale of revolution that remains fundamentally untold, he reminds us of the incomplete nature of the historical record and reveals the imperial overcompensation inherent in monumental history.

The mosses in the vicinity of the Old Manse do more than just inspire Hawthorne's poetic imagination. As Gillian Osborne has recently observed, "For Hawthorne, moss signifies history's vital, though often strangling, power over the present" (Osborne 131). The tension between Hawthorne's efforts to create the Old Manse's environs as a new Eden and his celebration of moss-

shrouded revolutionary artifacts disclose what Osborne calls the "vital" potency of moss that caused Hawthorne's fixation. Time and again, he uses moss as a figure to emphasize the double-edged interplay between age/decay and verdant life. Thus, "the mosses of ancient growth upon the walls [of the Old Manse] looked green and fresh, as if they were the newest things and afterthought of Time" (*Mosses* 12). Similarly, in "Buds and Bird Voices," Hawthorne depicts moss as at once the marker of time's passage and as the first plant growth to regain its verdant coloring following Spring rains, thereby signifying broader renewal. The first insights that flower each spring, Hawthorne suggests, emerge not ex nihilo, nor out of seeds, but out of the revivified growth left over from preceding years. Tradition, under such conditions, is not opposed to renewal, but is a condition for its flourishing.

Following Reinhart Koselleck, we often imagine the American and French revolutions as foundational ruptures that inaugurated a regime of linear, homogenous empty time. In "The Old Manse," Hawthorne shifts attention away from Concord's war monuments and onto moss's capacity to reabsorb the nation-state's progressive temporality into cyclical natural rhythms. Revolutionary ruptures eddy back into soporific pastoral splendor. Even the neighboring Concord River, a singularly "unexcitable and sluggish stream," moves so "imperceptibly" that it takes Hawthorne three weeks to discern "which way the current flowed" (*Mosses* 6). In addition to denaturalizing the habitual association of waterways with forward progress, the river's "incurable indolence" resists appropriation by industrial capitalism. Whereas "many a wild, free mountain torrent" is dammed and put to work, the Concord river's lazy flow renders it "happily incapable of becoming the slave of human ingenuity." Like an *un*rolling stone, the barely flowing river gathers "half a century's growth" of scraggly "water moss," which emerge out of the submerged ruins of the North Bridge employed by Minutemen at the Battle of Concord (7). In this altered temporal atmosphere, Hawthorne imagines three years at the Manse dissolving into what "seems but the scattered reminiscences of a single summer" (25). Thus, the growth of moss can testify to time's passage, but it can also signify time that has been compressed, flattened, rendered cyclical, or even shrouded in a hazy dream- or death-like erasure of the phenomenology of temporality itself.

Decaying, mossy counter-monuments like the British graves and the sunken bridge build towards Hawthorne's account of the volume's eponymous epiphytes: the mosses *on* the Old Manse. Whereas Nathaniel and Sophia began their habitation of the Manse by trying to erase signifiers of the past through interior remodeling, Nathaniel ends "The Old Manse" by decrying their landlord's attempt at exterior renovation. Strangely enough, scholars have not tended to focus on this crisis. When their landlord decides to engage in construction prior to repossessing his estate, Hawthorne figures the carpenters' arrival as representing the intrusion of history upon "fairyland" where "there is no measurement of time" (*Mosses* 25). Representing unwanted modernity, the carpenters proceed by "vexing the whole antiquity of the place with their discordant renovations." Hawthorne describes the removal of the mosses as a mock-epic deforestation:

> Soon, moreover, they divested our abode of the veil of woodbine which had crept over a large portion of its southern face. All the aged mosses were cleared unsparingly away; and there were horrible whispers about brushing up the external walls with a coat of paint—a purpose as little to my taste as might be that of rouging the venerable cheeks of one's grandmother. But the hand that renovates is always more sacrilegious than that which destroys. (26)

If mosses represent a Burkean, accretive growth that emerge only over long spans of time, here renovation comes to play an analogous role to the decapitating, house-cleaning elections in "The Custom House." Each periodic process displaces Hawthorne himself (in fact, he ends this 1846 sketch by describing his movement to the custom house). For Hawthorne, the removal of mosses

and painting of walls is not only meretricious (tearing away veils, rouging the grandmother's cheeks), but a revival of historical trauma. By recurring to the seemingly ubiquitous metaphor of uprooting (see also the introduction and chapters one and two), Hawthorne resituates a routine renovation as a recursion of revolutionary violence, albeit in a sublimated form.

By contrast, from the renovators' point of view, moss does not *signify* tradition: it *threatens* the Old Manse's ability to endure as either habitus or monument. In the nineteenth-century, there was suspicion that mosses *were* composters, feeding themselves off of decomposing plant tissues. In reality, the vast majority of mosses are epiphytic: they may grow upon other plants, but they draw their nutriment from photosynthesis (Kimmerer 10). However, the Manse renovators were correct that mosses can hasten decay of wooden structures. They hold moisture and their root structures can pry underneath shingles, thereby hastening structural degradation (as testified to by the existence of moss removal services even today).[344]

Yet for Hawthorne, the renovators' efforts to preserve material history threaten to return the Old Manse—an ecologically interwoven memorial—into a static, univocal text. Instead of enabling renewal, the moss removal reprises revolutionary violence by imposing a particular meaning on a site previously marked by unfolding processes, openness to various interpretations, and tendency to inspire narratives. Hawthorne's most forceful denunciation of the moss's removal is his proclamation that "the hand that renovates is always more sacrilegious than that which destroys" (*Mosses* 26). Rather than voice a simplistic preference for preservation, Hawthorne radically suggests that it is better to tear a monument down completely than to repair it and thereby fix its meaning in place. An act of total levelling is less "sacrilegious" than an act of selective uprooting, because while the former exerts violence upon the monument, the latter extends the monument's association with previous political violence into the future.

There is a certain delightful, if also distressing, anarchy to Hawthorne's suggestion: a reminder that the historical preservation paradigm we take for granted is itself an artifact of human history that only emerged in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century (DeSilvey 4). But, of course, demolishing the Old Manse is not Hawthorne's first choice. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne sets up an opposition between preserving memory and pretending that "The past is gone!" only to reveal it as a false binary. Instead, in Hawthorne's romantic imagination, memorials do their most important work by deconstructing the fantasies of permanence they putatively serve. Taken together, Hawthorne's celebration of the water-logged, decomposing North bridge, fragmentary British grave, and verdant Old Manse—all moss covered—suggest a counter-monumental aesthetic in which the most "interesting" memorials activate feeling through planned obsolescence or benign neglect. As memento mori for the imperial impulse itself, such counter-monuments demand acknowledgement that progressive history coexists, and will inevitably be overtaken by, alternative temporal and agential forces. This decentering effect of decay is most materially manifest through the interpolation of nonhuman processes into human systems designed to reify meaning over time. The impersonal effects of climate and the direct agency of nesting animals are both important agents of decay, but in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, plants' "position… at the borderline between animate and inanimate registers" not only grants them "an uncanny ontological potency," but enables them to directly resist anthropocentric priority (Laist 12). As neither fully deliberate agents nor inert, lifeless matter, plants disrupt the distinctions between intention and accident, challenging the very

[344] Many ardent bryophyte fans (latter day moss-troopers) argue that removal companies have wildly overstated moss's role in aging buildings. In a twist that Hawthorne would surely appreciate, even moss removal services warn that overly vigorous forms of defoliation (such as the use of pressure sprayers) can hasten a roof's decay far faster than the presence of moss itself.

conception of politically concentrated regimes of stable meaning. A monument whose meaning can be complicated *even* by mosses can certainly be challenged by subaltern humans.[345]

Despite these liberatory possibilities, in each of his three central deliberations on gardening during the Old Manse period (the Common Journal, "The Old Manse," and "Buds and Bird Voices"), Hawthorne grapples with forms of plant decay that are far less aesthetically pleasing or politically soothing than a moss covered cottage. Encountering the detritus left after the snow melts, Hawthorne finds he cannot dwell upon spring's verdant abundance until he has grappled with the necessity of human intervention in natural processes. As a gardener, Nathaniel Hawthorne concedes that benign neglect is unlikely to achieve desirable results without the active, laborious curation of decay: a process of composting that aesthetically, horticulturally, and even politically sorts and processes old materials to create cyclical renewal. But as a writer of stories, Hawthorne continued to pretend that the mind's flights of fancy could obviate the necessity of labor, vacantly wishing that nature's decay did not need curation.

In using these terms, I argue that Hawthorne anticipatorily grapples with a concept that cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey has recently called "Curated Decay." For DeSilvey, "the disintegration of structural integrity does not necessarily lead to the evacuation of meaning" (5) but can be "culturally as well as ecologically productive" by enabling a vision of "change not as loss but as a release into other states, unpredictable and open" (3). DeSilvey notes that in certain cases, the anticipation of impending structural dissolution can draw attention to a particular monument, thereby activating new forms of knowledge and relationship.[346] However, she also recognizes that in some cases we might want to be open to certain kinds of transformation—as well as express openness to processual change whose forms we acknowledge we cannot predict—without surrendering curatorial agency entirely. DeSilvey's chapter titles and subtitles express different kinds of relationships one might have towards a heritage project: one might "curate mutability," record what happens "when story meets the storm," seek to enable "orderly decay," strive for "a positive passivity," limit one's role to "boundary work," pursue "palliative curation" during a structure's "death"; or acknowledge that certain monuments are simply "beyond saving."

Of these suggestive modalities, Hawthorne's mode of maintenance at the Old Manse might best be described as vacillating between a wish that passivity could *always* be positive and engaging in a kind of "boundary work" that seeks to *undo* the absolute distinction between the natural and the cultural. He believes that the external structure of the Old Manse should not be an exclusively culturally defined space: by opposing exterior renovations and moss removals, he argues that it should be open to the interventions of natural processes. But rather than allowing him to simplistically elevate nature over culture, Hawthorne's experiences at the Old Manse progressively teach him that nature will not remain paradisiacal without laborious intervention that balances his benign neglect of the house itself.

Hawthorne's was first forced to wrestle with the complications of decay after the onset of spring. Typically, Hawthorne produced literature for the marketplace during the time of year when

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[345] One might even imagine that in the face of revolutionary nostalgia in Concord, these humble, but tenacious mosses assert their representative capacity. Adding vegetable votes to a nascent democracy, they assert causes: for decayed timbers! against revolutionary triumphalism! By influencing material futures and mediating memory, they silently draw attention to the range of other voiceless but resistant actors denied political representation in the Early Republic. These are anthropomorphic whimsies, of course—but whimsies in the spirit of Jane Bennett and other new materialists, who ask us to attend to the ways that self-conscious anthropomorphism can push back against anthropocentrism.

[346] Desilvey writes, "Cultural amnesia does not necessarily follow from material erasure, and encroaching absence may paradoxically facilitate the persistence of memory and significance" (5).

the soil lay fallow and blanketed in snow. His first winter with Sophia was no exception, and as Nathaniel wrote stories, the Hawthorne's common journal lay largely dormant. The following spring, entries began in earnest shortly before planting. According to their notes, this was the first independent attempt at gardening for either Nathaniel or Sophia, and the status of their agricultural experiment dominates the journal for much of the year. In contrast to their blissful enjoyment of the unearned harvest during the previous fall, spring immediately caused Nathaniel to lament the necessity of actual labor. In April, while contemplating his failure to clear the garden of decayed growths before the last year's snowfall, he complained, "it is a pity that the world cannot be really be made over anew, every spring" (*Ordinary Mysteries* 197). The same situation appears in the sketch "Buds and Bird Voices," where "One of the first things that strikes the attention when the white sheet of winter is withdrawn is the neglect and disarray that lay hidden beneath it. Nature is not cleanly, according to our prejudices." In the fictional sketch, Hawthorne goes on to describe the mess in significant detail, focusing on "autumn's withered leaves … decayed branches … black and rotten … dried bean vines, the brown stalks of the asparagus bed, and melancholy old cabbages" (*Mosses* 118).

The salient difference between the two accounts lies in what follows. In the journal, Hawthorne describes how he was forced to deal with the tangled mess in his garden the next day. In other words, he begrudgingly curates decay in the service of new growth. Engaging in "boundary work," he carts away certain decaying materials as unfit for the garden's confines while sorting and preserving others for compost. Such labor reaffirms the garden as a middle space where the given-ness of the natural world expresses itself not only as that which is ungovernably wild (the "decayed branches" blown in from trees), but also as the obtrusively present remnants of the cultivated (stalks, husks, and vines). The garden is not enclosed by a wall that admits of no passage, no immigration; instead, both gardener and ecosystem elements (from pollinating bees to windblown branches) cross and re-cross its permeable boundaries in a mutually laborious interplay between wildness and cultivation. Both leftover and intrusive materials must be removed, albeit only temporarily, because they will return in the form of life-giving compost. The gardener's curation cannot be merely static preservation; in order to enable growth, she must alternate between clearing out agents of decay and inviting them in, in curated, composting mixtures. Because of the garden's *necessarily* hybrid combination of the planned and the given, such boundary work may be essential, but it also essentially undoes *absolute* distinctions between the natural and the cultural.

Although Hawthorne reluctantly engages in such curatorial work, the arduous process led him to write, and even underline "I hate all labor" in this journal. However, in the wish-fulfillment of "Buds and Bird Voices," rather than either enact or disavow labor, Hawthorne strives to whisk the material mess into an airier allegorical mode. He shifts registers: decaying branches now lie not upon his doorstep but upon "the soil of thought and in the garden of the heart." They are simply "the ideas and feelings that we have done with." But Hawthorne's allegorizing gestures stumble. Hardly done with the melancholy remnants after all, he is forced to admit that "There is no wind strong enough to sweep them away." Even here, he tries once again to swerve from the physical to the metaphysical: instead of asking "What is to be done about these branches?" he querulously cries, "What mean they?" Finding no recourse, he is thrust back upon his old Edenic fantasy: "Sweet must have been the spring time of Eden, when no earlier year had strewn its decay upon the virgin turf." He accuses himself: "O thou murmurer, it is out of the very wantonness of such a life that thou feignest these idle lamentations," and then turns to blanket denial of reality: "There is no decay" (*Mosses* 118-19).

Hawthorne's claim that "There is no decay" is a religious statement, a claim that God will eventually regenerate all. But in a sketch that at times aspires towards Thoreauvian attention to the

details of seasonal transitions and natural cycles (manifestations of the physical world), the gesture feels both rote and desperate. Throwing up his hands, he concedes that decay will not simply curate itself, and so invokes God as a transcendent gardener—a composter so efficient that decay becomes a mere illusion of the earthly state. Indeed, as Hawthorne grows increasingly frustrated throughout the passage, it seems that the garden mess represents less something *within* Hawthorne's allegory than those disorderly parts of the material world that are difficult to assimilate into allegory—that exceed categorization. In other words, as a result of Hawthorne's willful and wishful elision of the necessity of earthly labor, he is forced into obdurate *authorial* labor, producing extravagant appeals and allegories.

In many other regards, "The Old Manse" and "Buds and Bird Voices" minimize the actuality of labor that the journals reveal. In reality, Hawthorne hardly ceased to "murmur" discontentedly. In the summer of 1843, he recorded a "continual warfare with the squash bugs," and an "absolute pleasure in taking vengeance on them" (*Ordinary Mysteries* 229). And while he continued to say that the garden "flourishes like Eden itself," he claimed that "Adam could hardly have been doomed to contend with such a tremendous banditti of weeds" (241). Conversely, in "The Old Manse" sketch, the narrator claims that "an hour or two of morning labor was all that [the garden] required," but that it provided hours of pleasure as he "used to visit and revisit it, a dozen times a day, and stand in deep contemplation over my vegetable progeny, with a love that nobody could share nor conceive of who had never taken part in the process of creation" (*Mosses* 11).

While it is impossible to verify whether Hawthorne really spent only an hour or two each day with his hands in the soil, the difference in tone is striking. The gendered implications are even more troubling. Nathaniel and Sophia intended for the garden to be a symbolic expression of their marriage, resulting in yardwork taking on an uncommon emotional charge. They quickly fell into a gendered distribution of labor: Sophia tended the flower garden, while Nathaniel tried to nurture the "kind of fruit that will satisfy earthly appetites" (*Ordinary Mysteries* 195). In the earthly vegetable/spiritual flower dichotomy, Nathaniel and Sophia etherealize the gender *and class* politics that Nathaniel later bifurcated in *The House of the Seven Gables*, where Holgrave is keeper of the "plebeian vegetables" (87) and Phoebe nurtures the "aristocratic flowers" (93). Despite this clear separation of roles, the journals indicate that Sophia frequently labored in the garden. But in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Nathaniel never mentions Sophia's labor. Instead he constructs a fantasy of male reproduction and spontaneous generation. "Childless men," Hawthorne writes, "if they would know something of the bliss of paternity, should plant a seed" (*Mosses* 11).

While Hawthorne's *erasure* of female labor hardly has the dastardly consequences of Rappaccini's "lurid," poisonous mixture of control over nature and control over female bodies or Chillingworth's gathering of poisonous herbs, the gaps between journal and tales still put Hawthorne in uncomfortable proximity with some of his less reputable characters. In the journal, Nathaniel occasionally describes Sophia doing his work raking leaves in the yard, rather than simply attending to the feminized flowerbeds. Moreover, Sophia's journal entries contain a tender admonition that her "dearest husband… should not have to labour … with the hands" because he is a "seraph come to observe Nature & men in a still repose, without being obliged to exert thyself *in reproduction or clearing away old rubbish*" (*Ordinary Mysteries* 203; emphasis added). Sophia's remark suggests that Nathaniel's appeals to the "higher" realms of allegory allowed him to worm his way out of at least some of the composting.

Noting the Burkean strains in Hawthorne's fear of uprooting, depiction of elections as half-serious traumatic displacements, and distaste for patriotic monuments, one could plausibly argue that Hawthorne's pattern of labor-phobia and labor-denial extended to a denial of the "work" of revolution. Recent accounts critical of Hawthorne's conservatism, moderation, or quietism more

or less charge him with enjoying the fruits of the tree of liberty planted and nourished with the blood of others, all while imagining himself in a paradise without a past. But Hawthorne's vision of himself and Sophia as a "New Adam and Eve" was always satirical, always a wishful projection that he toyed with only to undermine in the end. Far from truly imagining himself existing without a past, Hawthorne capaciously internalized the belief Faulkner later succinctly expressed: that the past was never really dead, or even past.

More broadly, the single-sided critique (or in some cases valuation) that reads Hawthorne as an anti-revolutionary conservative tends to ignore key issues. It is true that works such as "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and "Fire Worship" reflect deep anxieties that movements for liberty might descend into lurid, carnivalesque conflagrations. In *The Scarlet Letter*, such concerns take on urgency in light of the recent European Revolutions of 1848. But as *Grandfather's Chair* (Hawthorne's children's history of America) makes clear, Hawthorne celebrated the American Revolution itself. His principle concern was not that the American Revolution was misguided. Instead, he worried that certain *modes of remembering* it not only downplayed the realities of historical violence but were fundamentally *anti*-historical. He feared that revolutionary monuments would permanently arrest the meaning of the American society by treating the Revolution as a decisive break that freed Americans not only from British rule, but also from the bonds of the past. For Hawthorne, patriotic monumentalism and electoral triumphalism repressed foundational colonial and Puritan legacies; in fact, everything that occurred before 1775. As a result, the uncritical embrace of to-the-victor-goes-the-spoils electoral politics threatened not only the return of sublimated revolutionary violence, but also a palimpsestic society that believed it could create itself anew every four years, ritualizing the erasure of history in the name of revolutionary memory.

Hawthorne's fear of a society that disregards its own history may make him seem more thoroughly Burkean than he truly was. As Colgan compellingly argues at some length, Hawthorne not only praised Burke, but seems to have shared his fundamental sense that the American revolution was *conservative in character*: that Americans' were justified in pushing the status of democratic rights forward because they simultaneously defended a tradition of colonial and English rights. But where Colgan praises Hawthorne as a thoroughly Burkean conservative, I tend to concur with Swann's recent argument that Hawthorne sought to balance his belief in the vitality of tradition with subtle but focused commitments to the American Revolution *itself* (though not patriotic revolutionary triumphalism). In his criticism of readings that treat Hawthorne as an arch-conservative, Swann includes a quote from Hawthorne's nineteenth-century critic George Parsons Lathrop, who situates Hawthorne as a true "revolutionist" in that he unites the word's original senses of motion and cyclicality: "Hawthorne's repose is the acme of motion; and though turning on an axis of conservatism, the radicalism of his mind is irresistible; he is one of the most powerful because unsuspected revolutionists of the world" (Lathrop 330).

Lathrop's deft navigation of paradox helps make sense of Hawthorne's attitudes towards revolutionary tradition beyond "The Custom House" and "The Old Manse." More "revolutionist" than "revolutionary," Hawthorne based his politics on a belief that what goes around comes around. He was skeptical of contemporary reform projects not so much because they proposed profound changes, but because of the reformers' presentism and focus on the future to the exclusion of the historical past. Swann argues that alongside his commitments to tradition, Hawthorne is "equally aware that history is something that can be made, which can, or at least should, take new directions" (3). Swann gets something key right in the subordinate clause: namely, that Hawthorne—who believed that human nature evolved very little over time (hence the necessity of studying history)—was more confident that history *should* "take new directions" than that it *can*. Burke, a practicing statesman who saw rapid upheaval as a dangerous disruption of complex systems, feared that the reverse was true: he believed that history was in *imminent* danger

of taking "new directions," but he felt that it probably *should not* do so.

A brief contrast between the environmental dimensions of Burke and Hawthorne's thought helps to reveal the stakes of the differences between their positions. Hawthorne's writing is far more frequently attuned to nature than Burke's, but with just a few exceptions, his work lacks Burke's sense for interconnected proto-ecological fragility.[347] He is also more likely to romanticize the natural world. But with a less developed ecological sensibility, Hawthorne was also less at risk of believing that a complex, interconnected but profoundly unequal social system was necessarily a harmonious system. As a result, he was—at least at times—more open to radical change, *so long as it acknowledges the existence and weight of the past*. This is nowhere clearer than in his reaction to the renovation of the Old Manse. He begins with Burkean objections to the uprooting of accreted growth that signify age and tradition. But he builds towards the exclamation that "the hand that renovates is always more sacrilegious than that which destroys." It is hard to imagine a more un-Burkean sentence; even if Burke might have been capable of uttering most of the words in a moment of extreme agitation, he simply *could not* have included the "always." But for Hawthorne, a demonstrable act of violent levelling may be preferable to a renovation project that makes it appear as though the aged is new.

As covered above, the destruction of the Old Manse is not Hawthorne's first choice, of course. He prefers moss-mediated decay. Gradual, planned obsolescence or curated decay may seem less radical than destruction, but it, too, constitutes a significant departure from Burke's thought. However much Burke experimented with recipes for compost and ambivalently embraced agricultural reform, he seems to have had little room for decay *as a principle of political or social renewal.* Tellingly, his favored images for tradition were either strapping cattle under a healthy oak or gleaming chivalric relics. By contrast, Hawthorne feared a lack of decay—or processes of ineffective/incomplete decay—almost as much as revolutionary excesses. This is why he expresses as much anxiety about the soil exhaustion that afflicts his family tree as about his metaphoric beheading after the election of 1848. *Both* afflictions eject him from a position of relative comfort, forcing him to move. Only composting allows a way to revivify the present by breaking down old materials. For Hawthorne, it is less a practice than a *disposition towards history,* and particularly the paradoxical question of revolutionary legacy. While Hawthorne's creation of a compostable past satisfies the Burkean dictum of refusing to treat the past as refuse, it also and equally refuses to treat the past as relic. Such a disposition may initially appear conservative and anti-revolutionary, but it *contains* revolution's destructive energies (both in the sense of neutralizing *and* conserving) before transforming them into new growths that maintain an essential, chemical connection to the past.

Parables of Bodily Decay and Un-decay

Hawthorne was hardly the first or only American writer to frame the work of historical memory through an ironically inflected account of monuments. In Washington Irving's *The History of New York*, Diedrich Knickerbocker bookends the narrative with discussions of decay. At the opening of the narrative, Knickerbocker claims that the historian's job is to find disintegrating documentary "memorials" and "gather together their scattered fragments as they rot" as he "rears a triumphal monument, to transmit their renown to all succeeding time" (7). Knickerbocker's

[347] The exceptions are at times strikingly powerful. For instance, in his notebooks, Hawthorne mused that "perhaps if we could penetrate Nature's secrets we should find that what we call weeds are more essential to the well-being of the world than the most precious fruit or rains" (qtd. in Milder 64).

approach seems to be the polar opposite of Hawthorne's preference for monuments in a state of decay. In fact, Knickerbocker's triumphantly monumental moment is characteristically hyperbolic and self-centered. It is not entirely clear whether the "renown" being "transmitted" to the future ultimately belongs to the author or inheres in the archival fragments themselves. By contrast, at the end of the *History*—which is as much a mock-autobiography of the historian's ego as a faithful rendering of the past—Knickerbocker is forced to confront the inevitability of his own death. Instead of portraying the work of history as building monuments up out of ashes and fragments, he now appeals to the human body's capacity to serve as compost. "Haply this frail compound of dust, which while alive may have given birth to naught but unprofitable weeds, may form a humble sod of the valley, from whence shall spring many a sweet wild flower, to adorn my beloved island of Manna-hata!" (348). In Knickerbocker's sudden humility topos, the work of history that the reader has just completed is reduced to an "unprofitable weed." Real redemption flowers from the fleeting materiality of the body, from transient disintegration rather than monumentality.

Irving's two models of dealing with decay and monumentality help illuminate the differences between composting and Claude Levi-Strauss's famous process of bricolage. Both deal with fragments and remnants, and both create something new. But where the bricoleur gathers and immediately starts to *build* a work of art (going from refuse to monument), the composter gathers in order to first break down further before *growing* something new. Because she does not move immediately into assemblage, the composter dwells longer in the rebellious moment of fragmentation, seeing it as a good in and of itself. But her rebelliousness knows limits: she works with more constraints than the bricoleur. Where the bricoleur builds whatever their mind imagines with the materials at hand, the composter is hemmed in by nature—by the peculiar chemistry of soil, by the fact that seeds cannot enact becoming in infinite combinations but bear a genetic destiny. The composter's act of transformation is also more complete. She prizes the flow of *energy* and of atomic recombination, not the preservation of old forms in semi-recognizable shards. When the object one contemplates composting is a human body—particularly one's own—an act of letting go is necessary. The process requires a kind of extreme humility and openness to change, a mode of surrender and absorption entirely different in kind than the bricoleur's efforts to reassemble the fragments of a shattered world in their own image.

By giving us a grandiose bricoleur who ends up contemplating his own body turned to compost, Knickerbocker signals that the act of writing the *History* has led to personal growth. And yet, he hardly intends to be taken seriously. The extremity of his humility topos strikes one all wrong. If the book we read was just "unprofitable weeds," did we waste our time in reading it? If he explicitly tells us that the "sod" his body creates will be "humble," is he actually humble or does he want credit for being *superlatively* humble? The redemption is too glib and complete ("*many*" a "*sweet*" wild flower?). To put it in a nutshell, Knickerbocker humblebrags. By making this humblebrag transparent, *Irving* suggests that his narrator's moral development has been far less complete than the actual metamorphosis of a human corpse turning into compost and nourishing a flower. To belabor the obvious, the passage is, in short, a satire. But to be satirized, you have to make it big to begin with. With this over-the-top, under-the-soil ending, Irving backhandedly testifies to the *ubiquitous convention* of redemptive images of the human body *as* compost in early-nineteenth-century literature. However, the result is not entirely deflationary. By structurally making the image of a compostable human body the converse of a historical monument, he suggests that the compostable corpse may be much *more* than an overused cliché from graveside poetry and sentimental literature. In a comical book about the ways in which history is *made* as much by the historian as the historical actor, the compostable body's *unmaking* actually represents a particular kind of historical remembrance: an anti-monumental historical mode that locates meaning in the process of dissolution.

Building on Irving, this section considers three narratives that more or less seriously explore the consequences of decaying or un-decaying human bodies: Hawthorne's short story "Roger Malvin's Burial" (1832), Robert Montgomery Bird's novel *Sheppard Lee* (1836), and Herman Melville's short novel *Israel Potter* (1854-5). Anticipating Marx's surprising late-career interest in compost, the *un*-composted body follows Marx's famous formula in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: it appears first as tragedy (in "Roger Malvin's Burial") then as farce (in *Sheppard Lee*), and finally (in *Israel Potter*), as a vehicle to mediate tensions between picaresque comedy and bleak historical drama. Collectively, these texts reflect a period where compostable bodies could be overused romantic tropes, metaphors for historical change, or even macabre actualities—according to widespread reports, farmers stole soldier's corpses from Austerlitz and Waterloo to fertilize their fields (James 128).

Despite these variable possibilities, patterns emerge in these parables of decay and un-decay. Early in each story, a farmer's poor soil stewardship intersects with broader patterns of historical change to force him into a life of agitated mobility. In all three cases, diminished soil fertility results in unburied, restless bodies (both living ones and troublingly mobile corpses). Such narratives alternately instantiate and parody Adams and Madison's fears that a nation without intensive agricultural practices would devolve into a realm of rootless individualism devoid of intergenerational continuity. Each account ends at much the same place as Knickerbocker in *The History of New York*: contemplating (more or less directly, more or less seriously, more or less symbolically) human bodies' utility *as* compost.

The title of "Roger Malvin's Burial" is deliberately misleading. In this story, which Hawthorne first published in 1832 and then reprinted in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, the central problem is that Roger Malvin is *not* properly interred. The sketch begins in 1725: after a battle with Natives, mortally wounded patrician Roger Malvin and his younger compatriot Reuben Bourne repose on a "bed of withered oak leaves" underneath a "mass of granite … not unlike a gigantic gravestone, upon which the veins seemed to form an inscription in forgotten characters" (*Mosses* 269). Roger tells Reuben to leave him to die in the open air and Reuben resists. However, Roger persuades Reuben both by claiming that he may be able to find help and by portraying the granite massif as a fit "monument" and the "withered leaves" as a substitute for an earthy covering (*Mosses* 270). Before the younger man departs, Roger gives Reuben his blessing to marry his daughter Dorcas, while also enjoining him to "return to this wild rock, and lay my bones in the grave, and say a prayer over them" (*Mosses* 274). To mark the spot and his vow, Reuben ties a bloody handkerchief to the top bough of a "young and vigorous sapling" (269).

The second half of the story explores the consequences of leaving Malvin's body unburied. Reuben weds Dorcas but fails to return and perform the promised "rites of sepulture" (*Mosses* 274). After initially lying to Dorcas and claiming that he buried her father, Reuben's "fear of losing her affection, the dread of universal scorn forbade him to rectify this falsehood" (*Mosses* 277). Eighteen years later, Reuben, Dorcas, and their son Cyrus are forced to move west into the forest. Finding a likely spot for settlement, Reuben and Cyrus split up while hunting. Reuben gradually recognizes that he is beneath the same granite outcropping where he left Roger Malvin's body. Thinking he perceives a deer, Reuben fires into the undergrowth. Hearing the shot, Dorcas comes upon her husband beneath the same tree (formerly the "vigorous sapling," now fully grown) where he cradles their unwittingly slain son. As she lets out a shriek, a branch from the tree comes crashing down upon the three of them, potentially burying them along with "Roger Malvin's bones" (*Mosses* 286).

Like *The Scarlet Letter* or "The Minister's Black Veil," "Roger Malvin's Burial" clearly functions as a psychological allegory for the soul-sapping consequences of carrying a guilty secret, but Hawthorne's description of environmental details gives the narrative much of its distinctive potency. He narrates the surroundings of the "mass of granite" meticulously, noting the presence of

an "uptorn tree" and ubiquity of "oak and other hard-wood trees" that "supplied the place of pines, which were the usual growth of the land" (*Mosses* 269). It is essential to Hawthorne's purposes that the trees be deciduous because "fallen" leaves function as one of the text's key symbols. Hawthorne mentions them incessantly, almost always reminding the reader that they are "dry" or "withered." Failing to be absorbed into the soil as moist humus, they form a crackly "bed" above the surface. At the end of the story, these desiccated leaves find a corollary in the oak tree that has grown from the "vigorous sapling." Though the "middle and lower branches were in luxuriant life, and an excess of vegetation had fringed the trunk almost to the ground …[and] the very topmost bough" where Reuben earlier tied the bloody handkerchief "was withered, sapless, and utterly dead" (*Mosses* 283).

The "withered" "topmost bough" of the oak tree connects this fatal arboreal specimen to the Hawthorne family tree in "The Custom House," where Nathaniel himself figures as the "degenerate" "topmost bough." But whereas the Hawthorne family tree diminishes because of the Hawthorne family's failure to geographically uproot themselves from the land where they live and are buried, the withered branch signifies the uninterred presence of Roger Malvin's shriveled corpse. Instead of reflecting a failure of transplantation, it reflects a failure to compost the parental body. Left to dehydrate along with the withered leaves, the corpse cannot provide the earth with matter capable of sustaining future generations of plant life. Instead, it weighs on Reuben's conscience "like a serpent gnawing in his heart" that "transformed him into a sad and downcast yet irritable man." Hawthorne segues directly from this description of Reuben's guilt-ridden transformation into an account of his agricultural mismanagement. In marrying Dorcas, he has every opportunity to succeed. He inherits a "farm, under older cultivation, larger, and better stocked than most of the frontier establishments." But as a "neglectful husbandman" his lands "deteriorated" even as his neighbors' farms thrived (*Mosses* 278).

The consequence of Reuben's failure to properly mix compost into the soil of his farm and of his failure to bury his father-in-law is restlessness: a restless ghost, a restless mind, and a restless family. When Hawthorne portrays Roger Malvin's impending demise, he describes how "Death would come like the slow approach of a corpse, stealing gradually towards him through the forest" (*Mosses* 275). Counterintuitively, instead of death creeping up on Malvin and leaving *his* corpse inert, Hawthorne portrays the "corpse" in the passage as in motion. Even though the corpse in motion is not Roger's, it still hints at the ways in which his remains are unsettled by remaining in the open air. The corpse's figurative restlessness finds a more literal corollary in the Bourne family's flight from the exhausted soil. Hawthorne notes that Reuben and Cyrus proceed into the wilderness ahead of Dorcas "for the purpose of selecting a tract of land and felling and burning the timber" (*Mosses* 279). Reuben imagines creating a permanent settlement where "his far descendants would mourn over the venerated dust" he leaves behind after his death (*Mosses* 280). But by taking pains to specify that Reuben uses the extractive backwoods method of agricultural settlement that begins with burning the trees, Hawthorne suggests that he has not learned his lesson. The family would inevitably be forced to move again.

Hawthorne ultimately presents a symbolic alternative to the tale's many accounts of withered un-decay. When Reuben, refugee from his own agricultural incompetence, encounters the "withered topmost bough," the narrator asks, "Whose guilt had blasted it?" (*Mosses* 238). The answer to the question should be self-evident: Reuben's guilt is to blame. But if the question is redundant, the word "blasted" does work as a pun in two different regards. First, it is here that Reuben unintentionally "blasts" his son Cyrus with a fatal shot. Second, the pun draws attention to two other "blasted"—or fallen—trees in close textual and geographical proximity to the withered

branch.[348] The first is an "uptorn tree" with "earthy roots" next to the oak. The second is a "moss-covered trunk of a large fallen tree" that Dorcas uses to create a "sylvan table" and surround with "seats of mouldering wood, covered with leaves" while Reuben and Cyrus go hunting. Far from *reproducing* Hawthorne's symbol of dry, dead wood, these decaying specimens serve as foils. The first fallen tree's salient characteristic is its "earthy roots." It has what Roger Malvin lacks: an attachment to the soil even after death. It even gestures towards an open space (the hollow left vacated by the upturned root-well) where Malvin *could* have been buried.

Meanwhile, rather than creating an ad-hoc domestic space in the burned-out clearing, Dorcas chooses a moss-covered log within the forest. Hawthorne uses loaded language to describe her table and chairs: "mouldering" signifies not just another mode of obsolescence, but a synonym for rotting. Contextually, it suggests a return to the soil: the opposite of "withering" above ground. For once, Hawthorne's leaves are not dry: by using them to cushion the "mouldering" seats, Dorcas brings them into contact with moist agents of decay. Placing the fertile mother within a grove of regenerative decomposition, Hawthorne hints at a more sustainable alternative to the associations in the text between masculinity and dry barrenness, burning, deforestation, enforced uprooting, and failures to compost. However, Dorcas never has a chance to symbolically validate Humphry Davy's theory that humus—moist, decomposing organic matter—is a powerful agent of renewal. Instead, after the sound of the shot rings out, Dorcas is drawn into the desiccated masculine realm of hunters and guilty secrets. Reinforcing the connections between male violence and parched un-decay once more, Hawthorne notes that the "muzzle" of Reuben's discharged gun "rested upon the withered leaves" (*Mosses* 285). Then, with the sudden fall of the withered branch, the family's three generations fatefully collapse into a single heap.

In this tragic climax, Hawthorne leaves room for ambiguity: it seems likely, but not assured, that Dorcas is dead. Reuben's prayer at the story's conclusion signifies that his "sin was expiated," but it is not clear whether the words are his own dying gasps or the beginning of a solitary, sterile life. By watering the grave, however, his copious tears offer moisture that makes composting possible at last. They signify that his family might finally rest in peace. Those tears, which "gushed out, like water from a rock," connect this would-be patriarch to Moses: another wanderer in the wilderness who is punished for his impatient extraction from a terrestrial resource by being denied access to the fertile valleys of lasting settlement (*Mosses* 286). Moses strikes the rock in anger and is left behind; Reuben strikes out for the frontier and loses his family: how striking, then, that in Hawthorne's parable of un-decay, the American promised land is what was left behind rather than what lies ahead. It is not the extractive backwoods farm, but the intensive, well-composted Eastern estate (which Reuben's poisonous secret about an unburied body made him too distracted to manage properly).

Considered in isolation, my interpretation's use of compost as a sort of key to unlock hidden secrets of "Roger Malvin's Burial" may seem altogether too tidy. The tale is much more than an allegorical representation of soil degradation, and Hawthorne almost certainly did not *set out* intending to compose a story somehow primarily "about" the failure to compost, only to bury that message deeply enough that it has received little critical attention to this point. The largely overlooked importance of agricultural mismanagement within "Roger Malvin's Burial" matters not because it defines the narrative's central meaning, but because it helps draw our attention to a pattern between texts. In an agricultural nation, questions about land use were inescapable. Hawthorne's story reflects the extent to which environmental degradation followed by moves Westward was a major concern within the public consciousness during the antebellum era. American

[348] While the word "blasted" most often designates those trees struck by lightning, it can also refer to any that have fallen by natural causes.

storytellers certainly did not create the "Young Man From the Provinces" archetype, but it is surely worth noting that so many of the young (and not so young men) they depict wandering away from rural spaces leave not purely in search of adventure, but *as a consequence* of exhausted soil. In these cases, mobility is not primarily associated with opportunity, but with necessity. *Collectively*, by virtue of their repetition of key plot mechanics, these narratives function as parables, even though each also contains elements that resist reduction to allegory.

Both the elements of parable and the passages that resist the simplifying logic of parable are heavily accentuated in Robert Montgomery Bird's 1836 novel *Sheppard Lee*: another narrative set in motion by agricultural mismanagement. Because the novel has been subject of a robust recent revival, a brief summary will suffice. The work focuses on bankrupt farmer Sheppard Lee, whose search for Captain Kidd's treasure is interrupted when he suddenly dies. This ending *begins* his wanderings. Metempsychosis follows: Lee's soul/spirit/mind/persona journeys sequentially through six bodies. The novel explores the exact nature of post-corporeal identity at some length, largely concluding that material embodiment is as determinative as any immaterial manifestation of the self. Inhabiting social positions ranging from a rich miser to a Quaker philanthropist to a Virginia slave, Lee eventually discovers that his original body has been preserved and exhibited by a diabolical German grave robber and scientist (Dr. Feuerteufel). Lee revives and re-inhabits his own corpse before returning to his farm, where he reemerges as a changed man.[349] Throughout, the narrative purports to teach relatively simplistic lessons. Each section begins with Lee inhabiting a new body of an individual who seems to live a life free from care and worry; it ends when he discovers that each new life has drawbacks which outweigh those of his previous situation. The circular pattern ends only when he is finally satisfied to just be himself and enjoy his quotidian life as a farmer.

In addition to the conventional moral lesson ("just be yourself"), in more material terms, Sheppard Lee's journey teaches him the value and necessity of intensive agricultural labor. It may seem like Sheppard Lee is punished for making a sort of Faustian bargain to find buried treasure, but his poor record as a farmer is the reason he needs to quickly extract wealth from the ground to begin with. Early in the book, he presents a downwardly mobile, riches-to-rags narrative (a surprisingly frequent trope during the period) as he fritters away his father's sizeable estate. He describes his agricultural mismanagement as a combination of lazy neglect resulting in *degenerative* decay ("the trees being old, rotten, worm-eaten") and overworking that causes the soil to be "entirely worn out and empoverished" (Bird 17). At the end of the novel, he returns and finds that his sister and brother-in-law have restored part of the estate by "building fences, banking meadows, spreading marl, and so on" (415). When he repossesses the property, Lee concludes: "My estate is small, and it may be that it will never increase. I am, however, content with it; and content is the secret of all enjoyment. I am not ashamed to labour in my fields. On the contrary, I have learned to be grateful to Providence that it ordained me to a lot of toil" (424). In Lee's summation of what he has learned, the element of parable could hardly be clearer. In practice, Americans had a great deal of trouble learning these lessons and implementing intensive agricultural practices, suggesting that Bird could have intended it to be taken seriously.

However, the book contains a great deal—both tonally and in terms of plot development—that complicates the status of parable itself. In fact, Lee's utterly conventional, moralistic tone frustrates because it seems to all-too-neatly foreclose the novel's subversively comic charms. As Christopher Looby observes, *Sheppard Lee* "is a satire, not a sermon; it teases and baffles its readers, producing a tonic uncertainty and palpable frustration rather than a satisfying lesson" (xlii). In terms of compost, Feuerteufel's (or Fire-Devil's) diabolical anatomical exhibition performs some of this

[349] Bird presents a second possible explanation; namely, that Sheppard Lee was mentally ill and imagined the entire series of adventures while held in containment by his family.

destabilizing work. On the one hand, by body-snatching Lee's remains, he literalizes the problem of a mobile corpse that is not allowed to decay. On the other hand, Feurteufel's traveling show grants Sheppard Lee a prominence and utility (as an object of scientific inquiry) he never achieved in his many lives or his many deaths. This gently macabre humor shades the happy ending: Lee is happy to be allowed both to compost (upon his farm) and look forward to a death in which his body composts (under his farm).

More pointedly, the book presents a shocking, satirical plan for national agricultural renewal that complicates Lee's complacent absorption in labor upon his renovated estate. In a rollicking proposal, Lee begins by complaining that corpses are "consigned to miserable holes in the earth" where they are "of no service to any person or persons whatsoever, the young doctors only excepted." Computing that around 30 million people die each year worldwide, he asks, "what benefit might be derived from a judicious disposition of this mountain of mortality" and suggests that

> The great mass of mankind might be made to subserve the purpose for which nature designated them, namely—to enrich the soil from which they draw their sustenance. According to the economical Chinese method, each of these bodies could be converted into five tons of excellent manure; and the whole number would therefore produce one hundred and fifty million of tons; of which one hundred and fifty thousand, being their due proportion, would fall to the share of the United States of America, enabling our farmers, in the course of ten or twelve years, to double the value of their lands. This, therefore, would be a highly profitable way of disposing of the mass of mankind. Such a disposition of their bodies would prove especially advantageous among American cultivators in divers districts, as a remedy against bad agriculture, and as the only means of handing down their fields in good order to their descendants. (Bird 228)

Lee's plan serves as a foil to Feuerteufel's: each seeks to make corpses publicly useful. Bird begins the passage with mathematical calculations and appeals to exotic practices ("the economical Chinese method") that give the outlandish proposal a faint air of plausibility. He also refers to English farmers' use of soldiers' bodies at Waterloo as fertilizer in order to establish historical precedent.[350] However, in Bird's novel, the satirical edge is buried no deeper than the bodies that farmers are supposed to spade into the soil. Lee invokes the patriotic "American" discourse that associates soil stewardship with intergenerational continuity, but cleverly reverses its political valence. The clear implication is that parents would "hand down their fields in good order" only because their "descendants" would dismember them and redistribute their corpses as fertilizer. In this grand new agrarian order, inheritance and revolutionary patricide (or at least posthumous guillotining) become virtually indistinguishable.

As the passage continues, the subject of Bird's parody shifts from agricultural practices to the putative association of agrarian*ism* and democracy. The hyperbolic claim that increasing soil fertility is the highest "purpose for which nature designated" human beings parodies Jeffersonian assertions that farmers fulfilled some unique democratic destiny. Elevating his pitch further, Lee proposes *requiring* "all politicians and office-holders, from the vice-president down to the county collector" to surrender "their mortal flesh" so that they can finally be "of some use to their

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[350] In all fairness, the idea of composting human bodies may *not* be inherently absurd. As I am concluding this chapter (in May of 2019), the New York Times reports that Washington has become the first state to legalize composting of human remains, citing environmental benefits (avoiding the emissions of burning or the chemicals of embalming) as well as the possibility of "return[ing] the soil to loved ones to be spread on a garden or to help grow a tree," for the small fee of $5000.

country." The president is to be "boiled down to soap, according to the plan recommended by the French chymists, to be used by his successor in scouring the constitution and the minds of the people." (There is the French Revolution, popping up again!) And the rich are to be turned into candles so that "their bones might be made into rings and whistles, for infant democrats to cut their teeth upon" (Bird 229). As Lee's rhetoric escalates, his proposal becomes less modest and more Swiftian than it initially appeared. Through his imagery of transmuted mortal remains, Bird gives Hamlet's famous dictum that "A man can fish with the worm that ate a king, and then eat the fish that he catches with that worm" an American, democratic turn. No fishing is necessary; vice-presidents are turned straight into vegetables. Dead bodies are to be redistributed as fertilizer on the basis of strict numeric equality. So many acres per farmer; so many compostable corpses per farm. In the process, Lee reveals the skeletal structure of Jeffersonian agrarianism: a nation of equal freehold farmers becomes a nation of fair and equitable quasi-cannibalism, where even innocent babies cut their teeth on rich men's bones.

Despite the seemingly reactionary implications of Bird's over-enthusiasm for composting human bodies, the passage does not truly *undo* Sheppard Lee's piously Jeffersonian valuation of agricultural labor at the end of the novel. Nor do the two passages—and two ways of thinking about agricultural reform—sit alongside and balance one another, like the family tree and the electoral decapitations in "The Custom House." Instead, as a committed satirist (rather than a polemicist who uses comedy to reify his worldview), Bird's interest is in *destabilizing* all easy pieties, not presenting a particular agenda. He *erodes* our faith in one-size-fits-all solutions. The effect of his work is to destabilize our ability to see intensive agricultural reform as a utopian democratic project. He demands that readers pause and question. Bird does not necessarily think composting is unnecessary or that pious labor is incapable of effecting moral reform on an individual basis. Such methods serve as adequate solutions for Sheppard Lee's ailments, but Bird ridicules the idea that they constitute a singular, all-encompassing cure for American health, happiness, and equality.

At the same time that Bird uses satire to reveal that reality is more complex than reformers imagine (a fundamentally Burkean gesture), he labors to show that satire itself contains a corrosive structural logic that renders it equally unable to reflect all the world's complexities. He concludes the chapter on compostable bodies by noting that it has been a "digression" disconnected from the narrative's development, calling into question whether its whimsical excess actually connects to Lee's broader journey. He admits that "this subject, though often reflected on, I have had no leisure to digest properly" (Bird 230). The framing of incomplete digestion is telling. Adopting a new materialist lens, we can see that digestion functions as an internal metabolic process that parallels the external processes by which composting bodies are decomposed. In each case, the difference between human body and alien body/environment "gradually dissipates" and eventually "vanishes altogether" through a series of chemical reactions (Bennett 49).

In fact, the concentrated, corrosive satiric excesses of the compostable bodies chapter *cannot* be assimilated into the rest of the narrative because they would eat away at its ability to signify seriously at any point. Capable of breaking down something grandiose (the pretensions of agricultural reform and democratic agrarianism) and exposing its artificiality, these acids catalyze most quickly when exposed to *un*reality. Left to their own devices, they would eat away at the real until it too was rendered unrecognizable. Bird can be *over the top* within this chapter only because the satirical forces are *contained within* some segregated recess of the narrative's gut. They are not merely undigested; they are undigestible agents of digestion. That the satire in Bird's lampoon of compost behaves like a composter may suggest something broader about the mode's structure—or lack thereof. Like the predatory shape-shifter in *The Thing* (1982), unadulterated satire's mode of destruction depends upon both distorting and reproducing the object, lifeform, *or form of life* it attempts to erase.

In *Israel Potter* (1854-55), Herman Melville offers another parable of decay, but instead of reproducing Bird's concentrated satirical excesses or Hawthorne's tragic intonations he presents a picaresque comedy that shifts into a dark historical drama, only to be partially redeemed in the end by a compostable body. *Israel Potter* presents a particularly compelling set of connections between the anti-monumental reflections on the American Revolution in the Hawthorne texts considered in the last section (*Mosses from an Old Manse* and *The Scarlet Letter*) and the relatively explicit accounts of decaying or troublingly undecayed human bodies in "Roger Malvin's Burial" and *Sheppard Lee*. As such, it offers the most consolidated demonstration of the way that compost (or regenerative decay more broadly) served as a potent metaphor that helped authors to mediate the Revolution's memory during the antebellum period.

Fittingly, Melville's text is itself a sort of composted material. When he rescued Henry Trumbull's 1824 pamphlet titled *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* from the "rag-pickers" and imaginatively recycled it into the serial novel *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile*, Melville transplanted Israel's birthplace from Cranston, Rhode Island to the Berkshire hills in Western Massachusetts.[351] Though the Berkshire sketches that open and close the novel comprise one of Melville's most substantial imaginative alterations to Trumbull's text, critical treatments often portray them as picturesque framing: less transgressive than Melville's efforts to supplant American Revolutionary hagiography with "anti-history" or "little history."[352] Thus, most scholarly accounts of the novel emphasize—and even structurally replicate—the picaresque chronology of Israel's wartime wanderings that make up the bulk of the novel.[353]

However, we cannot fully understand the stakes of Melville's historicizing gestures without attending to his deliberate choice to situate the legacy of revolution in green spaces filled with actual farming practices. By beginning and ending his novel in the Berkshire countryside, Melville interprets revolution not as the singular genesis of national identity, but instead as a notable rupture in a longer, still unfolding agrarian history. Like the other authors throughout this chapter, Melville grounds his narrative in accounts of fertility, decay, and depletion in order to underscore that exhaustion—of the soil, the characters, and the nation—is produced by unsustainable environmental practices. By offering successive views of the same Berkshire hill country (in the pre-war 1770s, 1826, and the early 1850s) *Israel Potter* offers a three-stage account of restless wanderings that map onto three historical stages of American agricultural reform: the failure to compost in the 1770s, a limited, but insufficient application of compost in the 1820s, and a vision of land that is largely exhausted beyond repair in the 1850s. Participating equally with Hawthorne in the desacralization of revolutionary tradition and construction of a compostable past, Melville leavens the profound weariness of the novel's conclusion with a vision of minimal, but meaningful, bodily decay. At the end of the novel, Israel's corpse becomes a textual crux: an anti-monument to the American Revolution that accrues subversive significations and environmentally redemptive potency by losing cohesion as a discrete, agential human body.

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[351] Melville's shifts of scene are persistent; each time Israel wanders, Melville returns him to the Berkshires, going so far as to transfer him from a minuteman company in Rhode Island to one in Windsor, Massachusetts (Chacko and Kulcsar 374). By contrast, Trumbull's subtitle itself declared that Potter was "*A Native of Cranston, Rhode Island*."

[352] Temple details the many critics who portray *Israel Potter* as an anti-history objecting to "the sociopolitical costs of… monument worship" (9). Those cited herein include Brian Rosenberg (175-86) and Samson (14-15). Faflik suggests that *Israel Potter*'s focus on a forgotten figure radically anticipates new historicist critical investments (51-77).

[353] While early critics saw *Israel Potter* as "irretrievably minor," in 1969 Arnold Rampersad and Alexander Keyssar published the first analyses that found aesthetic merit in the novel.

Rather than trace the story of Israel Potter chronologically, this section follows the novel's discursive organization, beginning with the retrospective overview in the 1850s, backtracking to Israel's young adulthood in the 1770s, and ending with an account of his death and grave in 1826. Though the focus herein is primarily on these Berkshire scenes, the bulk of the novel takes place in England during and after the American revolutionary war. Following a series of youthful employments in New England, Israel fights as part of a minuteman company at Bunker Hill. Later captured while aboard an American ship, Israel engages in a series of adventurous escapes from British authority. Along the way, his encounters with historical figures (including King George III, Benjamin Franklin, John Paul Jones, and Ethan Allen) give Melville an opportunity to imaginatively reconsider the cult of revolutionary personality consolidated in antebellum texts such as George Lippard's *Legends of the American Revolution* (1847). After working in London for several decades as an impoverished furniture re-upholsterer and brick-kiln laborer, Israel returns home on July 4, 1826, traveling first to Bunker Hill, where he unsuccessfully seeks a military pension, and finally to the ruins of his family's Berkshire farmstead. Ultimately, he dies in poverty.

Like Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823), *Israel Potter* starts not with an account of settlement's early days, but with a retrospective prospect set at the moment of the novel's composition (in Melville's case, the mid-1850s). Where Cooper depicts the settlers as smoothing the wilderness into a picturesque Georgic paradise, Melville starts with a vision of Israel's Berkshire hill country slipping backwards into sublimity. Even though the novel's revolutionary battles occur elsewhere, Melville compares the uncommonly large ruins of farmhouses to the "aspect" of "countries depopulated by plague and war" (*Israel* 4). The narrator suggests that the marginal, "ungrateful" soil activated "herculean" building projects among these "men of the Revolutionary era" (4-5). But he also reminds the reader that "the [Berkshire] region was not unproductive" in the 1770s. By the 1850s, the settlers' excessive Georgic vigor results in land that can barely be farmed: "arable parts" that "have long since been nearly exhausted" (4). The soil's "ungrateful" return to the settlers, who have taken from it without giving back, hints that affective relationships—and perhaps even something like agency—inhere in non-human configurations. The hill country has to be abandoned not because the land was insufficiently transformed, but because it was overworked. "Herculean" industriousness proves self-defeating, much like Benjamin's Franklin's doctrine of thrift proves a ruse to defraud Israel.

The curiously prolonged decline of the farmhouse ruins contrasts with Melville's ironic presentation of the Bunker Hill Monument in the novel's Dedication. Although he pretends to praise Bunker Hill's massive grandeur rather than the Concord monument's diminutive stature, Melville's mock-epic tone has much in common with Hawthorne's in "The Old Manse." In referring to the Bunker Hill structure as "*His Highness*" (*Israel* v) Melville skewers the role monumental history played in calcifying the revolutionary energies it purportedly sought to maintain into a form of monarchical hegemony (Levine, "Introduction" x, Tendler 33). By portraying the monument as "prematurely gray" (*Israel* vi), Melville exposes triumphant versions of revolutionary history as recent, artificial innovations. In Daniel Webster's famous Bunker Hill orations, the monolith served as a concrete justification for permanently expanding empire.[354] By contrast, Melville's emphasis on the decelerated decay of the crumbling Berkshire chimneys presents a model of history that is prone to displacement, rupture, and decline.

Unlike Hawthorne, for whom decayed buildings could signify compost-like renewal, Melville presents the agrarian ruins as consequences of failure to compost. His decision to dwell on decaying

[354] In 1825, as the monument was being constructed, Webster emphasized that it would eventually fall, but in the 1843 address (at its completion), he claimed the monument itself was an "orator" and crowed that it would endure "unto the last man, to whom the light of civilization and Christianity shall be extended" (3).

Berkshire structures serves as more than just a *memento mori*: they expose facets of environmental history that might otherwise go unnoticed, such as the sale of potash, planting of monocultures, and neglect of soil stewardship. He implies that a failure to properly curate the digestion and decay of organic bodies leads to the decay of architectural bodies. Melville had good reasons to be especially attuned to the consequences of such shortsighted settlement practices. In an 1811 address, his uncle Thomas argued that improved agricultural practices were not only "of the first importance to mankind" but also "the firmest basis of our national independence and posterity" (Melvill 11). Although Thomas was at the forefront of such reforms in Massachusetts (even serving as president of the Berkshire Agricultural Society in 1835), he was unable to remedy the long misuse of the land. Eventually, he was forced to move his family to Illinois before being thrown in a debtor's prison. The perils of unsustainable practices are addressed even more directly in the 1850 "Report of the Committee on Agriculture" that Herman Melville ghostwrote for his cousin Robert. Despite satirizing the efforts of Berkshire farmers to reform their land into a new Eden, Melville praises the construction of barns to facilitate the collection of manure for use as fertilizer.[355] The "Report" relishes "this opportunity" to stress "the importance of saving every ingredient that can be made to enter into the composition of that substance which renovates exhausted lands, and returns to the earth those particles which have been drawn from it by successive crops, thereby enabling Nature to reinvest herself in her beautiful attire… of Flowers and Fruits" ("Report" 450). Though Melville's emphasis here is on aesthetics ("beautiful attire"), the shift to a more serious tone suggests a deep understanding of the connected social and environmental consequences of manurance.

Just as Melville was producing this encomium to manure, he engaged in the research that would inspire the Berkshire scenes in *Israel Potter* four years later. On July 16th, 1850, Melville purchased *A History of the County of Berkshire, Massachusetts*, where he inscribed notations on the back fly-leaf connecting his "Old man-soldier" to John Patterson's Massachusetts minuteman company that fought at Bunker Hill (Leyda 378). Just days later (July 18-20), Herman and Robert toured the countryside collecting notes for the agricultural "Report" that was published in October. Meanwhile, in early September, after a multi-day visit from Melville, newfound friend Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote in his journal about a moss-overgrown, decaying woodpile abandoned for decades until reencountered by "one old man who was a little child when the wood was cut" (394). It seems quite likely that Hawthorne and Melville discussed this poetic conceit together while on one of their rambles, because at the conclusion of Melville's novel Israel's encounter with just such a woodpile enables him to recognize his obliterated homestead. In the opening scene of *Israel Potter*, Melville combines such contemplations on the uses of decayed materials (as either mnemonic aids or compost) with reminders that destructive settlement practices continued even in the 1850s. When Melville's narrator looks over the largely abandoned landscape from a picturesque vantage point, the two remaining signs of human activity are the "lazy columns of smoke" that "proclaim the presence of that half-outlaw, the charcoal-burner" and the "added curls of vapor" from the "maple sugar-boiler" (*Israel* 4). The sources of smoke, representing two possible paths forward, are in symbolic tension. The charcoal-burner continues to extract potash from the land, making it even less suitable for farming, while the sugar harvester ekes out a living that depends on forest health.

As Melville moves from his 1850s prospect of the depleted Berkshires to an account of Israel's "Youthful Adventures," he depicts an individual torn between wandering and setting down roots; between obedience and rebelliousness; between his desire to extract value from the land and maintain a prolonged relationship to place. As many critics have noted, Melville directly compares

[355] Though early commentators read Melville's report as entirely satirical (Parker 737) recent scholarship on agrarianism (Dolan 34-35) and sustainability (Goode 27-28) has taken the report's recommendations much more seriously.

the moment when Israel "emancipated himself from his sire" to his later revolutionary role "throwing off the yoke of his king" (*Israel* 7).[356] Israel's short-term employments as agricultural laborer, hunter, trapper, surveyor, land-owner, and frontier commodity trader seem to make him a familiar avatar of Yankee mobility and acquisitiveness. Though it is tempting to read Israel as an exemplar of Tocqueville's young American whose flight from paternal habitation becomes the basis of democratic self-expression, the fact that Israel repeatedly returns home suggests that his early wanderings are primarily means of gaining capital to impress his family and his beloved. As Clark Davis observes, Israel's "ultimate goal" is "land, a wife, and a homestead" near his parents (125).

Despite this yearning for intergenerational continuity, as a farmer and surveyor Israel engages in deforestation practices that lead to soil degradation. During his first Atlantic voyage, Israel facilitates an early form of extractive fertilizer trade. His voyage ends disastrously when his ship bound for the West Indies "caught fire, from water communicating with the lime" (*Israel* 10). Lime—a fertilizer mined from powdered limestone or chalk—helps plants on acidic soils absorb nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium: the exact three nutrients that sugar plantations deplete from the soil. Archival research has demonstrated that the real Israel Potter's ship was bound for Grenada (Chacko and Kulcsar 11). Thus, Israel is first set adrift (in literal terms) because he participates in exporting soil nutrients abroad; a symbolic slave later in the narrative, he is nearly killed by his role buttressing Caribbean slavery.[357]

Following this incident, Melville portrays the outbreak of revolution as displacing Israel's desire to establish a Berkshire home. When the call to arms arrives, Israel, though a "minuteman" committed to instantaneous response, lingers at the plow like some mute, inglorious Cincinnatus (*Israel* 13). Leisurely finishing his afternoon's Georgic labor is Israel's first act of resistance to the rapidly accelerating temporality of the age of revolution. In describing the moment prior to Israel's enlistment, Melville leans on a rhetorical trope of uprooting: "in mother earth, you may plant and reap; not, as in other things, plant and see the planting torn up by the roots" (12). Later, as Israel wanders the "wilderness" of England, Melville presents images of violent defoliation: "repeatedly and rapidly were the fortunes of our wanderer planted, torn up, transplanted, and dropped again, hither and thither" (84).

This language of uprooting alludes (once again) back to Anglophone debates over the French Revolution, where a wide range of thinkers deployed the metaphor to contest whether the conflict was "natural." By importing this vibrantly debated metaphor of uprooting to the American Revolution, Melville ironically associates Israel's patriotic adventures with the Reign of Terror. When Israel was farming, he was the one planting and reaping; once history intrudes on pastoral temporality (a generic pattern beginning with Virgil's first Eclogue), Israel loses the distinctness of a human, agential body. He moves from manipulating the vegetable realm to being (metaphorically) part of it. Not only the fruits of Israel's labor, but also the plant fibers of his clothing and his very body are repeatedly rent and torn in the conflicts that follow. Here, Melville dramatically reverses Crèvecoeur's image of Europeans being transformed from "useless plants, wanting vegetative mould and refreshing showers" into "men" by the salubrious "power of transplantation" to America (69). In fact, Israel's entire journey after the Revolution mirrors that of Crèvecoeur's Farmer James to a striking degree, except that instead of retreating Westward to a Native village, Israel achieves moments of relative security in England when he works as a gardener for British nobles, including

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[356] Several critics argue that Israel's "emancipation" should be read as signaling a broader rebellion against what Sacvan Bercovitch called "filiopiety" (Samson 191). See also Baker (17-18). By contrast, Tendler (36) and Dekker (*American Historical* 191) emphasize Israel's reluctance.

[357] For accounts of the connections between *Israel Potter* and slave narratives, see Matterson (148-51) and Baker (9-22).

King George III. Restoring his agency *over* plants causes him to be treated, temporarily, as a less plant-like being. However, such moments are fleeting. In both the American and British segments of the novel, transplantation and uprooting emerge as central motifs to signify the sheer precarity of Israel's adventures.

Melville's discussions of uprooting suggest a Burkean concern over destabilized ground. But in the account of Israel's return to America in 1826, he balances these conservative (though proto-environmentalist) anxieties with a radical vision of revitalized ground that depends on allowing old structures to decompose. If the opening chapters pose the problems of soil exhaustion and uprooting to signify the dangers of complacent settlement and revolutionary violence, respectively, Israel's return to the Berkshires in 1826 employs composting as not just an environmental practice, but also a paradigm for America to re-imagine its relationship to revolutionary origins and tradition.

Melville's approach is notable because he writes during the period when the Madisonian proto-ecological, local, and permaculture compost paradigm was giving way to Justus von Liebig's bio-chemical paradigm reliant on scientific expertise and international commodity markets. But in the closing chapters of *Israel Potter*—set in 1826—Melville reaches back to compost to work through the paradox of memorializing revolution. The Bunker Hill Monument shows the peril of revolutionary energies turned into dead stone memorials; by counterpoint, the totalizing, anti-heroic battle between the *Serapis* and the *Bon Homme Richard* reveals that a "civilization" founded on revolutionary violence might periodically devolve into "an advanced state of barbarism" (*Israel* 130). As a third option, Melville—like Hawthorne—envisions history itself as neither refuse to be discarded nor a relic to be worshipped, but matter to be worked with, decomposed, and recomposed through acts of creative mixing, transformation, and nurture. It predicates long-term sustainability on the impermanence and inevitable decay of all particular objects, reimagining the breakdown of old materials not as an act of destruction, but rather as an energy transfer that alters form, yet maintains vitality. As Katarina Saltzman observes, such a paradigm helps us to see that "decomposing is simultaneously a process of composing" (63).

However, Melville does not present a triumphant account of compost entirely renewing the depleted Berkshire farmlands. Where the opening chapters explored the consequences of neglecting to compost, the recurrent metaphors linking Israel to plants in various stages of distress, decay, and decomposition offer Israel—or at least his body—a kind of unintentionally redemptive role.[358] In the final three chapters, which rapidly cover Israel's long exile in England and return home (first to Bunker Hill and then the Berkshires), Melville somewhat incongruously compares Israel to an anonymous weed, American *and* British oaks, a pile of "mouldering" wood, and mosses clinging to the remnants of the family hearth.

In these closing chapters, Melville's strategic mixing of metaphors undercuts our ability to read "nature" as normatively signaling any one meaning or reinforcing one political agenda. This sheer heterogeneity of plant metaphors serves as a reminder that pre-twentieth century authors and common readers shared an extensive "botanical vocabulary," especially compared to the "defoliation of the cultural imagination common today" (Laist 10). If Melville "naturalizes" Israel by comparing him to plants, he also reminds us that the botanical world is filled with profound diversity. This variety implies that while we may not be able to entirely avoid using the non-human world as a normative guide for human life, we should be skeptical of schematic or overly selective natural

[358] The many critics who read the novel's conclusion as unremitting and exhausting have not acknowledged this possibility. Dekker (*American Historical* 190), Dryden (47), Keyssar (50-51), B. Rosenberg (184), and Zaller (621) all dwell on the shift between the comic tone in much of the novel and what they read as the deflationary conclusion.

metaphors. The embodied "state of nature" Israel navigates is fundamentally irreducible to either Rousseau's shorthand for pre-political innocence or Hobbes' metaphor for conflict.

Oak trees are the most conventionally symbolic plant life Melville refers to, but he inverts their usual significations. Melville not only associates impoverished Israel with Burkean aristocratic oaks, but also democratically implies that every individual in London is equally oak-like. This very abundance becomes problematic, as oak-Israel finds himself "cramped by rival trees and fettered by rocks" (*Israel* 165). Israel becomes the exact inverse of the oak Cooper describes early in *The Pioneers* attaining particularly impressive dimensions when released from the "thraldom" of its neighbors and throwing "its gnarled and fantastic arms abroad, in the wildness of liberty" (*Pioneers* 41). By contrast, "oaks" like Israel—overcrowded in Malthusian urban conditions—are stunted, succeeding solely, "against all odds, in keeping the vital nerve of the tap-root alive" (*Israel* 165).

American oaks fare little better. The closing line of the novel informs the reader that Israel "died the same day that the oldest oak on his native hills was blown down" (*Israel* 169). The symbolism is at once apparent and nuanced: Israel, despite his long absence, is vitally, tragically linked to the land he wished to make into his home. The image of the wounded (in this case fallen) oak subverts Thomas Paine's famous comparison of America to a "young oak" engraved with letters that will grow larger with the tree (*Common Sense* 19). While Paine imagines the "wound" as enabling later legibility, Melville's windblown oak encodes cutting ironies. If Israel had stayed in the Berkshires, his role in deforestation would have helped hasten the date of his own symbolic demise.

As Israel returns home like a plebeian Odysseus, he seeks self-recognition not by having the scars on his body read, but by reading the scars on the land. Before Israel recognizes the remnants of his family's hearth, he encounters a "strange, mouldy pile… [that] would crumble, yet here and there, even in powder, it preserved the exact look, each irregularly defined line, of what it had originally been—namely, a half-cord of stout hemlock" that Israel harvested as a youth, but "by subsequent oversight, abandoned to oblivious decay. Type now, as it stood there, of for ever arrested intentions, and a long life still rotting in early mishap" (*Israel* 168). This image seems an indictment of Israel's life until one remembers that the decimation of the landscape resulted from exporting plant-based nutrients rather than letting them rot. Read in combination with the opening chapters, the very "mishap" that "arrested" Israel's chores becomes an alternative to the extractive labor that made the site uninhabitable. In this case, abandoning the Berkshires helps to preserve them. The "mouldy pile" may be a poor substitute for the topsoil generated by fifty years of falling hemlock leaves, but it offers at least a minimal alternative to nutrient extraction.

Several chapters earlier, Melville even more explicitly suggests that humble figures of decay might have regenerative value when Israel (and the other brick makers) are briefly compared to "that weed which but grows on barren ground; enrich the soil; and it disappears" (*Israel* 155). Though the comparison again initially seems to diminish Israel, it actually implies that a forgotten, seemingly wasted life might inaugurate or restore fertility to "barren ground" as it "disappears." The sentence's odd grammar hints at a broader role for the seemingly inconsequential plant. Although the singular subject "weed" agrees with the verbs "grows" and "disappears," the verb "enrich" is plural, suggesting that the individual, marginalized life partakes of a collective productivity when transformed by the leveling process of decay. The individual body comes to nourish many bodies. This swift slip in the syllepsis takes its place in a long series of moments where Melville finds regenerative value in decaying plant matter. These include Melville's sense of wonder in the 1850 agricultural report that through composting "ingredients the most offensive to the human senses, are converted into articles that gratify the most delicate taste" (451); the dictum in *Pierre* that "the most mighty of nature's laws" is "that out of death she brings life" (7-8); and the instance in "Weeds

and Wildlings" when the artist responds to the moss, lichen, and flowers springing forth from a lilac's rotten bark by claiming "decay is often a gardener" (Billy Budd *and Uncompleted Writings* 111).[359]

Anticipating this moment in "Weeds and Wildlings," Melville bookends *Israel Potter* with two images of moss and lichen: one that tempers the claim that "decay" might be an intentional, benevolent agent, and another that reinforces it. The more forbidding vision comes at the end of the novel, when Israel finds the ruins of his family's "old hearth-stone" "now aridly stuck over here and there, with thin, clinging, round prohibitory mosses, like executors' wafers" (*Israel* 169). Though the moss may take sustenance from the decay of the chimney, these "prohibitory" growths represent the minimal amount of growth necessary to choke off other life forms. Whereas Hawthorne's mosses point to the past by signifying venerable age, verdant conditions, and rich traditions, Melville's mosses suggest an imperiled future. As in *Pierre*, where the invasive amaranth flowers coat the hillsides, make grazing impossible, and force tenant farmers to flee the Glendinning estate for the city, these mosses are a growth that is simultaneously in excess and insufficient. As Abby L. Goode argues in a recent essay, plants like the amaranth flowers represent Melville's efforts to link the depleted population in the Berkshires with urban overpopulation, thereby exposing the paranoid connections in nineteenth-century thought between agrarian "unsustainability" and racial/sexual "degeneracy" imagined as proliferating in cities (28). While the links between race, sex, and sustainability are clearer in *Pierre* than in *Israel Potter*, the contrast (and connection) between these arid mosses and the overcrowded urban "oaks" reinforces Melville's claim that growth is not always a good in and of itself. Renewal can be stifling if it takes the wrong form. Thus, the mosses serve as reminders that though decay may be a "gardener," its sheer, processual otherness renders it indifferent to human plans and desires.

Melville balances this image of "prohibitory" lichen with the account of the "posthumous pension, in default of any during life, annually paid [Israel's decaying corpse] by the spring in ever-new mosses and sward" (*Israel* v). Melville's fixation on the material afterlife of Israel's body might seem macabre, but it partakes of a broader nineteenth-century imagination of human corpses as compost. By contributing to the unfettered growth of this "sward," Israel's corpse inverts his earlier job trimming the "sward" in London's Saint James Park, a "fenced in" enclosure signifying nature in chains (164). The emphasis on constant growth and cyclical regeneration ("annually paid," "ever-new") makes the grave-moss one of the most bountiful pieces of natural imagery in the novel. Yet the text suggests that botanical abundance is a poor alternative to the monetary pension Israel was denied.

As human subject, Israel is unjustly compensated by the substitution of mosses for money. Ultimately, however, Israel is a biochemical body in an interconnected ecosystem as well as a particularized person, and the verdant "mosses and sward" suggest that his corpse eventually enables exactly the kind of regenerative energy transfer that many American farmers neglected. As his body is composted, he ceases being an actor and becomes what Bruno Latour names an "actant" (237). Jane Bennett describes such an actant as "a source of action… which has efficacy, can *do things*, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events" though it may not have consciousness, intentions, or even be alive (viii). Fittingly, Israel—tossed about by the winds of history and scarcely in control of his own destiny during the Revolution—becomes part of a sustainable, rooted process only after he is transformed from living being into lively, life-giving matter. The oak "blown down" (*Israel* 169) by wind will have a richer material afterlife than the tree burned for potash, or, for that matter, the *Bon Homme Richard*, whose timbers are also consumed by

[359] I am indebted in these notes on moss and decay to Gillian Osborne's recent account of "Weeds and Wildlings" as the place where "Melville explores this interdependence of flowering and decay as a relation between art and life" (142).

fire. Better, Melville implies, to decay into other forms than to burn up in a blaze of glory; better to be compost than charcoal.

Composting the Blood of Martyrs

While Melville swerves away from fiery exhortations in *Israel Potter,* Walt Whitman begins one of his earliest poems with a blaze of glory: a sudden lightning strike and then the exclamation: "God, twas delicious! / That brief, tight, glorious grip / Upon the throats of kings" ("Resurgemus" 3). Whitman's direct subject in this 1850 poem titled "Resurgemus" was the fleeting triumph and rapid repression of the 1848-1849 revolutions in France, Germany, Italy, and Austria. The poem's organic imagery resituates 1848 not as a singular event, but as an instantiation of a still-unfolding process, suggesting that the blaze of glory and the compostable body are ultimately reconcilable. In this poem that connects the failures of 1848 to the enduring legacies of the American and French Revolutions, Whitman joins Hawthorne, Bird, and Melville in contemplating the symbolic uses of human remains.[360] But as Whitman first tests out one of his most potent and celebrated symbols—the emergence of plant life from human graves—he rejects Hawthorne and Melville's accounts of composting as a synthesis of revolution and tradition.[361]

Whitman removed the incendiary lines about "delicious" regicide from the poem when he reprinted it in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* (there untitled; renamed "Europe in the 72nd and 73rd Years of These States" in subsequent editions), but he returns to the concept of regenerative decay throughout the volume. Echoing Thomas Jefferson's remark that the tree of liberty needs the "manure" of tyrant's blood and anticipating Karl Marx's theory of metabolic rift in *Das Kapital*, Whitman refuses to accept that the failures of 1848 signify the end of the Age of Revolution. Responding to a putrefying miasma of dead bodies in New York, he transplants urban upheaval into regenerative pastoral spaces. In order to articulate a distinctly post-1848 vision, he mixes together Justus Von Liebig's analysis of soil chemistry and Jean Baptiste Lamarck's evolutionary theories. Through this politicized metabolism of scientific thought, Whitman portrays compost as the predominant symbol for both the irrepressibility of revolutionary energies and the spiritualization of material existence.

While "Resurgemus" represented Whitman's first attention to compostable bodies, the famous opening and closing lines of the poem later titled "Song of Myself" hinted that decay would become one of his major preoccupations. "I celebrate myself," Whitman memorably intones as the poem begins, "And what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (1855 *Leaves* 27). Speaking to posterity, the bard evokes Lucretius's atomic materialism in at least two senses: first, by dwelling on the unpredictable swerve of atoms recombining into new forms, and second by playing on the meanings of "assume" (which suggests not only "believing with scant evidence" but also "taking on or becoming") in order to suggest that

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[360] In an 1847 editorial, Whitman even justified the Reign of Terror by arguing "that era of bloodshed … even wild as it was, did not half equal the horror of the long train of *quiet* outrage and wretchedness, which millions had previously endured" (*Gathering of the Forces* 1:109-110).

[361] Of the several poems Whitman published in periodicals in 1850, "Resurgemus" was the only one reprinted in the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*. Given the prominence of the symbol of grass growing from graves in "Song of Myself," I follow Larry J. Reynolds in locating "Resurgemus" as the most legible "beginnings of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*" (139). As Reynolds notes, Whitman may have been inspired by Margaret Fuller's late dispatch from Italy where she longed "that immortal flowers bloom on the grave of all martyrs, and phenix [sic] births rise from each noble sacrifice" (1).

the poet's atoms will eventually make up other bodies. As the poem progresses, the poet's body and non-human matter become co-constituent: a potent early example of what Stacy Alaimo calls "transcorporeality" (2). Thus the poet "find[s]" that his being "incorporate[s] gneiss and coal and long-threaded moss and fruits and grains and esculent roots" (1855 *Leaves* 57). Here Whitman demystifies our corporeality, revealing that bodily metabolic and digestive processes *compose* our material selves. Elsewhere, he shows that nature *decomposes* our bodies back into varied material, which in turn, provides the nutrients for the "fruits and grains and esculent roots" that nourish human life: "as to you corpse, I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me, / I smell the white roses sweetscented and growing" (1855 *Leaves* 86).[362]

In the second to last stanza of "Song of Myself," Whitman brings the poem full circle by reminding the reader of his or her *own* material connection to the poet's body: "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, / If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles" (1855 *Leaves* 88). These lines constitute the poet's most direct revelation that the titular figure of "grass"—which, when bound in "leaves," becomes poetry—most materially and predominantly serves as a memento mori, a reminder of death, decay, and (in this case) re-growth.[363] This is certainly not the only thing grass signifies in the poem: in fact, when "a child" directly asks "What is the grass," the poet's "first 'answer' is characteristically a dodge" (Outka, "(De)Composing" 45): the poet speculatively "guess[es]" that the grass could be "the flag of my disposition," "the handkerchief of the Lord," "itself a child" or "a uniform hieroglyphic." Nonetheless, Whitman's hypothetical catalog concludes with the conjecture that the grass is "the beautiful uncut hair of graves": the "curling grass" that may "transpire from the breasts of young men" both living and dead (1855 *Leaves* 31). Whitman leaves the lingering sense that the compostable dissolution and reconstitution of material bodies is the *most* resonant (but never the sole or irreducible) signification of the eponymous greenery.

Taken in isolation, these much-celebrated moments in Whitman's most famous poem are enough to validate D.H. Lawrence's assessment of Whitman's poems as "huge fat tomb-plants, great rank graveyard growths" (Lawrence 173-74).[364] But to understand the political and scientific resonances of compost more broadly, and particularly the ways Whitman relates this symbol to revolution, it is necessary to turn to the poems where the poet directs his attention beyond the boundaries of self. In particular, Whitman's "Poem of Wonder at the Resurrection of the Wheat," (first published in 1856 and re-titled "This Compost" in 1867 and subsequent editions; referred to herein by the latter title) represents his most prolonged meditation on the social and environmental processes of bodily decomposition. As critics have noted, in "This Compost" Whitman displays a "proto-ecological" (Killingsworth 121) "proto-toxic consciousness" (Outka, "(De)Composing" 56) as he responds to the most pressing "public health crisis" (Farland 800) of his time.

Uniquely among Whitman's poems, "This Compost" begins with a moment when the speaker doubts the Earth's regenerative powers. "I withdraw from the still woods I loved," laments

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362 While Whitman's line about the "sweetscented" roses suggests a specifically *olfactory* compensation for awful/offal-smelling "manure," it is worth remembering that in the nineteenth-century the term "manure" could apply to *any* compostable material.

363 Noting that the grass also becomes "an infinite number of uttering tongues," Outka further elaborates the relationship between grass, body, compost, and poetry: "The speaking self becomes the material body, which becomes the corpse, which merges with the landscape, fertilizing the grass that in turn 'speaks' of the grave it springs from, and references the text of Whitman's book in which this circuit of transformation from text to material and back takes place" ("(De)Composing" 47-48).

364 However, most would take issue with Lawrence's assessment in the next line that Whitman's "exuberance" is "false."

the speaker: "I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the sea, / I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to renew me." The source of corruption is quickly revealed as the "distemper'd corpses," "sour dead," and "foul liquid and meat" of human flesh. At the end of the first section, the speaker declares: "I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade through the sod and turn it up underneath, / I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat." In an abrupt rhetorical and emotive turn, the speaker reveals that instead of the "foul meat" of human corpses, he has discovered healthy soil: fully metabolized loam. "Behold this compost!" he sounds forth. "Behold it well! / Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—yet behold!" (1892 *Leaves* 495).

The unbridled celebration of decomposition that follows derives not only from Whitman's capacious temperament, but also from the centrality of compost in conjoined agricultural and political discourse. But there is a key difference separating Whitman's arrival at their discovery of compost's potency and his predecessors' agricultural practices. For most of the American founders, compost provided an alternative to the wasteful, *un*-settling process of exhausting the soil and moving westward. But Whitman was not primarily motivated by concerns about soil exhaustion or geographic mobility; his is a poetry of motion. He does not labor to create the perfect compost recipe; instead, he experiences compost as a fortuitous discovery, a *solution* to the death and decay that initially oppressed him.

As Whitman continues "This Compost," he turns to recent scientific theories. The poet follows up the exclamation "Behold this Compost!" with "What chemistry!" In context, the phrase serves as a clear reference to Justus Liebig's *Chemistry in its Application to Physiology and Agriculture*, first published in English in 1840. In his August 11, 1847 review of Liebig's work in the *Boston Eagle*, Whitman also rhapsodized about "Chemistry!" and claimed that Liebig's scientific advances demanded "a fame nobler than that of generals, or of many bright geniuses" (qtd. in D.S. Reynolds 238). Even Whitman's title "*Leaves" of Grass* (as opposed to the more colloquial "spears of grass") may have been validated in part by Liebig's use of "leaves" to "signify the 'green parts of all plants,' including grass" (D.S. Reynolds 241). Of course, Whitman's main *motive* for using "Leaves" was to connect grass (the literal plant) with the printer's term for "leaves" of a book. Nonetheless, finding scientific validation for the term may have served as additional support for the title.

In Liebig's applications of laboratory chemistry to problems of agricultural fertility, Whitman found hope that human ingenuity might mimic Earth's previously incomprehensible purification processes. In fact, Whitman's appeal to Liebig's "chemistry" seems to bring the poet closer to nature in all sorts of ways. In the same stanza in "This Compost" that links Earth's mysterious composting power to the episteme of "chemistry," Whitman undoes the human-nature binary established by the opening lines where the speaker was forced to "withdraw from the still woods [he] loved." An appreciation for chemistry enables an ecstatic embrace between the "amorous" sea's "many tongues" and the "naked body" of the speaker (1892 *Leaves* 496). This fervent, erotic scene is far more explicit than Natty Bumppo's nascent ecosexuality (explored in the last chapter).

The connection between Liebig's chemistry and posthuman erotic potential may have been coincidental or associational, but there is no doubt that Liebig's scientific method gave better expression to Whitman's radical political beliefs than earlier modes of composting. For Whitman, composting was not a middle way between revolutionary energy and intergenerational stability. Instead, it consolidates and perpetuates violent liberatory energies across generations. Whereas thought leaders in what I have termed the "compost era" that stretched from roughly 1818 to the 1840s sought (often unsuccessfully) to ensure local community cohesion through proto-permacultures, Liebig's system used enlightenment rationalism to create laboratories divorced from ecological and community contexts. Aiming to upend old agricultural practices rather than simply "intensify" them, Liebig self-consciously pursued an agricultural revolution.

Similarly, in his appeals to Liebig, Whitman invokes less Madison's concerns with balance and sustainability than Thomas Jefferson's embrace of periodic revolution in the infamous liberty tree letter. But even when he sounds much like Jefferson, Whitman implies crucial distinctions mediated by antebellum chemistry. For Jefferson, the key ingredient is "the blood of patriots and tyrants" which fertilizes an already growing tree. For Whitman the crucial ingredient in the manure recipe is not the overthrown tyrant, but the revolutionary "martyr." The composted atoms of Whitman's martyrs do not merely fertilize an existing arboreal symbol but are transformed and actually subsumed into the bodily essence of new growths over time through a complex chemical process that only a scientist like Liebig could rationally comprehend.

Whitman's modulation between urban revolution and pastoral renewal seeks to heal the city-country divide that consumed political thinkers in the nineteenth-century. More particularly, "This Compost" and "Resurgemus" prefigure Karl Marx's largely forgotten late-career fixation with literal compost.[365] Though generations of Marxists dismissed Marx's interest in the nonhuman nature, in *Marx's Ecologies* John Bellamy Foster redirects attention to Marx's theory of "metabolic rift." Marx (like Whitman) read Liebig with particular interest, focusing especially on his 1865 *Letters on the Subject of the Utilization of the Metropolitan Sewage*. There, Liebig maintained that if "the solid and fluid excrements of the inhabitants of towns" were collected and "return[ed] to each farmer the portion arising from produce originally supplied by him to the town, the productiveness of his land might be maintained almost unimpaired for ages to come" (qtd. in Foster 154). As Marx wrote to Engels shortly before publishing the first volume of *Capital*, Liebig's "new agricultural chemistry" was "more important" for certain "matter[s] than all the economists put together" (qtd. in Foster 125). Building on Liebig, Marx concluded in *Capital* that the concentration of populations in cities, combined with the degradation of agricultural soils used to feed urban dwellers, constituted an "irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism." "All progress in capitalist agriculture," Marx declared, "is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil" (qtd. in Foster 156). However, Marx's solution to this problem was very different than Liebig's. Where Liebig's bio-chemical paradigm caused farmers to rely upon far-flung commodity markets and intensified capitalist agriculture, Marx proposed dissolving the city/country divide. By creating "as uniform a distribution as possible of the population over the whole country," the digested nutrients in excrement might be practically returned to the farms where food was raised.

While Whitman focuses primarily on bodies rather than excrement and his practice is poetic rather than practical, "This Compost" and "Resurgemus" show that he, too, cared about healing metabolic rifts between city and country. When Whitman wrote about 1848 and the French Revolution, he alluded primarily to incidents that took place within heavily populated European capital cities. For instance, in "France, the 18th Year of these States," Whitman's imagery highlights "blood in the gutters running" (1892 *Leaves* 378). Nonetheless, when Whitman imagines the spread of "seeds" imbued with energy from fallen revolutionary corpses, the scene shifts to pastoral landscapes where "winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish" (1855 *Leaves* 134). As in Marx, the preservation of revolutionary energies seems to depend on at least a symbolic—if not literal—healing of the metabolic rift between city and country through the dispersal of organically potent matter.

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[365] It is worth noting that like Whitman, Marx also used the metaphor of fruit to express the punctuated historical process of revolutionary organizing: "Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers" (qtd. in Erkkila 53). Unlike Whitman, Marx did not explicitly connect this image of eventual fruits with his ample considerations of compost.

Likewise, both "This Compost" and Whitman's journalism evince the author's deep preoccupation with un-composted heaps of organic detritus in urban spaces. As Maria Farland notes in "Decomposing City," New York experienced a massive increase in death rate in the years before the 1850s. At the time, many postulated that "miasmic" diseases spreading from mountains of horse manure, "fermenting, putrefied corpses" of animals (804), and even decaying human bodies were the main cause of "this public health crisis" that "was quite possibly the single greatest concern of New Yorkers and other urban dwellers in these years" (800). As a result, "This Compost" celebrates the "phytological" processes of plants "transforming rot into regeneration" not only because of a desire for sustainable agriculture, but also because the removal of city wastes into rural soil corrects an imbalance (808).[366] Whitman's understanding of the agricultural or political consequences of this imbalance was less developed than Marx's. But Whitman nonetheless *poetically* carries out a process that posed deep practical challenges by removing decomposing matter from the city, where it constituted an unproductive and toxic surplus, and reinvesting it in the countryside, where it can participate in the soil's radiant regenerative capacities.

Whereas Liebig's new soil chemistry—as well as both Marx and Whitman's responses to it—emphasized the profound *physical* transformation of elements and bodies, Whitman's attachment to Lamarck's evolutionary theory helps to explain his equally fundamental emphasis on spiritual continuity achieved through physical means.[367] Whereas Darwinian evolution depends on passing down inherited genetic material through sexual reproduction, Whitman (perhaps mis-)interpreted Lamarck as suggesting that "desire" (*avoir besoin de*/"to have need of") exerted by an individual changed their *entire* physical being, meaning that not only their progeny, but also their corpse itself would retain a sort of physical remnant of their activities. In other words, given the famous instance of Lamarck's giraffe, which lengthens its neck by stretching to reach food, Whitman could have hypothesized that the decomposing giraffe's *individual atoms* would bear the same markers of its lived experience as the giraffe's offspring. Jack Turner's analysis of Whitman's reading of Lamarck is worth quoting at length:

> Whitman's idea that the self is materially immortal becomes intelligible if we account for his belief in Lamarckian evolution ... Whitman subscribed to Lamarck's theory, and if we may assume he understood the body's changes to imprint themselves on every atom, we can see why he thought the self immortal. Though the self receives identity from the decomposed body matter of previous generations, its distinctive life experience leaves a mark on every atom, transforming the matter then passed on to future generations. The self is immortal not as a single entity, but as dispersed atoms taken up by other bodies. Though the self materially disintegrates, it leaves an organic signature on the world. (274)

As Turner goes on to note (275), this Lamarckian inheritance through decomposition bears directly on one of Whitman's most famous pronouncements. The claim "I am large… I contain multitudes," can be taken quite literally, as Walt Whitman, poet and human body, contains the essence-transmitting atoms of multitudes of prior human bodies. He is a singular assemblage of formerly discrete, but always originally composite, identities.

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[366] We now know that nineteenth-century Americans somewhat overestimated the role of environmental waste in the spread of disease, while underestimating the force of human overcrowding and lack of hygiene as vectors.

[367] For Lamarck's influence on Whitman, see Gershenowitz, "Two Lamarckians" and "Whitman and Lamarck Revisited;" Tanner, "The Lamarckian Theory of Progress in *Leaves of Grass*" and "*Walt Whitman—Poet of Lamarckian Evolution*;" and David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America* (246).

When incorporated in poems about the compostable bodies of revolutionary martyrs, Whitman's synthesis of Liebig's chemical transformations and Lamarck's biological continuity allows the poet to suggest that the defeat and decomposition of martyred bodies will produce nutrient enriched growths enabling an eventual revolutionary triumph. "Resurgemus," Whitman's first, pattern-setting poem about the 1848 revolutions, particularly attends to the way that decomposition enables new growth. Though "corpses lie in new-made graves…. Bloody corpses of young men," such acts of destruction "bear fruits." Whitman continues, "Not a grave of the murdered for freedom but grows seed for freedom in its turn to bear seed, / Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish" (3). Though the dominant metaphor here *seems* to be seminal energy, Whitman subtly but crucially emphasizes that the "grave" itself "grows" the seed. The martyrs are not *themselves* seeds or seed-bearing plants, but instead bodily transmitters of revolutionary atoms. Those atoms, in turn, become seeds of change only through another act of transformation: the uptake of soil nutrients by plants.

This central role of plants in mediating the transfer of revolutionary energies suggests that for Whitman, compost not only blurs the boundary between the human and the nonhuman, but also structures his particular account of revolutionary temporality. What is at stake in "Resurgemus" is not the direct transmission of revolutionary energy into new human bodies, but instead a multi-stage process that depends on transformation and recombination rather than recursion.[368] For Whitman, this quasi-mystic transfer of energies emerged from materialist science but expressed a more transcendent truth. In his own review of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman emphasized the way that his Lucretian theory of atomic inheritance rendered him "the true spiritualist. He recognizes no annihilation, or death, or loss of identity" (*In Re* 19).

However, the fact that Whitman posits no "loss of identity" between human generations does not mean that he views history as a cycle of eternal recurrence. In fact, while the atoms and the essences they contain suffer "no annihilation, no death," each human being is composed of different quantities and proportions of prior atoms: thus, each of us contains a different, but overlapping multitude. According to Whitman's conception, revolutionary battlefields become particularly important sites because they concentrate an array of politicized atoms. These new, though transformed combinations (transmitted through fruits) maintain unaltered energies in new combinations that will lead to a final, lasting defeat of tyranny.

As Betsy Erkkila points out, "For Whitman, as for Marx, the movement of history is revolutionary, progressive, and the triumph of freedom and the masses is *inevitable*" (52).[369] While Erkkila astutely draws parallels between Whitman and Marx's firm belief in the inexorability of revolutionary triumph, to call such a "movement" "progressive" understates the way that Whitman's compost destabilizes the process of history. In Whitman's accounts of the failures of 1848 and the French Revolution, there is no sense of a continuous, steady march of progress through empty

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[368] If speculatively delineating a process that Whitman describes in suggestive, compacted terms, I would imagine it as follows: Lamarckian atoms residing in human bodies are first rendered revolutionary when rebels are radicalized (as in 1848); then, rather than being received more or less intact through sexual inheritance, they are broken down into the soil, still maintaining their revolutionary essence; that soil, in turn, mixes the atoms of many bodies into a new combination of revolutionary energies; those nutrients are absorbed by plants, which then produce fruits; those fruits bear seeds that are biologically distinct, but related, to the initial plant; the "winds carry afar and re-sow" the seeds until, now dispersed, they grow more plants bearing fruits that can be re-metabolized into new human bodies, inspiring later revolutions.

[369] Erkkila excavates a number of connections between Whitman and Marx and disputes the Cold War priorities that situated Marx as the chief proponent of collectivism/state authority and Whitman as the avatar for unfettered individualism.

homogenous time. Whitman's temporality does not move in either a direct line or a circle; instead, he presents a cycle of ruptures, defeats, and pauses for re-growth and regeneration. While Whitman's vision achieves expression through nature's seasonal cycles (the growth of fruits, flowers, and seeds out of grave compost), the emphasis on atomic recombination suggests not recurrence but a dialectical unfolding, an interplay between decomposition and composition, becoming and unbecoming. In each instantiation, the implied synthesis exists *within* human bodies and their individuated, idiosyncratic, willful manipulation of the multitudes that compose the material substrata of the self. Thus, Whitman ultimately situates both the motive for and eventual fulfillment of democratic revolution as inhering not in a static, unchanging "state of nature" that preceded human society, but instead in the very unfolding of natural processes that depends upon the historical presence—and especially decay—of human bodies.

Soil Renewal and the Perils of Sustainable Systems of Oppression

In *The Conjure Tales* (1899), Charles Chesnutt slyly reflects upon a century's worth of agricultural reforms. Though *The Conjure Tales* was written and is set decades later than the other works considered herein, it revisits antebellum discussions about composting from a fresh, revisionist perspective. Each of Chesnutt's stories in the volume includes a frame narration set during Reconstruction and an account of plantation life that takes place around the same time Melville offered his own mid-century re-evaluation of agricultural reforms in *Israel Potter* and Walt Whitman envisioned compostable bodies as enabling perpetual revolution in "Resurgemus." Chesnutt shows composting operating very differently in the context of slavery than in Northern meditations on agrarianism which celebrated composting as a means to mediate revolutionary memory. "The Goophered Grapevine" (the first story in the volume) dwells upon an African-American who experiences new composting technologies as poisonous, traumatic intensifications of slavery's injustices. By constructing a metaphor for the antebellum agrarian revolution's role in paralyzing possibilities for social change in the South, Chesnutt's rhetorical conjurer Julius McAdoo subverts those who imagine agricultural and social sustainability as goods in and of themselves. Instead of focusing on *how* systems can be rendered sustainable, he impels auditors and readers to wrestle with the topic of *which* power relationships (among humans and between humans and the nonhuman world) are *worth* sustaining. Thus, in Julius's stories the salient question shifts from "How can we best sustain our relationship to place?" to "What is actually being sustained?" and "Who benefits from its continuance?"

In the frame narratives featuring the white Northern couple John (the book's narrator) and Annie and former slave Julius McAdoo, Chesnutt distinguishes between two types of agricultural (with the emphasis on *cultural*) sustainability. The first shows how "improvements" enable white property owners to more efficiently commodify and alienate black labor under the sigil of progress. By exposing the power structures underlying the implementation of agricultural reform projects, Chesnutt implicitly connects antebellum slaveholder practices to the post-war appropriation of Southern lands by rich Northerners. As an alternative, Julius rejects accelerative temporality and market participation as forces that pretend to move forward but actually crystallize existing racial power imbalances. Instead, he resists white capital and maintains community cohesion through deliberate slowness and subsistence-level entanglement of cultivation and wildness. By implicitly endorsing the second model, Chesnutt not only finds relatively liberatory possibilities in earlier semi-permaculture practices, but also elevates early concerns about environmental justice over Hawthorne and Melville's musings on revolutionary temporality. However, even as Julius presciently reframes

the stakes of agricultural reform, he also tells his stories to achieve something tangible. His more direct, utilitarian goals are often strikingly modest: he generally aims not so much to gain something new as to maintain something he already has. By decoupling the local black community's sustainable, subsistence modes of relating to the natural environment from the exploitations of slavery that made them necessary in the first place, Julius suggests that acts of resistance can enable humble, recuperative, even Burkean *preservations* of locally embedded nature-cultures. By combining a nascent model of environmental justice with Burkean concerns about community continuity, Chesnutt offers a radical merger of two modalities that might otherwise seem intrinsically incompatible.

Chesnutt's stories register a deep history of environmental mismanagement on Southern plantations. Though "The Goophered Grapevine" focuses on the production of wine, the Northern narrator John witnesses "abandoned fields" reverting back into "scrub-oak and short-leaved pine" as he approaches the former plantation where Julius resides (*Conjure* 3). Some of the reforested meadows were likely abandoned after the Civil War, but their neglect also reflects the consequences of short-sighted extractive land use patterns. In the sandy North Carolina soils where Chesnutt grew up, the main cash crop was turpentine, harvested from the sap of pine trees. Tobacco and cotton cash-crop monocultures in the region also leeched out soil nutrients much faster than Northern farming practices. Instead of enabling decades of harvests, tobacco could ruin the land after only three or four profitable crops (Montgomery 119). Monocultures meant that crop rotation was impossible. Without grains to feed livestock, manure could not be produced locally in sizable quantities. The result was that by the early antebellum period, massive erosion and gullying changed the face of the land in many Southeastern districts, which was "was commonly believed to be dead" (Feeley 58).

It is no exaggeration to say that this Southern inattention to soil stewardship served as one of the principal material triggers for the Civil War.[370] Whereas the Westward movement of family farmers always destabilized rural communities, the structural conditions of slavery and the widespread process of uprooting entire plantations caused especially consequential forms of environmental and political upheaval. As cotton and tobacco planters were forced to moved westward, they activated one of the era's most contentious debates; namely, whether new territories should enter the Union as slave or free states. Historians have yet to fully grapple with the reality that much of the political pressure during the 1840s and 1850s resulted from these mismanaged environmental relationships. In the minds of many Southerners, the continuation of slavery *within the Eastern seaboard states* also depended on the Westward expansion of slavery-driven monocultures. Huge numbers of slave-owners moved to Western states, to be sure. But those who remained often found themselves barely breaking even on previously profitable soil. As a result, some white Southerners began the particularly horrifying shift from viewing themselves as slave-holding farmers to slave-breeders, counting on new Western "markets" to fund their seaboard farms. They campaigned as vigorously as white Texans for the expansion of bondage to the massive new state because "it was widely expected that allowing slaveholding in Texas would double the value of slaves" (Montgomery 137).

Even as streams of slaveholders moved West and others aimed to sell slaves in the same direction, most Southerners did not entirely neglect efforts to make their plantations—and therefore, slavery—more sustainable. "Agricultural reformers" such as influential slaveholder Edmund Ruffin, "believed that poor soils could be amended and restored," and therefore "pleaded their brethren not to emigrate" (Feeley 60). Ruffin, who is best remembered for his work promoting the cause of Southern separatism, wrote a widely read *Essay on Calcareous Manures* in 1832 and later served as President of Virginia's agricultural society. For Ruffin—who would go on to be "awarded

[370] See Montgomery (134) and James (122-3) for similar claims.

the distinction of firing the first shot at Fort Sumter" partially on the basis of having "helped start an agrochemical revolution"—the causes of Southern independence and Southern agricultural sustainability were practically identical (Montgomery 130).

In practice, plantation owners seeking to amend their soils generally could not fulfill Ruffin's fantasy of a self-sufficient South. They had to import materials from far flung sources, including a "North-South 'recycling system"' that *increased* dependence on anti-slavery states (James 122). However, in the two decades leading up to the crisis of the Civil War, they began to rely on two other sources: lab-produced fertilizer (the earliest outputs of Liebig's biochemical agricultural revolution), and, on a broader scale, international guano markets that emerged starting around 1840.[371] Southerners' reliance on distant trade markets for fertilizer meant that they could postpone the imperial extension of slavery across the American continent only by participating in trans-oceanic or North-South commodity markets. But for most plantation owners, economic entanglements were small prices to pay for the promise that they could continue to exploit slave-labor and restore yields to prior conditions.[372]

Even as they ridiculed Southerners for building the foundations of modern slavery on earth mixed with bird excrement, abolitionists noticed that the importation of new fertilizers would worsen the plight of slaves. They often cited the rate of southern land dilapidation as proof of the moral degradations of slaveholding (S. Phillips 808).[373] In one article reprinted in *The North Star* and *The Liberator*, a commentator noted that Southern discourse tended to over-associate "State rights and guano, liberty and life" (qtd. in James 121). Meanwhile, as Jennifer James has argued, "Douglass and Garrison saw Southern guano-mania for what it was: a materialization of pro-slavery ideology. When 'A New York Merchant' later opined in *Douglass's Paper* that the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law was like 'guano' for slavery, it was because guano was *already* guano for slavery" (James 121-22).[374] In direct terms, by dramatically increasing yields, guano forced enslaved African-Americans to labor more intensely (of course, they also had to spread the smelly substance). Equally importantly, these fertilizers stabilized Southern life, alleviating the intense disruptions that served as inspirations for slave uprisings and abolitionists. As a result, in the same period that writers like Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman used composting as a symbol for maintaining and managing revolutionary energies, fertilizer (as physical fact, not metaphor) helped Southern slaveholders suppress revolts and perpetuate the system of slavery.

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[371] The analysis of guano and slavery that follows relies heavily on Jennifer James's outstanding article "Buried in Guano." Though guano can refer to any animal droppings used as fertilizer, the so-called "Great Guano Rush" created an international race to exploit the accumulated buildup of bird droppings on Caribbean and Pacific islands. As the richest form of natural fertilizer, guano "made for hardier plants, reduced the time between harvests, eased the cultivation of difficult crops and revitalized overworked lands … in smaller amounts than other fertilizers" (119). As James notes, guano may have been "the first globally marketed 'organic' product hailed as a *natural* way to replenish land and sustain agricultural productivity" (117).

[372] Ironically, some southerners "argued the South actually needed more and more slaves to increase the population density and to bring about soil-preserving methods of agriculture" (S. Phillips 806).

[373] Sarah Phillips, like James, includes excerpts from Northerners who criticized Southern land use practices (such as William Seward and Frederick Law Olmsted, the latter of whom published an extensive survey of his travels through the Southern states). She concludes that "at every step, Republicans equated scientific agriculture with free labor and free men" (822).

[374] James notes that widely divergent groups (including French romantic socialists as well as slaveholders) imagined that cheap fertilizer would allow the creation of "guanotopias": "economies built on the exploitation of humans and other parts of the natural world" that "seek to disavow histories of damage" (136). In turn, Karl Marx initially hoped that new fertilizers like guano might provide alternatives to capitalism, but eventually lamented that they merely intensified and industrialized agriculture.

Deploying a retrospective gaze some decades later, Charles Chesnutt grants the antebellum obsession with fertilizer a central place in "The Goophered Grapevine." While Julius's stories of plantation life only obliquely hint at the national environmental and political dimensions of new composting practices and fertilizer technology, they use conjuration as a potent metaphor to shift focus onto ways that Southern land-use practices concentrated suffering within African American bodies and communities. "The Goophered Grapevine" sets this pattern within the collection. The story begins when the narrator John and his afflicted wife Annie move south in search of more salubrious climes. Hoping to become viticulturists, they encounter a decayed plantation where "a venerable-looking colored man"—former slave Julius McAdoo—sits eating "scuppernon'" grapes "with great gusto." Julius discourages John and Annie from buying the land because the "ole vimya'd is goophered… conju'd, bewitch'" (Chesnutt 5). He proceeds to tell a story about how the former plantation master (Mars Dugal') asked the local "cunjuh 'oman" named Aun' Peggy to goopher the grapes so that they would gradually poison any African-Americans who ate them. While the locals stop gleaning grapes straight off the vines, Henry, a slave new to the area, eats the forbidden fruit without being aware of the consequences. Aun' Peggy performs a second act of conjure, tying Henry's health to the grapevines in order to save him. Each year, as the vines grow, Henry's youthful vigor is restored and his hair grows. But after each harvest, he approaches a state near death as the vines decline. For a time, Mars Dugal' exploits this magical cycle of rejuvenation and senescence, selling Henry to a neighbor each spring and then buying him back in the fall at a substantial discount.

This pattern of seasonal recurrence is rudely interrupted when a Northern agriculturalist arrives with extravagant promises about the potential of fertilizer and new grape pressing technology. Mars Dugal' is immediately "bewitch' wid dat Yankee" and allows him to dig up the dirt under the roots and "fix up a mixtry er lime en ashes en manyo, en po' it roun' de roots er de grapevimes." At first, the fertilizer miraculously rejuvenates both the crops and Henry: "De scuppernon' vimes growed monst's fas', en de leaves wuz greener en thicker dan dey eber be'n dyoin' my rememb'ance; en Henry's ha'r growed out thicker dan eber, en he 'peared ter git younger 'n younger, en soopler 'n soopler." The reinvigoration is so profound that Mars Dugal' decides to exploit Henry's labor directly rather than seasonably sell his labor, only to be surprised when the entire vineyard suddenly dies off because "all dat lime en ashes done burn' de life out'n de vimes" (Chesnutt 11-12). As a result, Henry, like the vineyard, "des pined away, en pined away" before perishing.[375]

There is something historically improbable about the fertilizer's failure; in reality, similar reforms overwhelmingly revitalized southern agriculture. Nonetheless, the presence of the Yankee agricultural reformer lends historically specific dimensions to Julius's subversive allegory. Though the Northerner does not actually import guano or chemical fertilizer, his status as a wandering outsider clearly represents the over-reliance of Southern plantations upon distant sources of agricultural renewal. Far from offering a sustainable future, he is a con-man who wins over a thousand dollars at cards off Mars Dugal' during the same week that he "wuz a-ruinin' de grapevines" (Chesnutt 11). Dugal's intemperate desire for revenge propels him into the Civil War, where he claims that he would "kill a Yankee fer eve'y dollar he los' 'long er dat grape-raisin' Yankee." However, in Julius's telling, "de Yankees had n' s'picioned sump'n, en killed him fus'" (12). In this account, one of the text's rare mentions of the Civil War, Julius comically implies that the usually cited causes of historical upheaval were merely incidental—the real issues motivating southerners like Mars Dugal' were modes of land management, the perils of economic

[375] Chesnutt embeds an ironic reversal here: those Southern farms that did *not* implement agricultural reforms also "pined" away as they reverted into forest.

entanglement, and revenge. But Julius's reductionist account also offers characteristically canny hints at broader truths; namely, that plantation owners *were* more motivated by a spiteful desire for profit than by lofty ideals such as states' rights.

While Mars Dugal' responds to the grapevine's demise with an entitled sense of aggrieved white victimhood, his economic loss pales in comparison to the suffering Henry endures. Ultimately, Julius is less interested in the verisimilitude of agricultural practices than in exploring their consequences upon African-American lives. Here, too, Chesnutt uses the *failure* of a mode of land-use reform that usually succeeded in order to represent an underlying reality: namely, that agricultural renewal concentrated suffering upon black bodies. Chesnutt twists and inverts all the usual metaphors of composting, showing how they fail to apply under the conditions of slavery. In the account of fertilizer application as overexposing and chemically burning the vines' root structure, rootedness itself shifts from an aspirational signifier of continuity into a representation of poisoned ties that forcefully bind slaves to lands not of their choosing. Similarly, Julius reveals that the vine's initial, unnaturally rapid growth is actually 'monst's." Easily mistaken as a source of health and vigor, it serves as a false promise, merely causing Mars Dugal' to intensify Henry's labor. The "lime and ashes" that promised growth "burn de life out'n" both the vines and Henry. Southern plantation holders ultimately find themselves "burned" by their reliance on Northern and international markets to rejuvenate soil health, but the real victims were enslaved African-Americans who experienced agricultural sustainability as a fiery extension of their suffering.

One of the tragedies of the tale is not merely that Henry dies, but that Mars Dugal' is incapable of mourning his death as anything other than an economic setback. Julius describes how he "tuk on might'ly 'bout losin' his vimes en his nigger in de same year" (Chesnutt 12). The quote makes it obvious that Dugal' views Henry as just another economic resource, fundamentally no different from the grapes themselves. By exposing the racist logic of such conflations, Chesnutt reveals that the objectification and commodification of nature and the objectification and commodification of human others are fundamentally inseparable processes.

The next story, "Po' Sandy," reveals a similar message in even starker terms. There, the eponymous protagonist is a particularly productive laborer whose master responds by leasing him out to neighboring landowners. Because this commodified sale of his body causes him to be separated from his wife Tenie (a "cunjuh 'oman"), he asks her to transform him into a tree so that he can stay close at hand. Before long, Sandy is cut down, sliced up, and transformed a second time, now becoming the lumber used to construct a schoolhouse. When she discovers his fate, Tenie dies of grief. Unlike the complex uses to which Julius puts this narrative in his dialog with John, the story itself poses an *unmissably* straightforward connection between the exploitations of deforestation and slavery. It reveals white supremacy and anthropocentrism as co-constitutive ideologies united by the supposedly inviolable prerogatives of property ownership and commodity appropriation. This profound message likely functioned as a revelation for Chesnutt's audience; today, the discipline of environmental justice allows us to notice such correlations as a pervasive pattern.

It is possible to read Chesnutt's tales of conjure as indexing a direct connection to nature that African-Americans and Native-Americans inherently possess, but which white people have lost through dualism and the instrumentalization of nature.[376] However, such readings downplay the ways in which Chesnutt's stories of conjure tend to go wrong, unintentionally causing the transformed subject new modes of pain or persecution, (usually) at the hands of white oppressors. The surprising—and troubling implication—is that in Chesnutt's writings white supremacy and

[376] This has been the dominant way to interpret the stories. Jeffrey Myers, for instance, claims that "the story that Julius tells John about Henry's symbiosis with the vines is really a story of his own connection to a landscape that is not only symbolic but also spiritually and materially real" (98).

conjuration share a certain logic of conflation. As Paul Outka registers in *Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance*, both conjure and white supremacy collapse the distinction between African-Americans and natural objects, plants, or animals. White supremacy operates through the racist supposition that black bodies are *merely* natural materials (as opposed to cultural agents) that can be appropriated as property. Meanwhile, conjure leverages knowledge of natural materials (such as roots and herbs) gained *through* closeness to nature in order to turn African American subjects *into* nonhuman bodies. According to the conjure women in Chesnutt's stories, these transformed bodies are supposed to be mindful agents, not merely objects. However, more often than not, the *result* of acts of conjure in Chesnutt's tales is the commodified re-absorption of the now nonhuman body into a system of capitalist exploitation: an ending that replicates, rather than successfully subverts, the linked logic of slavery and anthropocentric appropriation. In response, Paul Outka argues that we should attend to the ways that conjuration risks devolving into "an expression of slavery rather than simply a form of resistance to it" (*Race and Nature* 106).[377] According to Outka, *The Conjure Tales* are not parables for the closeness to nature subverting white supremacy; instead, they reveal the dangerous slippage between appearing close to nature and being appropriated as part of nature.

Within "The Goophered Grapevine" and "Po' Sandy," slavery's ruthless re-appropriation of human/plant hybrid bodies represents the *co-optation* not only of black labor, but of conjuration itself.[378] Far from the liberatory mode of resistance that most critics make it out to be, the repeated failure of conjure in Julius's stories reflects his suspicion that what *seems* transformational can mask a recursion to—or even worsening of—old power structures. In "The Goophered Grapevine," this pattern repeats itself. Fertilizer—representing agricultural modernity—*intersects* with Henry's ingestion of the conjured grapes, resulting in his death. Then, in the frame narrative, John ignores Julius's story and buys the former plantation. Seemingly without a sense of irony, this second interloping Northerner congratulates himself as a progressive agricultural reformer, bragging that the vineyard "is often referred to by the local press as a striking illustration of the opportunities open to Northern capital in the development of Southern industries." In the process, John repeats Mars Dugal's efforts to exile African-Americans like Julius from the garden. Having discovered that Julius had "derived a respectable revenue from the product of the neglected grapevines," John justifies the expulsion by stating that Julius's new wages as "coach-man" "were more than an equivalent for anything he lost by the sale of the vineyard" (Chesnutt 13). Here, "Northern capital" replicates a similar kind of putatively transformative process as the Northern methods of revitalizing the soil. Each promises stability—the farm will be sustainable; Julius will earn more money—but in practice places an African-American in an unchosen relationship with commodity culture. In some ways, Julius has an even worse bargain than Henry. Whereas the fertilizer *reveals* Henry's status *as* grape-like commodity within slavery, John's agricultural reforms *reduce* Julius *from* producer to wage-laborer.

To justify this appropriation of Julius into agro-capitalist modernity, John later portrays Julius as possessing an uncanny connection to the nonhuman world. In a particularly patronizing passage in "Mars Jeems Nightmare," he cites "the simplicity of a life that had kept him close to nature" and suggests that Julius succeeds with "horses and dogs" because he has "a greater familiarity" with their "mental processes "than mere use would seem to account for." Emphasizing his own ownership of the "tract of land," John critiques Julius's "peculiar personal attitude, that

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[377] Myers differs from Outka and interprets conjure as a mode of preserving African- and Native-American ontologies that connect people to the natural world (94).

[378] Even the exceptions seem to prove the rule: an act of conjure makes the life of slaves better in "Mars Jeem's Nightmare," but that is because the person conjured is a white overseer. *His* life is profoundly (and justly) destabilized.

might be called predial rather than proprietary. He had been accustomed, until long after middle life, to look upon himself as the property of another." The term "predial" denotes a particular set of usufruct (use) rights that only exist *in the absence of ownership*. Given that John sees Julius as a mere "appurtenance" "attached" to the land, he overextends a common settler-colonialist prerogative: whereas early settlers often justified the appropriation of Native lands by arguing that usufruct could not grant ownership, John more or less appropriates Julius along with the land itself. He concludes the passage by stating "We found him useful in many ways and entertaining in others" (Chesnutt 25). According to John's doctrine, anyone who relies only on use-rights will soon lose his rights and *be put to use*. Not precisely re-enslaved, Julius is nonetheless brought into a system of constraints against his will as he now depends upon participation in broader markets rather than local economies that rely on barter and exchange alongside currency.

At the end of each story, John offers a reductionist reading of Julius's tales as mere effort at selfish manipulation. He fails to see that Julius uses storytelling less out of an acquisitive desire to gain something new than to preserve the limited forms of autonomy that the end of slavery made available to rural blacks. Whatever Julius gains (a job for his nephew, a ham) is less important as a marker of progress than as a means of subverting John's (often unwitting, sometimes even well-intentioned) disruptions of the black community's modes of relating to their environment and to one another.[379] Thus, in "The Goophered Grapevine," Julius's resistance to Northern capital takes the form of a preference for autonomous subsistence agriculture over market participation. In "Po' Sandy," Julius's tale allows him to preserve a dilapidated old schoolhouse from being repurposed in a renovation process.

Unlike Hawthorne or Melville, Julius does not preserve the aged building because he wishes to symbolically curate its decay. Instead, he acts because it is the only space available for his congregation to worship (at least according to John; it may be that Julius has other historical associations with the structure). Nonetheless, Julius's mode of relating to overgrown spaces signifies an ecological valence to his minimally intrusive mode of land management. When John first approaches the estate, he observes that "shiftless cultivation had well-nigh exhausted the soil." In almost the same breath, he describes the vineyard as overrun with "decayed and broken-down trellises," where saplings "grew in wild and unpruned luxuriance" (Chesnutt 3). For John, the images of decay and entanglement are simply *consequences of* soil mismanagement. But the fact that Julius "derives a respectable revenue" from the grapevines suggests otherwise. As Jeffrey Myers notes, in combination with Julius's successful harvests the decay and entanglement signify a divergent, but also deliberate, mode of farming: they produce an "ecologically healthy and diverse landscape providing sustainable living" (Myers 98). Not many details about Julius's farming practices filter through John's narration; indeed, John is unable even to recognize them *as* farming practices. We do not learn whether Julius's vineyard appears ecological because Julius values interconnection for its own sake, because of instrumental reasons, or because it is the only way he knows how to farm. However, by encouraging processes of decay and not trying to maximize the land's production, Julius farms in a way that does not require massive infusions of fertilizer. In opposition to John's capital-intensive model of agricultural progress, Julius offers a version of agriculture that blurs the line between subsistence and sustainability.

These acts of preservation partake of Julius's broader ethic of deliberate slowness. Julius makes things happen by getting people to slow down, by arresting the motion of John and Annie's

[379] As Jeffrey Myers notes, one of Julius's "deeper motives" in manipulating John is the preservation of the local ecosystem itself (95).

carriage or by taking them on the long way 'round.[380] One of the most frequently repeated—and subtly central—words in *The Conjure Tales* is "bimeby," or "bye and bye." A laconic condensation of languid Southern temporality, the term appears again and again within Julius's stories, but it also represents the gradual, indirect way in which his tales work on his auditors. Annie, in particular, tends to react emotionally upon hearing the stories and then grant Julius something later, when John is not present. The dialect form of the term is suggestive: for Julius, that which occurs slowly, in the intervals when attention is elsewhere and things are *not noticed* ("bye and bye"), also just-so-happens to happen according to his design: "*by ME* by," by his own act of willing and doing.

The languid, eddying motion that Julius favors is characteristic of regionalist local-color writing, but it is also rendered particularly necessary and poignant by Julius's experiences with upheaval. Even while we revel in his modes of indirection and subversion, as readers we may find ourselves wishing that Julius was more self-assertive, less contented with merely autonomous subsistence, more revolutionary. But if there is something frustratingly limited—and even conservative—in Julius's successful moments of resistance, it is likely because, as his stories bear out again and again, he has so often seen more radical transformations co-opted. Nowhere is this more dynamically the case than in "The Goophered Grapevine," where both conjure and the products of an agricultural "revolution" fail to produce a liberating break with the past or an equitable and just form of sustainability. Instead, they simply bring more suffering on African-American bodies. Similarly, John's purchase of the land and supposedly progressive agricultural reform projects reduce Julius to dependence on a broader, more abstract instrumentalizing system.

Placed against these counterintuitive, often oppressive results, Julius's efforts to resist the capitalist market, maintain local community cohesion, promote semi-autonomous subsistence, and preserve traditional modes of relating to the land appear less backwards (as John would certainly have it) than recuperative. John's inability to see the overgrown, intertwined vines *as a managed agricultural space* reproduces (in slightly more benign form) the racist assumptions that slaveholders relied upon when they conflated African-Americans and natural objects. Thus, though we do not learn much about *how* Julius would avoid soil degradation in his vineyard, we can still see that Julius aims to revive many aspects of a Madisonian permaculture paradigm while warding against the forces of co-optation: the slave-owners, agricultural reformers, and Northern capitalists who alternately promise rigid order and revolutionary change but deliver only new forms of commodification.

The end result is an innovative combination of opposites which constitutes Chesnutt's most potent revision of antebellum environmental politics. Julius's vineyard intermingles concern that we would now describe under the rubric of environmental justice with Burkean conservationism. The fact that Julius can reject *both* the power structures of slavery (set in the past) and the absorption into capital markets (the modernizing future) suggests that Burkean "tradition" need not be a singular, totalizing system that protects the powerful, but instead can be broken into those components worth saving, those that should be left behind, and those that must be resisted going forward. Ultimately, Julius labors to save *a particular social and agricultural ecology* even while implicitly drawing attention to the way that appeals to Burkean social ecologies (like those that framed slavery as "natural") have too often rendered systems of oppression more sustainable.

[380] Even when Julius's actions are entirely benevolent—as in "Hot-Foot Hannibal," where Julius takes the long way home in order to allow an encounter between John's ward Mabel and her fiancé Murchison—he usually acts in order to preserve an existing relationship, rather than create something new.

Coda
Burkean Conservatism and Environmental Politics, Then and Now

This work began with Emerson's image of conservatism as an apple-tree that disperses heterozygous seeds. Such seeds grow into trees whose fruits, in turn, are direct descendants of the original tree but may only remotely resemble their parent's flavor profiles. Emerson's metaphor implies that seeds from conservative stock may, at times, grow into specimens that look little like their siblings. In other words, while most of the seeds from Burkean trees will likely be recognizably conservative, a few might look surprisingly progressive. Extending Emerson's metaphor, I have tried to suggest that Burke's nascent, proto-ecological strands constitute some of these wild seeds and incongruous trees. Filled with material genetically derived from the father of conservatism's texts, they are capable of producing offspring that don't *look* conservative: offspring which, in fact, challenge our definitions of what conservatism *is* and *could be*. The question that arises, then, is why we can observe so few such trees grown from wilder seeds. Why is it that *with regards to environmental thought*, conservatism looks less like an orchard filled with rich, tangy apple varietals and more like a factory-farmed monoculture of genetically identical engrafted Red Delicious clones? Put in more straightforward terms: if one accepts the popular premise that Burke is the founder of modern conservatism, recognizes that Burkean conservatism contains proto-ecological awareness, and acknowledges that these strands are developed in central nineteenth-century American works, then why are so few American conservatives amenable to environmentalism today?

Many answers are needed. First, the ecological dimensions of Burke's thought have often been overlooked, have at times been suppressed or deliberately forgotten, and—most importantly—have only recently begun to receive sustained attention. Second, Burke often did not do the work of applying his *social* ecologies to the nonhuman world, but instead left it to others to make such applications. Third, as chapters two and three detailed, Burke's influence has often been more readily discernible in literature than in the political realm (a trend that begins with American politicians' rejections of Burke in the 1790s, on the one hand, and with Cooper and Hawthorne's incorporation of Burkean themes, on the other).[381] Relatedly, as many have noted, political conservatism within America has never been straightforwardly Burkean. The Republican Party (particularly since 2016) has often been less invested in the Burkean values of gradualism, tradition, and continuity than in disruptive revanchism.[382] The swift resurgence and hopefully temporary ascendance of white ethnonationalism on the right draws into clear focus the fact that the Republican Party is less a stable, uniform entity than a functional coalition of groups whose influence is in constant flux. Free-market fundamentalists, the religious right, ethnonationalists, moderates, interventionist neocons, limited-government activists, and classical/Burkean

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[381] In the last few decades, only one scholarly monograph (Drew Maciag's *Edmund Burke in America*) has contended that Burke exerts a shaping role in American politics and then tracks that influence. However, even Maciag notes that by publishing a defense of tradition and unwritten constitutions just a few years after America consecrated the founding power of the revolution with the Constitution, Burke situated himself firmly outside the foundational American narrative from the get-go (2, 31).

[382] It is something of a commonplace for writers to observe that in America the Burkean political tradition is far less developed than in England or many European countries. See Berman, "Burke and Paine Now," Maciag's account of Arthur Schlesinger's claims to the same point (182), and virtually any lament about the recent state of American conservatism by columnist David Brooks. Challenging these straightforward contrasts between America and England, Emily Jones argues that Burke came to play a decisive role in the British conservative tradition only through a complicated, less than linear path.

conservatives differ as much in their core beliefs as they have been united in opposing environmental legislation over the past thirty years.[383]

It is no coincidence that despite the deep fault lines within this coalition, the one tenet that has come closest to uniting conservatives over the past quarter-century is a shared commitment to the philosophical centrality and political inviolability of property rights. Conservatives' widely shared belief that individual property owners have absolute rights to dispose of their land as they please consigns environmental responsibilities to the backseat—when it does not stuff them in the trunk or throw them under the tires. More broadly, the elevation of property rights over communal duties reflects the ascendance of Friedrich Hayek's libertarian thought, in which "freedom" is the ideological cornerstone, over Burkean conservatism, in which individual rights and duties to others necessarily balance one another.[384] But Burke should not be let off the hook entirely. While recent conservatives have too reductively framed the *tension* between property rights and environmental duties as an either/or choice, the same tension is present *within* Burke's writings. Burke unquestionably believed that social order depended on the protection of private property—especially when it was inherited or accrued over time, like noble estates. But he also argued that property rights were far from absolute. Thus, in the "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," he asserts "a *Law of Neighborhood* which does not leave a man perfectly master on his own ground. When a neighbor sees a new erection, in the nature of a nuisance, set up at his door, he has a right to represent it to the judge, who, on his part, has a right to order the work to be stayed; or if established to be removed" (*Writings* IX:250). Here, Burke argues that a property owner's ability to transform the environment at will is checked both by the surrounding community and by the standards of aesthetic beauty that will tend, however imperfectly, to correlate with environmental stability.

In order to understand why conservatives in recent decades have heeded only one segment of Burke's writings and almost entirely failed to take environmental crises seriously, it is useful to return to the nineteenth-century and register the shape of tensions between property rights and environmental awareness deep within the American conservative tradition. These foundational competing strains particularly pulled James Fenimore Cooper, the most Burkean of American writers, in opposite directions. In Cooper's early novel *The Pioneers,* Judge Temple at times argues that property rights are absolute, but his house is exactly the kind of unsightly "new erection" that Burke warned about. More pertinently, Natty Bumppo objects to deforestation not only because it is "wasty" but also because it leaves the land an ugly, pockmarked stubble. In making aesthetics part of his critique of Judge Temple's defense of property, Natty spreads Burke's law of neighborhood to encapsulate the "nuisance" of *environmental* destruction. Building on Burke's assertion that the law of neighborhood allows property owners to be sued before a judge, Natty—like a less successful Lorax—speaks to the Judge (Temple) on behalf of the trees. This is just one of the many ways that Cooper internalizes Burke's latent ecological sensibilities, extends Burkean social ecologies to cover human/nonhuman land communities, and thereby creates arguably the first environmentalist novel (see chapter three). In *The Pioneers*, Cooper seems genuinely torn between Natty and Temple. Though neither character is an *exact* analogue for Burke or Paine, by letting them each voice their

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[383] These ideological labels within conservatism are intended as shorthand for *groups* that exert political will. Few individual conservatives would describe *him or herself* as, say, a "free-market fundamentalist." Though no one individual is equally committed to all of the formations I describe, individuals often register the tensions within conservatism either by prioritizing between them or idiosyncratically mixing them—just like on the left, where the coalitional nature of liberalism is more broadly acknowledged as such.

[384] For the distinction between Hayek and Burke's respective influences in conservative thought since 1950, see Maciag (182).

cases at length, Cooper restages the Burke/Paine debate and suggests that both sides are at least worth hearing out.

However, Cooper's even-handed attention to the environment and to property became almost entirely one-sided late in his career. In *The Littlepage Manuscripts* (1845-6), a little-read trilogy written in response to the Anti-Rent Wars, Cooper shifts farther right than Burke, prefiguring twenty-first century conservatives' abandonment of nascent environmental strains in favor of property right absolutism and free market fundamentalism. For Cooper, the trouble had been brewing for some time. In 1837, he published a notice expelling his neighbors from Three Mile Point, a piece of land that he owned but which they had long used as a popular picnic ground. By asserting his rights as a property owner against long-established local custom, Cooper made a choice that Burke likely would have acquiesced to but would not have wholeheartedly approved of. At a minimum, it signaled Cooper choosing between strands *within* Burke's thought, taking a decisive step towards Burke's defenses of property and away from Burke's emphases on custom, community, and environmental situatedness. Cooper's protest resulted in a series of petty legal squabbles and libel cases (running from 1839-1845) that pitted him against his neighbors and caused him to retreat into isolated elitism. However, he saved his true libertarian invective for the so-called Anti-Rent Wars (also 1839 to 1845).

The Anti-Rent Wars were protests levied against landlords' treatment of their tenants. As a legacy of the Dutch Patroon system, massive estates were owned by single landowners who often leased out farms rather than selling titles to small parcels. Tenants purchased leases that gave them the ability to stay for decades, centuries, or perpetually, but were forced to pay heavy annual rents (often after an initial grace period). In most cases, tenants did not simply vacate farms, thereby reverting control directly back to the landlords; instead, they sold the rights of the lease to a new tenant, but were forced "to pay the landlord an alienation fine which might run as much as one-third of the amount received" (Hough viii). As a result, second or third-generation tenants were effectively tied to the land in quasi-feudal relationships. Cooper preferred to sell plots of rand rather than use leases on his own property; like a true conservative *and* an inchoate conservationist, he believed that tenants would treat the land better if they had an ownership stake in it. However, he showed no sympathy whatsoever for the tenants suffering under oppressive leases on neighboring estates, and instead sided entirely with the landlords.

Cooper's mode of expressing the landlords' case was quite unique: rather than write an argumentative tract or even a single, polemical novel set during the Anti-Rent conflict, he penned a three-volume intergenerational family saga.[385] The first novel, *Satanstoe* (1845), tracks Corny Littlepage as he first establishes the family's property claims in upstate New York during the French and Indian War. *The Chainbearer* (1845), taking place around the Revolutionary War, focuses on Mordy Littlepage's efforts to defend his family's as-yet-undeveloped property from the unscrupulous Yankee Jason Newcome and the uncouth squatter Aaron Timberman (known as Thousandacres).[386] *The Redskins; or, Indian and Injin* (1846) reaches a climax when Anti-Renters unsuccessfully attempt to murder the Littlepage family in their sleep.

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[385] According to George Dekker, *The Littlepage Manuscripts* are "the first family chronicle novel in American literature" (*Cooper: The Novelist* 218). Jerome McGann goes farther and calls them "the first chronicle novel in any literature that treats the history of a single family over the span of multiple generations as an index of the history of a nation" (146).

[386] The characters' names are revealing: Newcome represents Yankee scheming and restless mobility (newcomer) and Timberman is not only a logger, but also makes a grandiose claim to property that is not his own (Thousandacres).

There is something deeply Burkean about Cooper's belief that in order to understand the causes and stakes of the Anti-Rent Wars, one must begin almost a century before the conflict. In the preface to *Satanstoe*, Cooper begins by situating the series as a "chronicle of manners" (3).[387] Adding a new dimension to Burke's belief that the worst effect of revolution was the destruction of a system of manners, Cooper tracks the way that poor manners—if taken in combination with loosened defenses of property rights—can eventually *precipitate* revolution. In *Satanstoe*, antagonist Jason Newcome's social awkwardness, presumption, and Yankee accent are merely annoying; in *The Chainbearer*, he extra-legally attempts to undermine the Littlepage land claims; and in *The Redskins* his descendants' disrespect for property and social mores culminate in their effort to burn down the occupied Littlepage residence. For Cooper, the creeping spread of corruption across generations is not coincidental or absurd; instead, it represents the "gradual undermining of just opinions that forms the imminent danger of our social system." As a result, he maintains that "the lover of real liberty, under such circumstances, should never forget that the road to despotism lies along the borders of the slough of licentiousness" (*Chainbearer* 432). Hyperbolically, Cooper even warns that the Anti-Rent Wars are just the beginning: whereas in the recently concluded dispute over property rights "the violence which has occurred was limited to the loss of a single life … the chances were, and still are, that it will extend to civil war" (*Chainbearer* 5).

As the saga progresses, Cooper exhibits less and less patience for arguments made by those who dispute the inviolability of landlords' property rights. In *The Chainbearer*, Mordy Littlepage and Captain Andries Coejemaan (the titular "Chainbearer," or Littlepage family's land surveyor) engage in a lengthy dispute with Thousandacres, the squatter who is busily selling timber from land that Mordy's father owns but has never seen in person. At first, Thousandacres seems to have an intellectually interesting, Lockean case; namely, that the value of labor he has expended upon the land should give him a right to it regardless of who owns the legal title. "My sweat and labor be in them boards; and it's as good a sap, any day. What a man sweats for, he has a right to." Mordy responds by noting, "This was somewhat loose morality, it is true, since a man might sweat in bearing away his neighbor's goods" (458). For a while, Cooper seems to ask readers to take the debate seriously, perhaps even recalling its echoes of Natty and Judge Temple's disputes over the origin of property rights in *The Pioneers*. But whereas Natty and Temple's recapitulation of French Revolution debates maintains interest because there seems to be merit on both sides, Cooper designates Thousandacres as a clear loser in *The Chainbearer*. Instead of claiming the land itself (like Locke would have it), he asks only for the usufruct right of selling the timber he has mixed his labor with. Ultimately, the Chainbearer forces Thousandacres to admit that his claim boils down to the fact that he "crave[s]" the land, meaning that the Littlepages' prior "craving"—and use of proper legal channels—validates their title. This didactic presentation intensifies in *The Redskins*. There, Cooper presents a monologic discourse in which Hugh (Mordy's grandson) and Ro Littlepage mutually reinforce one another's points and disparage the claims of Anti-Renters at great length. This concluding novel ultimately denies the tenants anything more than a straw-man's voice.

The Littlepage scions' insistence that contracts are absolute betrays a shocking lack of sympathy for the plight of both squatters and legal tenants. *The Chainbearer* and *The Redskins* describe two contrasting estates initially affiliated with the Littlepage family: Ravensnest, where tenants purchase leases; and Mooseridge, where most farms are sold outright to small freeholders. One might expect Cooper to utilize this contrast as a social experiment designed to explore which system

[387] The emphasis on manners does more than make the series more Burkean: it brings Cooper's career full circle. Cooper's first novel *Precaution* (1820) was written in imitation of English domestic novels. Recently, critics have begun noting the sentimental strains throughout Cooper's oeuvre, reconfiguring earlier accounts that pigeonholed Cooper as a purely masculine writer (Tawil 130).

is preferable. But instead, juxtaposition merely exists in order to invalidate tenants' claims. Again and again, the Littlepage patriarchs insist that because the tenants had a free choice between leases and titles, they have no grounds for complaint within the system of tenancy, even when rents later become oppressive. The fact that the tenants' choices may have been less than free, as they were often constrained by poverty to choose the piecemeal pricing of the lease rather than outright purchase, hardly enters into the Littlepages' thinking. Nor does the reality that later generations of tenants suffer as a result of choices made by their parents or grandparents mitigate the case. Contracts are ironclad, either way. Just as property is inherited, so is debt: "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generations" (*Chainbearer* 243). Bad business decisions amount to fatal flaws, moral stains passed down to sons and daughters. What Cooper seems unwilling to acknowledge is that far from Burkean intergenerational contracts functioning as a force of social cohesion, by the period of the Anti-Rent Wars the *burdens* of inheritance have so alienated tenants that they now become the impetus for social upheaval.

One particularly galling instance shows how Cooper's increasing belief that contracts are absolute leaves the Littlepages with no pity for their neighbors' plight. In *The Chainbearer*, Jason Newcome is financially pressed to ally with Thousandacres because of the historical oddity of "three-lives leases." Often, landowners provided leases that were initially either rent-free or they charged extraordinarily low fees, supposedly to give the settlers a long grace period to establish a profitable farm. Instead of rents rising at the end of a fixed term, a tenant taking out a "three-lives lease" had a fixed amount of time to designate three people of his choosing. Only when all three died would the rent abruptly increase, often to exorbitant rates. Typically, the head of the household would designate himself, his wife, and one of their children. But when Jason Newcome takes out a lease, he "placed his lives on three infants," each of whom dies while very young. Instead of sympathizing with Jason's tragic loss of both his children *and* his financial security (or offering him leniency), Mordy Littlepage cold-heartedly berates him for his shortsightedness, given the high rates of infant mortality in frontier settlements. According to Mordy, by trying to cheat the system and take advantage of the landowners, Jason has shown his true colors and deserves what he gets.

At times this emphasis on property rights and contracts even makes Cooper distort history. In *The Redskins*, an ancient Indian brave named Susquesus contrasts the Anti-Renters—the so-called "Injins" of the book's subtitle, who appropriate Native dress as disguises during their rallies—with authentic "Indians" like himself. He suggests that the Anti-Renter's protests represent the same spirit of land-hunger that drove earlier white patricians to buy and steal Native land. Rather than let these almost karmic implications breathe, Cooper quickly dismisses the implication that *the white landlords* deserve to be punished. He hastens to have Susquesus acknowledge that "there is one difference": the fact that authentic Natives ("Indians") honored their contracts and left, whereas the white Anti-Renter (or "pale-face Injin") "will not keep his word with pale-face" (*Redskins* 514). In this stunning reversal, Cooper does more than elide the ways that treaties were notoriously misleading and exploitative: he has the gall to make a Native the paradigmatic defender of the treaties, which in turn become idealized exemplars for ironclad contractual obligation.

In addition to glorifying property rights (for the rich), Cooper displays concerning anti-democratic sentiments as the series progresses. In *The Redskins,* he portrays not only Anti-Rent protesters, but also post-Jacksonian era *voters*, as a uniform mob that is not to be trusted. He seeks to refute the "pernicious doctrine" that America "is a government of men, instead of one of principles" and derides the idea that "the majority *must* rule" (*Redskins* 136). These conservative retrenchments have been noticed by many readers, and as a result *The Redskins* is generally considered one of Cooper's most didactic, least enjoyable, and qualitatively worst books. What has *not* been observed—and what carries the most important consequences for my argument about the roots of the disjunction between Burkean ecological thought and the recent conservative overemphasis on

property rights—is the fact that Cooper's defenses of contracts and land ownership intensify in inverse proportion to the frequency with which he allows his environmental commitments to lapse.

As in earlier novels, Cooper turns to nature to justify his political positions; only now, he uses what he finds to excoriate supposed democratic excesses rather than lament environmentally shortsighted behavior. In a particularly notable scene in *The Chainbearer*, Cooper returns to one his favorite symbols for wastefulness: pigeons. In both *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, massive flocks of passenger pigeons signify environmental destruction; in the former book, the settlers indiscriminately slaughter them, and in the latter, Magua uses them to represent gluttonous white appetites. In *The Chainbearer*, Mordy and his love interest Dus become engulfed in a flock nesting within the forest, colliding with the birds. In a scene that diverges from Cooper's earlier works, Mordy waves away questions of environmental scarcity. [388] Mordy is not concerned that the pigeon is "a very voracious bird" because "American forests" are so vast that there is "probably a fruit bearing tree for each" of the millions of birds "within an hour's flight." Mordy represents their frenetic motion as a political parable for the way that masses (or "numbers") lose all appropriate caution. The birds clearly foreshadow the destructive consequences of the "rule by numbers" (i.e., democracy) that the Anti-Renters espouse in *The Redskins*. For an alternative form of government, Mordy again looks to the natural world. "The best government of which we know anything is that of the universe; and it is so, merely because it proceeds from a single will, that will being without blemish" (*Chainbearer* 215-220). Instead of replicating the embrace of proto-ecological complexity and interconnection that glimmers through in The Leatherstocking Tales, Mordy uses the appeal to natural order to praise a benevolent dictatorship. The Burkean hallmark of humility is still there, as he admits that humans can use *any* form of government tyrannically, but he seems most concerned with the tyranny of majorities, and not the tyranny of oligarchies.

As a result of such scenes, the Littlepage trilogy (like *The Pioneers*) can be read as a tale of environmental declension, but Cooper no longer seems troubled by the changes. In some cases, he even seems to celebrate environmental despoliation. In *Satanstoe*, Cooper presents the new frontier in all its sublime beauty, but the scenes of forest description that were so essential to The Leatherstocking Tales are now infrequent, rote, and half-hearted. *The Chainbearer* is a story about the consequences of land transformation. But here, Cooper is less alarmed at the ugliness and revolutionary pace of land transformation than concerned with who *gets* to be the one to deforest the land. In place of a debate between a utilitarian conservationist (Temple) and a preservationist (Natty), he presents a conflict between competing loggers. The lower-class, roughneck hero position within the novel remains, but the character is transformed: instead of presenting a proto-environmentalist saint who questions the very basis of property ownership (Natty), Cooper gives us a land surveyor whose job is to give concrete shape to the abstraction of a property title (the Chainbearer). As if that were not enough, Cooper's narrator unknowingly foreshadows Whitman by erupting into a sudden ode to "The American axe!" What was formerly Billy Kirby's weapon of mass environmental destruction is now hailed as having "made more real and lasting conquests than the sword of any warlike people that ever lived; but they have been conquests that have left civilization in their train instead of havoc and desolation." Rather than voice Burkean distaste for the reckless speed of landscape transformation, Cooper now lets Mordy crow that these "wonderful changes" have taken place in "a brief quarter century" thanks to "this beautiful, well-prized, ready and efficient implement, the American axe!" (*Chainbearer* 95-96). Meanwhile, by the final novel in the

[388] One of the first warnings that passenger pigeons might be persecuted to extinction was issued by Bénédict Henry Révoil in 1847, just two year after the publication of *The Chainbearer*. As the threats to the birds became more readily apparent, Cooper seemed to care about them less, obviating Natty's proto-preservationist concerns in *The Pioneers*.

series, Cooper barely bothers to describe the nonhuman world at all, alternating between glorifications of its transformed state and fears that the Anti-Renters dressed as Natives will return society to a savage state of nature.

One could dismiss the extreme sentiments expressed by characters in *The Chainbearer* and *The Redskins* as satire, but there is good reason to believe that they are merely comedically amplified versions of Cooper's own beliefs.[389] In *The Redskins*, Cooper's imagined "Editor" warns against conflating the three generations of Littlepage narrators' youthful exuberance with his own positions. The warning is necessary. Critics who would never mistake the underground man for Dostoevsky or Humbert Humbert for Nabokov too often fail to remember that Cooper can create ironic distance from his characters. But the "Editor" does not condemn the substance of the Littlepages' observations so much as their mode of expression, claiming "as to the moral and political principles connected with this matter, we are wholly of the side of Messrs. Littlepage" even though some of their "phrases" are "out of place, perhaps, in the mouths of those who act solely in the capacity of essayists and historians" (*Redskins* 537). Even if we assume that Cooper uses the Editor himself as a second-order ironic fictional apparatus, the stances throughout the prefaces—as well as many of Cooper's more public and private statements on the Anti-Rent War—reflect his alignment with the Littlepages' increasingly stringent defenses of property rights and concomitant lack of concern about their complicity in environmental destruction.

Cooper's vacillation between property rights and environmental duties registers a tension within conservative thought that is present in Burke's writings and that will likely never be resolved in a permanent way. But the extremity of Cooper's shift from *The Pioneers* to *The Littlepage Trilogy* uncannily parallels in miniature the post-1980 Republican Party's abandonment of nascent environmental consciousness in favor of a "freedom" that is too often reductively construed as freedom to own and transform property without facing consequences. However, just as *The Littlepage Trilogy* does not unwrite *The Pioneers*, it is worth noting ways Burkean environmental strains *have* at times helped shape conservative thought and action in America. Republicans began the twentieth century with a president-naturalist deeply committed to conservationism (Teddy Roosevelt). With the seminal 1953 publication of *The Conservative Mind*, Russell Kirk set the tone for postwar conservatism by repeatedly suggesting that an enriched natural world was part of the fiber of American experience. Even while he argued that Burke did not do enough to stop the enclosure movement's environmental harms and resulting "decay of British rural society," Kirk strenuously maintained that a Burkean defense of tradition necessitated protecting "the resources of nature" in decline. "All that a conscientious man can aspire to be is a literal conservative," he argued, "hoarding what remains of culture *and of natural wealth* against the fierce appetites of modern life" (362). Tellingly, Kirk often sounds almost identical to *both* Burke, the "father of conservatism," and Aldo Leopold, one of the heroes of the progressive environmental movement, claiming that "We have no right to imperil the happiness of posterity *by imprudently tinkering* with the heritage of humanity" (57; emphasis added).[390] Kirkean/Burkean conservatism flourished during the Cold War, especially as conservatives tried to connect communism with Jacobinism (Maciag 189). Relatedly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a surprising number of conservatives supported environmental measures. Most notably, Richard Nixon presided over the bipartisan establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species, and National Environmental Policy Acts (the last of which won unanimous support in the Senate). Even midway

[389] McGann presents an account of *The Redskins* as a satire in "Cooper's Anti-Aesthetic."

[390] See chapter one for Burke on the perils of discarding natural forces we don't yet understand and Aldo Leopold on conservation as "intelligent tinkering."

through his presidency, Ronald Reagan defined a "conservative" as "one who conserves … our countryside, our rivers and mountains, our plains and meadows and forests" (qtd. in Drake 180).

Although the environmental dimensions of Burke's thought have never been fully elaborated or understood, it is no coincidence that Burke's influence within conservative circles has waned at the same time as hostility to environmental protections have increased. The libertarian emphasis on freedom and property rights (derived from Friedrich Hayek's tradition, not Burke's and Kirk's) was ascendant on the right during Reagan's second term, triumphant during Newt Gingrich's 1994 "Republican Revolution," and (along with a *rhetorical* emphasis on individual responsibility and legislative commitments to disallowing abortion and allowing guns) has emerged as a near-universal litmus test for right-wing belonging during the early twenty-first century.[391] Being against environmental protections can now accurately be described as a "bedrock tenet of mainstream right-wing gospel" (Dreher 174).

However, as this history of ideological transformation suggests, it is a mistake to assume that the positions seemingly required for Republican Party membership at this historical moment will remain static and unchangeable. Perhaps conservatives can return to forsaken environmental positions—and even build more dynamic Burkean political ecologies, much like Cooper's post-Littlepage novels (such as *The Crater*, 1847) that returned to environmental themes. For one thing, as many noted both during the reign of interventionist neo-conservatism of the George W. Bush presidency and in the wake of resurgent white nationalism that helped sweep Donald Trump into office, the Republican party is not synonymous with conservatism in any traditional sense of the term. Since 2016, many disaffected classical/Burkean conservatives, including media members and opinion-shapers such as Burke disciple David Brooks, are more open to new alliances than they have been in decades. There could not be a more propitious—or urgent time—to delineate a history of conservative environmental thought.

This scholarly task can and should intersect with a small, but growing, movement of conservative environmentalists.[392] These green conservatives have begun to invoke Burke pursue both philosophical and activist programs.[393] In *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet,* Richard Scruton invokes three of Burke's concepts to frame conservative conservationism: "respect for the dead, the 'little platoon,' and the voice of tradition" (215). In keeping with Burke's emphasis on "prescription" as a guiding light to maintain accumulated stores of social knowledge, Scruton suggests that rich environments are "trusts" accumulated over time and therefore worth preserving. In the United States, organizations such as Conservamerica prominently cite Burke's influence on their webpages. Meanwhile, even without explicitly emphasizing Burke, the Evangelical Environmental Network attempts to bring tradition, religion, and environmentalism together to promote stewardship under the moniker of "creation care." Such organizations particularly stress the

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391 For more on the post-Cold War decline of Burkean conservatism in America, see Maciag's chapter "Contemporary Conservatives."

392 As of May 2019, the Wikipedia entry on Green conservatism foregrounded a Burke quote from *Reflections*: "the earth, the kind and equal mother of all ought not to be monopolized to foster the pride and luxury of any men." Unfortunately, it is a poor choice: the quote is taken entirely out of context, as it comes from a passage where Burke is describing what he sees as the naïve views of the revolutionaries (*Reflections* 224). The connection between Burke's *ecologies* and a hypothetical Burkean environmentalism is both more roundabout but also more productively complex than this particular decontextualized selection makes it seem. Nonetheless, the selection suggests that conservative environmentalists are *already* looking to Burke for inspiration, suggesting the value of a more developed framework.

393 See also Gray, *Beyond the New Right*; Bliese, *The Greening of Conservative America*; Ophuls and Boyan, *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity Revisited*; Drake, *Loving Nature, Fearing the State*, and Scruton's "Conservatism" (in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*) and *Green Philosophy*.

need to protect human communities that have entwined their Burkean roots with nonhuman environments. With access to alternative intellectual genealogies and openness to new coalitions, Burkean environmentalists and left-wing back-to-the-landers may find they have more in common with one another (especially deep commitments to community, localism, and sustainability) than with either major political party's connection to corporations and globalism.[394]

In order to foster such alliances, certain commitments will be required from liberals as well. People are seldom persuaded to change when all the movement is demanded from one side. If environmental seriousness is treated as a badge of progressive belonging that must be purchased through capitulation to a range of other progressive commitments or through complete renunciation of anthropocentrism, common ground will be hard to find. More specifically, if liberals appeal to Burke's prominence within the history of conservative thought only to shame conservatives into ecological commitments, conservatives will likely resist. Instead, liberals should be open to the idea that Burkean thought might have something unique to *offer* to environmental understanding and politics. At the conclusion of chapter one, I described a few ways that Burkean conservatives might enhance existing ecocritical insights or even provide new ones. For centuries, Burkeans have been developing a vocabulary to describe modes of *social* maintenance, preservation, stewardship, restoration, and conservation. Liberals should engage in good faith dialog to see which of conservatives' hard-won insights can transfer from the social realm to the environmental realm. This is especially the case when it comes to the preservation of communities and practices that are inseparably intertwined with particular ecosystems or bioregions threatened by altered environmental conditions. In such settings, conservative thought may refine our ability to articulate differences between acceptable and unacceptable kinds of change (a necessity in a time when no piece of land is untouched by human influence) and set environmental restoration benchmarks.

Additionally, as my chapter on compost suggested, there may be innovative ways to synthesize revolutionary and conservative modalities by carefully considering our interventions in the natural world and the metaphors we use to imagine the relation of past, present, and future (or in Burke's terms, "those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born," *Reflections* 96). In both philosophical and practical terms, revitalized regional permacultures may represent a starting point for generative re-mixing of worn-out dichotomous thought about old and new, nature and culture, radicalism and conservatism, continuity and change, rural and urban, democrat and republican, producer and consumer, property and environment. In more philosophical terms, if America's past (from democratic revolution to slavery to the genocidal removal of Native peoples) is metaphorically seen as neither relic nor refuse, but as material to be carefully collected *and transformed* in order to nourish new growth, we may enable change that is grounded in—that *grows out of*—our awareness of past flaws, shortcomings, and traumas. In these regards, Melville, Hawthorne, and other nineteenth-century authors' innovative constructions of history as not only a usable past, but as a *compostable* past, may offer a dynamic source of inspiration for moving beyond familiar sticking points in debates about American exceptionalism. Such composting cannot be a one-time, purgative act, but must be an *ongoing* process: never complete, but compositionally altered with each seasonal iteration.

In more concrete terms, Hawthorne and Melville's representations of mossy revolutionary monuments (The Old Manse, the sunken Concord bridge, and graves of British and American soldiers) can serve as particularly useful demonstrations of a way forward that dwells upon the past but also helps to curate its decay. Hawthorne believed that the Old Manse should be mossy even

[394] Rod Dreher detailed an early version of such allegiances in *The Crunchy Con Manifesto*. In his ten-point plan for conservatives ("cons") to embrace environmentalism, number six reads: "A good rule of thumb: Small and Local and Old and Particular are to be preferred over Big and Global and New and Abstract" (2).

though—and perhaps *because*—mosses can serve as agents of dissolution that imperil the structure's physical integrity. Similarly, Melville pointedly counterposed the turgid patriotic excess of the Bunker Hill Monument with Israel Potter's anonymous, moss-covered grave, suggesting that the latter was a more apt testament to the Revolution's mix of triumphs and half-filled, forgotten promises. Hawthorne and Melville's depictions of mossy monuments grant a central role to the process of disintegration in order to suggest that the work of revolution is fundamentally unfinished, but also to warn against a recursion to revolutionary fervor that sweeps away the old entirely, thereby doing violence to history itself.

Hawthorne and Melville's anti-monumental valuation of decay might even provide a powerful new paradigm for preserving material history. Building on Hawthorne, we might demand that the Old Manse should continue to be mossy. The 2010 *Old Manse Management Plan* outlines the Trustees commitment to "a strong conservation ethic" preserving the Old Manse's "Cultural Resources" and "Natural Resources" alike. However, moss risks once again being classified as one of the "Agent[s] of Deterioration" that poses "Significant Threats to Cultural Resources" (Trustees 4-13). Because of the title of Hawthorne's story collection, the Old Manse is most famous *for being mossy*. Its "cultural" and "natural" histories are peculiarly symbiotic. This makes the Old Manse an ideal test site for curated decay. Even if they slowly compromise the building's physical integrity, mosses will reveal history as an unfolding, dynamic process rather than a static artifact. Additionally, if the old manse *cannot* be mossy, the *absence* of moss might be rendered conspicuous. If warming climate patterns mean that maintaining the mosses of the Old Manse would require cultivation rather than benign neglect, this fact should be pointed out to visitors. It can serve as a potent reminder that in a world changing because of human activity, the fantasy of *static* sustainability depends upon active interventions rather than a reified dichotomy that imaginatively and practically separates humans from supposedly untouched natural spaces.

We might even apply Hawthorne's insights to much more controversial monuments. To invert a notable Neil Young lyric, perhaps *disgraced* monuments should be allowed to rust, rather than being burned out of our collective memory. For Hawthorne, even the American Revolution was "a long and deadly struggle" rather than a triumph of liberty. His vision of using decay to activate memory and meaning holds equally true for far more offensive stains on national history. A Confederate monument carted away or melted down loses the *power to warn* us that white Southern nostalgia *continues* to play a destructive role in our politics. Equally importantly, when removed, statues quickly lose the potential to *register the unfolding history* of protest *against* Southern racism—absence, hard to dramatize, fails to mobilize resistance, and is soon forgotten. By contrast, a shoddily constructed, crumpled statue pulled down from its pedestal and left where it falls serves as a reminder that history is still unfolding; that memory can be mediated, that futures can be forged by actors other than old white men and their memorial erections. A graffiti-tagged marble monument rewrites a fantasy of permanence into a palimpsest; it is a more powerful spur to change than a history whitewashed by adherence to a false binary that makes us choose between either "heroic" presence or redemptive absence.

There are, of course, hard questions to be asked about who gets to decide which monuments should be open to which forms of disruptive interventions. It is not my intention to make such decisions: only to offer a provocation by noting that ideologically charged curatorial decisions are *already being made* in largely invisible, undemocratic ways. In this light, it is worth recalling Hawthorne's message that even *withholding* curation of monuments opens them to agents of decay: animal actors (the pigeon who defecates, the dog who urinates) and the non-human, quasi-agential forces that Bruno Latour and Jane Bennet call actants: the rain which weathers, the lightning which rends, the smog which smothers, the mold and moss which re-colonize the fallen colonizer's furtive crevices. By corroding and encrusting, these dispersed actants help demonstrate that ideologies of

racial hierarchy, presented by their proponents as "natural" extensions of "natural" principles to human society, are in fact social fictions. A moss-encroached statue suggests that white supremacy is a historically contingent, culturally produced artifact that requires *unceasing* intervention to maintain. In short, while we need counter-monuments to truer, more diverse heroes than those currently standing outside Southern statehouses, we might also do well to follow Hawthorne in remembering that *refusing* renovation can at times be as subversive as removal, defenestration, or desecration. Deliberate neglect and curated decay may also serve as particularly strategic compromises: apt means of composting a troubled past.

Even in the case of environmental justice, the distinctions between right and left need not be as absolute as we have assumed. In Chesnutt's *Conjure Tales*, Julius subverts new manifestations of white privilege in order to conserve his community's modes of relating to the land. Similarly, if they are offered a philosophically and politically palatable path to foreground environmental consciousness, struggling, predominantly white rural communities may reassess who their true allies are as they strive to maintain long-established connections to place. Perhaps it is too utopian, but the title of Wordsworth's Book Eighth in *The Prelude* comes to mind: "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind." Perhaps Wordsworth is correct, and people *can* at times come to care for people unlike themselves *vis-a-vis* a shared experience of the land and its endangerment. If so, a philosophy of conservatism which encourages its adherents to cultivate and openly express care for the environment may help enable unlikely connections between precarious communities that have traditionally found themselves at odds with one another. A shared environmental politics may even make the talismanic compensation of whiteness that ethno-nationalists have used to cast a spell on much of rural America less appealing than green forms of cross-racial, class-based solidarity.

However, at the same time that openness to learning from one another and compromise are necessary, there may be certain lines that liberals justifiably insist on holding. There are situations when environmental justice struggles must come first: when insurrectionary defenses of vulnerable (usually, but not always, minority) communities imperiled by environmental toxins and/or climate change are simply more pressing than protecting the feelings of conservatives. Sometimes the changes that can come from political upheaval—be it the Anti-Rent War, the Standing Rock protests, or civil disobedience in Flint—are worth alienating conservatives who might or might not become conservationist allies (the modern equivalents of James Fenimore Cooper).

Finally, it may initially seem that Burkean ecologies are least equipped to handle the most urgent environmental issue of all: climate change. In order to even *acknowledge* climate change as an issue, some conservatives may need to reevaluate the residue of certain French Revolution-era political and cultural allegiances. In some ways, climate change denialism—and the broader conservative skepticism of science—can trace its deepest roots to the period when revolutionaries sought to conjoin sweeping social change and the technocratic rearrangement of land-use patterns (see chapter two). But the time is long overdue for conservatives to turn their skepticism away from the *descriptive and predictive technologies* that detail the impacts of climate change and towards the destructive industrial technologies that are *creating* its radical dangers.

Even if conservatives will take science seriously, more paradigm shifts may be in order. Modern green conservatives like Richard Scruton address the role that Burkean "little platoons" can play in protecting beloved local landscapes much more persuasively than they present strategies for addressing a devastating global emergency. But Burkean classical conservatives—in distinction to conservative factions that thrive upon disruptive revanchism—should *particularly* care about climate change precisely *because* it is abruptly revolutionary. At its core, Burkean thought attempts to regulate the *pace* of change. Climate change, perhaps more than any form of political unrest, is proceeding at a pace that is entirely unprecedented in the world's history. Every few months, new studies seem to indicate that warming is increasing faster than expected; the acceleration itself accelerates. One need

not believe in extinction scenarios to pay heed to the many credible warnings that climate change will cause (and already is causing) mass refugee crises, resource wars, and other profound rents in the social fabric. Were Burke living today, he would have to carefully consider whether "All circumstances taken together, the French revolution" *or climate change* "is the most astonishing [thing] that has hitherto happened in the world" (*Reflections* 10).

Ultimately, as much as conservatives *should* see Burkean reasons to carefully evaluate the revolutionary upheaval global climate change is already causing, liberals *need* them to do so. Although it seems that even the center cannot hold—or continue to exist—in such a changing meteorological and political climate, right and left must cleave together on this one issue, however much they cleave apart on others. If half the population (give or take) continues their carbon emissions unchecked, it will hardly matter what the other half does. Even if narrow majorities of the American electorate pass laws that compel more environmentally responsible behaviors (and perhaps overturn them four years later), the global nature of the problem will continue unabated if only liberals care about the issue. But even as a slim majority is insufficient, meaningful responses do not require unanimity. The fact that certain conservatives (especially those who are unmotivated by Burkean rationale) might not be persuaded is not a reason to avoid making allies. Only when temperamentally and ideologically disparate people can identify many philosophical paths leading towards environmental priorities can sensible climate change policy become the *default* political position. To these ends, conservative conservationism is far from a holistic solution. Considered through a liberal or radical lens, it seems to necessitate half-measures and unpalatable compromises. But ironically, Burke's proto-ecological insights might help create a world where environmentalism becomes *common sense*. It is a starting point: a trailhead that originates in the city; a neglected and overgrown path heading off towards an uncertain destination; a forgotten and hitherto less-taken road, perhaps rediscovered too late: but a beginning, nonetheless.

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