

**'Fellowship of sense with all that breathes':
Eighteenth-Century British Women Poets, War, and the Environment**

by

Amie Christine Seidman

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Approved by

Paula R. Bakscheider, Chair, Professor of English
Jonathan Bolton, Professor of English
Christopher Keirstead, Associate Professor of English
Donna Bohanan, Professor of History

Abstract

In “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” environmental historian William Cronon writes that in order to live responsibly with nature, we must learn to recognize nature in our own backyards. The poems I include in my dissertation are written by important eighteenth-century women writers, who did recognize the nature in their own backyards and understood the role that nature played in the development of their nation and the world. This dissertation employs Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies to poems published between 1780 and 1812 by various women poets, including Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, Anne Bannerman, and Anna Letitia Barbauld. Throughout the century, women’s poetry offers insight into civilian responses to war and testifies to the fact that women did write about public and political affairs, and in my dissertation, I argue that eighteenth-century women writers understood war through the damage it did to the environment. Their poetry reveals an eighteenth-century environmental consciousness, which reminds us that the environment has always been, as Lawrence Buell states, “a pressing problem.” It is not a coincidence that oftentimes their poems use the environment to discuss the impact of war because they understood that military glory is only the result of both human *and* non-human destruction. In exploring the role nature plays in eighteenth-century women’s war poetry, I prove that an environmental awareness existed in the eighteenth century.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Defining Nature	10
War on Nature.....	13
Ecocriticism	14
Eighteenth-Century Environmental Crises	18
War, Poetry and Ecology: Two Examples.....	30
The Chapters	33
Chapter One: “Fruitless conquest” and the “Suff’ring World”: Anna Seward’s <i>Monody on Major André</i> (1781) and Helen Maria Williams’s <i>Peru</i> (1784)	36
Humans and Nature: “Those good green people”	53
War on Nature: “Field of Death”	63
The Futility of War: “An absurd and ruinous attempt”	73
Worthless Products: “glitt’ring bane”	80
Peace: The “Benignant Power” of Nature	87
Inter-relatedness	92
Chapter Two: “Brothers in Science” and “a softer form”: Knowledge, Women, and Harmony in Anna Seward’s <i>Elegy on Captain Cook</i> (1780) and Anne Bannerman’s <i>Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory</i> (1794)	98
Illuminating “a Nation’s woe”	107
Voyages of Exploration and Conquest: “Mark the full tide of Desolation spread” ...	117

Domestic Consequences: “Ill-fated matron[s]”	129
Imagining Home and Harmony: “for a lodge, where Peace might love to dwell”	132
Chapter Three: The “tribes fuliginous invade” “the green earth”: War on Nature in Anna Seward’s <i>To Colebrook Dale</i> (1787) and <i>Colebrook Dale</i> (1791) and Anne Bannerman’s <i>The Genii</i> (1800).....	137
Spirit(s) of the Natural World: “Genius of thy shades”	145
Pre-industrialized Landscapes: “the green earth”	149
Nature Under Attack: “tribes fuliginous invade”.....	152
Global Imperial Economies: “Conquests yet to come”	166
The Power of the Natural World: “the mountain-waves returning force”	172
A Lesson in Conservation: “Time shall be no more”	174
Chapter Four: “Time can ne’er restore”: Improvement Questioned in Anna Seward’s <i>The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape</i> (1790) and Charlotte Smith’s <i>Beachy Head</i> (1807)	179
Nature’s History: “mock[ing] the ravages of relentless time”	190
War on the Land: “the oppressed earth”	196
Destroying to Improve: “The foe of beauty, and the bane of sense”	203
The End of a Way of Life: “To some better region fled forever”.....	210
Epilogue: “Shrink from the future, and regret the past”: Charlotte Smith’s <i>The Emigrants</i> (1793) and Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s <i>Eighteen Hundred and Eleven</i> (1812).....	214
Bibliography	225

Introduction

“The Earth will not function in the future in the same manner that it has functioned in the past. A decisive transformation has taken place. The human had nothing to say in the emergent period of the universe before the present. In the future, however, the human will be involved in almost everything that happens. We have passed over the threshold. We cannot make a blade of grass. Yet there is liable not to be a blade of grass in the future unless it is accepted, protected, and fostered by the human. Sometimes, too, there is a healing that can be brought about by human assistance.”

— Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as a Sacred Community*¹

First published posthumously in 1748, Mary Leapor’s poem *The Beauties of the Spring* reveals her own interest in the natural world, but also gives voice to a national concern regarding the consequences—environmental and otherwise—of Britain’s constant warfare.² She opens the poem by describing a time of renewal and rebirth as “smiling Nature decks the Infant Year.” Murmuring rivers, humming bees, “dewy buds [with] their blushing Bosoms” and “new Liv’ries [in] the green Woods” signify spring. Leapor also draws upon pastoral images, and, unlike in her pastoral poems, this time she idealizes Phillis and Cymon; their descriptions are reminiscent of the stereotypical milkmaid and shepherd:

¹ The epigraph to this chapter is drawn from Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 21. The same quotation is used as an epigraph to “God’s Green Earth: Creation, Faith, Crisis,” *Reflections* 94, no. 1 (Spring 2007), copyright page.

² Mary Leapor, “The Beauties of the Spring,” in *Poems upon several occasions. By Mrs. Leapor* (London: printed and sold by J. Roberts, 1748), 15–18. The first, second and fourth paragraphs include quotations from this poem.

Then Phillis hastens to her darling Cow,
Whose shining Tresses wanton on her Brow,
While to her Cheek enliv'ning Colours fly
And Health and Pleasure sparkle in her Eye.
Unspoil'd by Riches, nor with Knowledge vain,
Contented Cymon whistles o'er the Plain.

In this description, Leapor romanticizes the rural countryside as it mirrors spring. It is not a place of work; instead, it is a place of pleasure and relaxation. It is neither a place of poverty nor plenty; instead, it is a place where individuals have what they need in order to live simply. Yet, the positive and purposeful work of “sagacious” bees, which “their Labours now renew,” serves to remind the reader of the labor of war that occurs later in the poem and is also a constant presence for British citizens during the eighteenth century.

Spring follows “laws” written by nature, not humans. Respect, not violence, passes down from generation to generation: “See yon proud Elm that shines in borrow'd Charms, / While the curl'd Woodbines deck her aged Arms.” Leapor opens her poem with a “hail” to happiness and cheerfulness, where “Peace and Pleasure,” not war and misery, “reign”; however, just beyond her idealized spring, “ghastly Woe,” “Cries of Wretches,” “gloss'd Hate,” “sainted Wolves,” and “busy Faces” await. Nature is free from both people and their problems; it “shuns the scorching Ray” in the same way that it “shuns” war. The word “reign” can be linked to Britain’s own monarchy, and in using this word, Leapor juxtaposes spring to Britain’s government, suggesting that this season offers an alternative form of government that is diametrically opposed to Britain’s current one.

During the long eighteenth century (1640–1815), Britain was involved in actual warfare 60 percent of the time. The War of the Three Kingdoms and the Bishops’ Wars

in Scotland began in 1639 and marked the end of almost a decade and a half of peace and the beginning of a long and violent century. Historian David Scott argues that the second Bishops' War, which began in 1640, "was the pivotal conflict of the entire period" because it led to the Irish Rising of 1641 and eventually to the English Civil Wars (1642–46).³ After the civil wars, England continued to engage in conflicts with Scotland and Ireland between 1649 and 1652. After these battles, England fought the first of three wars with the Dutch between 1652 and 1654. Following this war, England fought Spain and captured Jamaica in 1655.⁴ Britain engaged in two other wars with the Dutch between 1665 and 1667 and between 1672 and 1674; all of the Dutch wars were undertaken in order for Britain to secure control of the sea and trading routes, which was one of the first steps to becoming an imperial power.⁵ After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Britain became even more involved in European affairs because it wanted to maintain its superpower status so as to avoid a French invasion of the British Isles.⁶ In

³ David Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms, 1637–1649* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 22. For more information on the Bishops' Wars and the English Civil Wars, see Michael Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (New York: Allen Lane, 2008); David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution, 1640–1642* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006); Scott, *Politics and War*; Malcolm Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals: Winning the British Civil Wars, 1642–1652* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴ See Michael J. Braddick, "The English Government, War, Trade, and Settlement, 1625–1688," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Origins of Empire*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 286–308.

⁵ For further discussion of the Dutch Wars, see Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, vol. 4, *England's Commercial and Colonial Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1938), 35–38; Daniel A. Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of 'a grand machine empire,'" in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London: Routledge, 1994), 185–223; David Ormond, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Charles Wilson, *Profit and Power: A Study of England and the Dutch Wars* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978). For an interesting argument on the connection between the English Civil Wars and the Anglo-Dutch wars, see Simon Groenveld, "The English Civil Wars as a Cause of the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1640–1652," *The Historical Journal* 30, no. 3 (September 1987): 541–66.

⁶ See H. V. Bowen, *War and British Society, 1688–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Ian Christie also writes that after the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) Britons "feared the decline of their

order to protect itself from France, Britain engaged in war with France and its allies between 1689–97, 1702–13, 1739–63, 1775–83, 1793–1802, and 1803–15.⁷ However, even when Britain was not actively engaged in a war, it was still on the citizens' minds as periods of peace in Britain only meant that they were recovering from one war in order to prepare for the next one. As historian H. V. Bowen writes, "From 1739 the frequency of war was such that periods of peace could almost be regarded as exceptions to the wartime norm."⁸ They were always on the defensive as they tried to avoid a military invasion on their own soil, and even though one could argue that they were successful in keeping war at a distance, the results of their preparation for, defensive strategies to avoid, and participation in wars took a toll on Britons and their landscapes.

Leapor's poem recognizes this destruction, which is why *The Beauties of the Spring* offers nature only as a temporary refuge from the realities of the world. Leapor knows that war will eventually invade nature. She tries to separate war from nature; however, her description of the natural world implicates it in war's destructiveness. Almost exactly halfway through the poem, Leapor urges her audience to escape reality and retreat to nature:

Then haste, my Friend, to yonder *Sylvan* Bowers,
Where Peace and Silence crown the blissful Hours;
In those still Groves no martial Clamours sound,
No streaming Purple stains the guiltless Ground.

The sense of urgency in these two lines is unmistakable and comes from the fact that Leapor knows, as do other British women writers, that nature cannot escape war

country into a minor satellite of France." *Wars and Revolutions: Britain, 1760–1815* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1.

⁷ See Bowen, *War and British Society*, 6; John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 27; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 1.

⁸ Bowen, *War and British Society*, 3. Bowen also explains how even when the British experienced times of relative peace, they still were engaged in small military matters (6–7).

indefinitely because even as the ground of these idealized “*Sylvan Bowers*” is safe from war at the moment, somewhere beyond them, blood does “stain the guiltless Ground.”⁹

In *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, Linda Colley writes that “we know extraordinarily little about how the majority of British civilians responded to this succession of wars, and to the innovations, conquests and dangers that accompanied them.” She continues, writing that “Britons at this time—like Americans in the twentieth century—were able to savour military glory without ever having to pay the price in terms of civilian casualties and large scale domestic destruction.”¹⁰ Leapor suggests that wars did have an effect on Britons as her poem shows that war altered Britons’ lives and landscapes, and it is not the exception. Jane West’s poem, *Spring: An Ode*, published in 1786, compares the cycle of the seasons, in particular Spring, to the cycle of violence: “War too, by intermission unsubdu’d, / Resumes its rage for violence and blood.”¹¹ In her 1790 poem, *An Address to the Muses*, Joanna Baillie explicitly points to poetry’s ability to heal war’s wounds when she writes that

⁹ See James Anderson Winn, *The Poetry of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). In this book, Winn discusses how nineteenth-century poets used the pastoral tradition to critique war; however, Leapor’s poem helps to prove that this discourse stretches back to the mid-eighteenth century.

¹⁰ Colley, *Britons*, 3.

¹¹ Jane West, “Spring: An Ode,” in *Miscellaneous Poetry by Mrs. West*. (London: printed for W.T. Swift, 1786), 37–40, quotation p. 39. At this time armies resumed conflict in the spring and fought until late fall or early winter, because in the winter it was too muddy for the heavy military equipment. This is why there is a “cycle” for war. Colonel H. C. B. Rogers, *The British Army of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1977), 82.

From you, . . . when the scene of blood is o'er,
And groans of death are heard no more,
Still holds the mind each parted form,
When closing glooms o'erspread the day,
And what we love has pass'd away,
Ye kindly bid each pleasing scene
Within the bosom still remain.¹²

Throughout the century women's poetry offers insight into civilian responses to war and testifies to the fact that women did write about public and political affairs. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, poetry was read "as a source of news," and according to Paula Backscheider, "women poets had become a deliberative body that perceived their writing, and were perceived themselves, as having a right to intervene in national life and its debates."¹³ It is also not a coincidence that oftentimes their poems use the environment to discuss the impact of war because they understood that "military glory" is only the result of both human *and* non-human destruction.

My study focuses on well-known women writers, Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams, Anne Bannerman, Charlotte Smith, and Anna Letitia Barbauld, and their "war poems" written in the latter part of the long eighteenth century, specifically 1780–1812.¹⁴ All of these poets were well-known during their lifetimes. For example, Anna Seward was considered the "Queen Muse of Britain"; Charlotte Smith's first work of poetry, *Elegaic Sonnets* (1784), would be in its ninth edition by 1800; and Anne Bannerman's

¹² Joanna Baillie, "An Address to the Muses," in *Poems; wherein it is attempted to describe certain views of nature and of rustic manners; and also, to point out, in some instances, the different influence which the same circumstances produce on different characters*. (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1790), 73–81, quotation p. 79.

¹³ Paula Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 9 and 8, respectively.

¹⁴ The term, "war poems," includes works that reflect the traditional definition of war as a "hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state" *and* the more liberal definition as "a contest, struggle (between living beings or opposing forces)." Both definitions can be found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

first book of poetry, published in 1800, continued to sell through 1806. I intentionally chose some poems that critics frequently discuss; however, unlike their criticism, mine will focus on the environment.¹⁵ In doing so, I will demonstrate that the environment was a concern for eighteenth-century women writers, that they were environmentally conscious, not just lovers of nature, and that eco-critical study of their poetry is a fruitful, even necessary, extension of the field.¹⁶ For women writers, and for Britain, in the eighteenth century, war was—and still is today—an environmental issue. In “Some Principles of Ecocriticism,” William Howarth writes that “although we cast *nature* and *culture* as opposites, in fact they constantly mingle, like water and soil in a flowing stream.” He continues to argue that the “the dogma that culture will always master nature has long directed Western progress, inspiring wars, invasions, and other forms of conquest.”¹⁷ Howarth’s essay and the women writers included in my study expose the societal consequences of viewing nature and culture as separate. In the poems discussed in the following pages, nature is not the focus; instead, the focus is the destruction and/or absence of nature. Discussions of war often focus on the human, not non-human, component, thus creating a division between war and nature. Similarly, portrayals of nature often view it as a place of peace that is isolated from the world and its problems.

¹⁵ See Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain, *Women’s Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730–1820* (New York: St. Martin’s Press in association with The Centre for English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1999); Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*; Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Other works have already begun to apply ecocriticism to earlier centuries. See Sylvia Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); John Parham, *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2002); Robert N. Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

¹⁷ William Howarth, “Some Principles of Ecocriticism,” in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 69 and 77, respectively.

The poems I include in my dissertation, like Leapor's, suggest that these views of war and nature are false because in the poems nature and culture merge. The poets included in this study do not show how humans are "better" than nature; instead, they highlight the differences between the two and in doing so, they emphasize what we destroy when we destroy nature. Their poetry is a call for action, a call to see how Britain's quest for a global identity damaged not only the British landscape but also the world's environments.

Several scholars have laid the groundwork for my own study of eighteenth-century British poetry and nature. Ralph Cohen, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Tim Fulford, and Rachel Crawford among others recognize that writing about nature in the eighteenth century is closely related to the century's political and social circumstances. Indeed, Spacks calls upon scholars to "use details of English politics to reveal the richness of English poetry."¹⁸ In many ways, eighteenth-century scholars have always tried to read poems through a political lens, but they have often failed either because they are too focused on one particular political aspect or they exclude an entire body of writing by women. Ralph Cohen's influential study of James Thomson's *The Seasons* falls into both categories. In his work, he sets out to see how well Thomson's poem related "to the life of its time" and acknowledges that the poem reflects an "awareness of the valued past" as well as the "corruption of this past in the present." Yet, even after he notices that Thomson's poem sees "estates [as] the sources of wealth and the basis of Britain's power," Cohen still does not question the implications of this value system; instead, he concludes that Thomson's poem is "neither for or against the validity of the idea of

¹⁸ Patricia Meyer Spacks, "The Bonds of Nature': Mid-Century Poetry," in *Teaching Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christopher Fox (New York: AMS Press, 1990), 62.

progress.”¹⁹ Cohen’s study of Thomson’s poem may offer some insight into how Thomson, and eighteenth-century British readers, viewed nature—it offers moments of beauty as well as the power to destroy this beauty—but overall Cohen fails to examine closely the “details of English politics” and offers only a limited understanding of Britain’s political and, ultimately, environmental history. Tim Fulford attempts to expand upon Cohen’s work in *Landscape, Liberty, and Authority: Poetry, Criticism, and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*. In his study, he examines a variety of poems as “discourse[s] on landscape” and puts them in the “contexts of contemporary debates in politics.”²⁰ Fulford rightly argues that eighteenth-century poetry “politiciz[es] the landscape” and that “landscape description was a means [for male poets to] make intervention in current political debates.”²¹ Yet by confining his arguments to male poets and restricting “political debates” to issues surrounding land reform, which Rachel Crawford also does in *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700–1830*,²² Fulford and Crawford fail to comprehend all the implications—political and environmental—of landscape description in poetry.

For the most part, scholars have responded to Spacks’s call by showing how the poetry written by men reflects concerns about the enclosure movement and Britain’s empire-building practices. These two topics are usually treated as mutually exclusive, which means that the study of “the details of English politics” requires us to ignore

¹⁹ Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of the Seasons* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 1, 7 and 3 respectively.

²⁰ Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty, and Authority: Poetry, Criticism, and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1.

²¹ Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority*, 1, 16, and 5, respectively. Suvir Kaul’s *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000) considers a similar line of argument, but does include at least two chapters on Anna Letitia Barbauld; however, he does not consider her poetry through an ecocritical lens.

²² In *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape*, Rachel Crawford includes Felicia Hemans in a chapter alongside John Keats and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

certain details so that we can continue to see policies that alter landscapes as separate from policies that attempt to redefine nations. My study will end this separation. The poets included here may not always explicitly show an “awareness” of the past, but they most certainly understand that there is “corruption” in the present that permeates all of Britain, not just the countryside, and their poetry is a plea to the rest of Britain to see what its imperial practices do to its colonies and nation’s landscapes. It is necessary to connect our discussion of politics to the environment because it, too, was—and is—a political issue.

Defining Nature

During the eighteenth century the word “nature” related to both people, as in human nature, and objects of the material world.²³ More specifically, nature writers, along with natural philosophers and political economists, defined nature as “the material world, or its collective objects and phenomena, especially those which man is most directly in contact; frequently the features and products of the earth itself, as contrasted with those of human civilization.”²⁴ In this definition, editor of the 1933 *Oxford English Dictionary*, James A. H. Murray, cites eighteenth-century poet William Cowper, who is known for his poem, *The Task* (1785), which praises rural life. Nature writers initially promoted this view of nature. According to Myra Reynolds in *The Treatment of Nature between Pope and Wordsworth*, writers first valued nature as something that mirrored

²³ For further discussion of this topic, see John Brewer, “Culture, Nature and Nation,” in *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 615–61; Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2000), 295–319; Raymond Williams, “The Green Language,” in *The Country and the City* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1973), 126–41.

²⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*. rev. ed., comp. James A. H. Murray (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1933), s.v. “nature.” The editors of the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* include poet and landscape gardener William Shenstone as well as William Cowper.

human actions and emotions and then viewed it as both beautiful and distinct from humans, which made it worth studying. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, nature writers recognized a unity between humans and the environment, thereby divorcing themselves from the natural philosophers and political economists who continued to espouse a scientific view of nature that is distinguished by its separation from humans.²⁵ Humans are no longer “other” than nature; now they are seen as superior to it, a view supported by “monolithic . . . narratives about the triumphs of human reason over the environment.”²⁶ To define nature as separate and, therefore, inferior to humans is a form of power. Throughout the eighteenth century, this definition of nature both encouraged and condoned Britain’s imperial practices. The Enlightenment’s emphasis on empiricism, natural theology, and natural history led to a “desire for order and systematic arrangement,” which, in turn, established a utilitarian relationship between humans and nature.²⁷ Nature had value based upon its use to humans; mountains were hated because they “deform[ed] the earth” while oceans were treasured as “commercial highway[s].”²⁸ Oceans had another asset, too; they made possible the transport of goods *and* ideas, which meant that British ideas about nature travelled to their colonies.²⁹

Nature was best known through observation, an act that both separates humans from nature and, at the same time, reinforces the usefulness of nature to humans. Natural philosopher William Derham writes, “We can, if need be, ransack the whole globe,

²⁵ Myra Reynolds, *Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), 27–28.

²⁶ See Ann Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition and the Female Talent: Studies in Augustan Poetry* (New York: AMC Press, Inc., 2001), 10 and Bridget Keegan, “Snowstorms, Shipwrecks and Scorching Heat: The Climates of Eighteenth-Century Laboring-Class Locodescriptive Poetry,” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2003), 77.

²⁷ See Christopher Hitt, “Ecocriticism in the Long Eighteenth Century,” *College Literature* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2004), 123 and Reynolds, *Treatment of Nature*, 14.

²⁸ Reynolds, *Treatment of Nature*, 10 and 18, respectively.

²⁹ Parham, *Environmental Tradition*, 3.

penetrate into the bowels of the earth, descend to the bottom of the deep, travel to the farthest regions of this world, to acquire wealth, to increase our knowledge, or even only to please our eye and fancy.”³⁰ Derham’s use of the word “penetrate” and his expression of the idea that nature can “please our eye” show how nature must be observed in order to be useful. Nature’s utilitarian value ultimately depends upon the observer’s goals.

Political economists, like Adam Smith, often viewed nature as a source of wealth: “Land constitutes by far the greatest, the most important, and the most durable part of the wealth of every extensive country.”³¹ Smith’s use of the word “extensive” connotes territorial expansion and exploitation.

The contradictions between the definitions of nature—opposed to and less than humans—and nature writing—a genre that praises an equal, non-domineering relationship between the physical world and humans—resulted in a schizophrenic approach to nature during the eighteenth century. As Christopher Hitt writes, there was “a double gesture of both deference and mastery before nature.”³² This is best seen in the differences between Britain’s imperial actions and women poets’ responses. To become an empire, Britain had to gain territories beyond its borders; in doing so, it conquered land and thereby practiced ecological imperialism, or “mastery before nature.” The women writers included in this study understood the impact of Britain’s imperial ambitions, and their poetry warns Britain of the dangers of its actions while presenting nature as an entity which can be permanently altered and, therefore, should be respected.

³⁰ William Derham, *Physico-Theology: or, a demonstration of the being and attribute of God, from His works of Creation*, 2nd ed. (London: printed for W. Innys, 1714), 131.

³¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. By Adam Smith, vol. 1 (Dublin: printed for Messrs. Whitestone, Chamberlaine, W. Watson, Potts, and S. Watson, 1776), 364.

³² Hitt, “Ecocriticism in Long Eighteenth Century,” 132.

War on Nature

The reason to engage in war in the eighteenth century and the centuries preceding and succeeding it is to expand—to gain and maintain colonies or ideological followers—and the results of this expansion are transformed environments, which makes war an environmental issue. In the eighteenth century, the numerous wars Britain participated in led to “improvements” that permanently altered land abroad and in Britain. Still, some may make the case for environmental determinism, the belief that changes in the environment, not social conditions, are the cause of major developments that revolutionized society. In a book on climate change, however, anthropologist Brian Fagan includes a chart that lists historical and climatic events side by side. For Britain, from 1688–1850, four out of the seven historical events are wars.³³ Although the chart does not explicitly state a connection between warfare and climate change, that does not mean there is not one; indeed, if wars and environments could exist in isolation, there would be no need for this chart. War may be a human invention, but its consequences extend beyond humans, a topic that will be explored in more detail in Chapter One.³⁴

In one century, 1680–1780, Britain was involved in five major wars, which is one of the reasons scholars refer to this century as one of “almost constant instability,” but at the same time, also see it as a “turning point.”³⁵ Both remarks acknowledge the effects of war. Although Britain succeeded in becoming a European power, the rise to the top

³³ The other three events include “more productive agriculture,” the “Great Storm” of 1703, and “increased pace of enclosure.” Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300–1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 100.

³⁴ Margaret Mead, “Warfare is only an Invention,” in *Anthropologists in the Public Sphere: Speaking Out on War, Peace, and American Power*, ed. Roberto J. González. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 26–33.

³⁵ See H. T. Dickinson, *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), xv and I.G. Simmons, *An Environmental History of Great Britain: From 10,000 Years Ago to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 120.

was not easy. Britain experienced both victory and defeat throughout the century as it attempted simultaneously to maintain its power abroad and to avoid invasion. Even though British citizens never experienced armed conflict on their native soil, they were perpetually surrounded by reminders of the wars being fought abroad. Citizens saw their neighborhoods temporarily invaded by military camps as well as troops being deployed and the arrival of prisoners of war. However, the most obvious sign of war was citizens' participation in the increased agricultural and industrial efforts, which were necessary to maintain a competitive army and navy.³⁶ Indeed, these efforts “fuelled a notable commercial advance” and led to an expansion of manufacturing, which enabled Britain to become not only an imperial power, but also the first industrial nation.³⁷

Industrialization is a manifestation of humans' attempts to be more powerful, or at least think they are more powerful, than nature. Many of the changes that led to or were brought about by industrialization have their beginning in war. The poets included in my study often write about the dangers inherent in this relationship, which I will look at specifically in Chapter Three, and by reading their poetry through an ecocritical lens, I show that ecological awareness arose in the eighteenth century because it was a period of constant warfare.

Ecocriticism

All definitions of ecocriticism have in common a concern for “how representations of nature, as well as humans' various modes of cultural mediation with the natural world, contribute to contemporary environmental crises and shape our

³⁶ See Bowen, *War and British Society*, 40–55.

³⁷ Dickinson, *Companion*, 429.

response to them.”³⁸ Cheryl Glotfelty first defined ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the environment.”³⁹ Since her definition, others have expanded its meaning. Christopher Hitt argues that ecocriticism is “defined by its politics” and that “value judgments are based on a common concern about the exploitation and overconsumption of nature by certain human cultures” while Jonathan Levin defines ecocriticism as “an interdisciplinary approach to the study of nature, environment and culture.”⁴⁰ Current ecocriticism moves beyond “nature writing” and “respond[s] to the broader trend toward globalism in literary studies.”⁴¹ In doing this, ecocriticism returns to a founding principle of ecology: “interconnectedness.”⁴² My own study relies upon Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace’s expanded definition of ecocriticism, which takes into account the interconnectedness of humans and nature. In the introduction to *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, Armbruster and Wallace write that “a viable ecocriticism must continue to challenge dualistic thinking by exploring the role of nature in texts more concerned with human cultures, by looking at the role of culture in nature, and by attending to the nature-focused text as also a cultural-literary text.”⁴³ The “new” ecocriticism “remembers the earth by rendering an account of the indebtedness of culture to nature.”⁴⁴ In the poems I have selected for this study, the women writers both acknowledge this “indebtedness” and

³⁸ Jonathan Levin, “Beyond Nature? Recent Work in Ecocriticism,” *Contemporary Literature* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2002), 171.

³⁹ Cheryl Glotfelty, “Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis,” in *Ecocriticism Reader*, xviii.

⁴⁰ Hitt, “Ecocriticism in Long Eighteenth Century,” 125 and Levin, “Beyond Nature,” 171, respectively.

⁴¹ Levin, “Beyond Nature,” 172.

⁴² Hitt, “Ecocriticism in Long Eighteenth Century,” 132. Also see Glotfelty and Fromm, *Ecocriticism Reader*.

⁴³ Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace, “Introduction: Why Go Beyond Nature Writing and Where To?” in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 4.

⁴⁴ Kate Rigby, “Ecocriticism,” in *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 154.

strive to educate others about it by showing that nature oftentimes suffers because of culture; in particular, their poems prove that wars waged against individuals are also waged against the environment. My dissertation acknowledges the focus of current ecocritical work by looking at these poems not simply as “nature writing,” but as treatises on global environmental issues.

In 1909, Myra Reynolds wrote that “the attitude toward Nature of the early nineteenth century is but the legitimate outcome of influences actively at work during the eighteenth century”; she continues writing that “the ideas of the period of Wordsworth were represented in the germ of the eighteenth century.”⁴⁵ Eighty-two years later, Reynolds’s wisdom was ignored with the publication of Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. Since Bate’s study, in which he argued that “if one historicizes the idea of an ecological viewpoint—a respect for the earth and a skepticism as to the orthodoxy that economic growth and material production are the be-all and end-all of human society—one finds oneself squarely in the romantic tradition,” it has generally been accepted that our environmental consciousness began in the nineteenth-century.⁴⁶

However, in 1996, with the publication of *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism, and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*, Tim Fulford began to engage Reynolds’s thesis, arguing that Wordsworth and Coleridge were a lot like their predecessors.⁴⁷ Although most would agree that Wordsworth’s poetry built upon the poetry that came before him, it has not been until recently that scholars, including Donna

⁴⁵ Reynolds, *Treatment of Nature*, v.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991), 9.

⁴⁷ Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority*, 2.

Landry, Sylvia Bowerbank and Beth Fowkes Tobin, have begun to explore how environmental issues of the nineteenth century actually began in the eighteenth century and how this leads to recognition of eighteenth-century environmental consciousness.⁴⁸

Yet, “the potential for ecocritical approaches to British literature between 1660 and 1800,” as Christopher Hitt writes, is “so vast,” but remains “largely untapped.”⁴⁹

In the eighteenth-century, before what is referred to as “the romantic tradition,” people had a respect for the earth. Kate Rigby argues that “since the eighteenth century, the necessity of recalling the true cost, both to subordinate humans and to the earth, of our production processes and consumption habits has grown in equal measure to its difficulty.” Rigby writes that the “socioeconomic developments [from the seventeenth century] might not have *generated* the new conception of Nature as totally knowable, manipulable, and predestined to be conquered and transformed by man, but they almost certainly *guaranteed the success* of this view as a dominant paradigm in the modern era.”⁵⁰ With the Industrial Revolution well underway by the middle of the eighteenth century, individuals understood the impact of this new philosophy of “economic growth and material production”; therefore, “an ecological viewpoint” is not first present in the “romantic tradition”; instead, it is “squarely” in the eighteenth century. Women writers, in particular, express their skepticism about the benefits of industrialization because of its potential to cause irreversible damage to the environment. Their poetry serves as a warning to the rest of Britain.

⁴⁸ See Donna Landry, “Green Languages: Women Poets as Naturalists in 1653 and 1807,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2000): 467–89; Bowerbank, *Speaking For Nature*; Spacks, “Bonds of Nature,” 64; Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760–1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). In “Ecocriticism in the Long Eighteenth Century,” Hitt also writes that “the major roots of our own attitudes toward the natural world lie in the eighteenth century” (125).

⁴⁹ Hitt, “Ecocriticism in Long Eighteenth Century,” 124.

⁵⁰ Rigby, “Ecocriticism,” 151 and 157, respectively.

Eighteenth-Century Environmental Crises

At the beginning of his book, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300–1850*, Brian Fagan writes that, in the twentieth century, “for the first time, human beings with their promiscuous land clearance, industrial scale agriculture, and use of coal, oil, and other fossil fuels have raised greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere to record highs and are changing global climate.”⁵¹ Although we see the effects of these developments now, the developments themselves—deforestation, enclosure, industrialization—first occurred in Britain during the eighteenth century.

Deforestation was a major environmental issue in the eighteenth century as trees were needed for both domestic and international endeavors. In her poem, *To ***** on his Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk* (1766), Elizabeth Carter addresses the “son of Science” and begs him to see that the real value of trees is not found in international trade, but instead in the role they play in art, specifically in the inspiration of poetry:

Not all the glowing Fruits, that blush
On *India*'s sunny coast,
Can recompense for the Worth
Of one Idea lost.⁵²

British officials did not heed Carter's warning, and throughout the eighteenth century trade and imperial ambitions led to massive deforestation. By 1750, most of Scotland's forests had disappeared and in Britain during the 1780s the demand for leather products along with the ongoing need to build ships for the Navy resulted in the loss of its own forests.⁵³ Oak trees in particular were affected as their bark and trunks were essential to

⁵¹ Fagan, *Little Ice Age*, xii.

⁵² Elizabeth Carter, “To ***** on his Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk,” in *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2nd ed. (London: printed for John Rivington, 1766), 39–41, quotations pp. 40 and 41, respectively.

⁵³ Simmons, *Environmental History*, 121.

the leather-making process and ship building, respectively. Frances Brooke acknowledges the latter use in *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) when she writes of Ed Rivers's desire to plant oak trees for the sole purpose of cutting them down; in this way, he will be an active participant in any British military endeavor because his oaks "will bear the British thunder to distant lands."⁵⁴ Like most alterations to the environment, there were consequences to deforestation. In *The Natural History of Selbourne*, Gilbert White mentions a few, including how birds left Selbourne since they no longer had habitats, and water sources also dried up.⁵⁵ One of the most important consequences, and one that led to even more environmental crises, was the fact that deforestation made it easier for land to be enclosed.

Enclosure is the transformation in agricultural methods from land that was communally owned and worked to land that was now physically separated from neighboring land, worked "in severalty," and placed under the ownership of (usually) one wealthy individual.⁵⁶ Prior to enclosure, land was managed under the common-field system.⁵⁷ Under this system, land was used in a variety of ways: crops were planted and after harvest cattle fed on the leftovers; sheep grazed in the open meadows and fallow land; common fields provided food for livestock as well as fuel, wild berries, and herbs for the farmers' homes; waste areas provided a space for animals to graze and also supplied gravel and clay for home repairs; and farmers collected timber from the

⁵⁴ Frances Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague*, ed. Lorraine McMullen (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1995), 339. Alexander Pope expresses a similar sentiment in *Windsor-Forest*: "Let India boast her plants, nor envy we / The weeping or the balmy tree, / While by our Oaks the precious loads are born / And realms commanded which those trees adorn." *Windsor-Forest. To the Right Honourable George Lord Lansdown. By Mr. Pope* (London: printed for Bernard Lintot, 1720), 3–33, quotation p. 7.

⁵⁵ Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selbourne* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1881), 161 and 216, respectively.

⁵⁶ Michael Turner, *Enclosures in Britain, 1750–1860* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1984), 11 and 67.

⁵⁷ See Joan Thirsk, "The Common Fields," *Past and Present* 29 (1964), 3–25.

woodland areas, which they restocked by systematically planting trees.⁵⁸ The most important feature of the communal system is its lack of control; the land and its resources were shared; no single person decided how the land would be used.

Enclosure did not first occur in the eighteenth century, and initially it did not change people's relationship to land. Early enclosures, those prior to 1750, usually occurred by private agreement between working farmers; these types of enclosures oftentimes meant that the same people who used to work the land would still do so; the only difference would be that now they owned it. In contrast, by the mid-eighteenth century, a specific act of parliament was the primary means by which land was enclosed. Parliamentary enclosures, in contrast to enclosures by agreement, almost always meant that the new owner of the land would be wealthy, and he would use his income to ensure that the latest farming techniques were implemented. According to economist and agricultural historian Mark Overton, by carrying out new farming methods, the owners made it possible for parliamentary enclosures to "transform the agricultural landscape almost overnight."⁵⁹

By the time parliamentary enclosures took place, 71 percent of England's landscape had already been enclosed, which has led some scholars to question whether parliamentary enclosures, as opposed to private ones, affected the transformation of England's landscape. However, the sheer rapidity with which parliamentary enclosures took place speaks to their significance. J. V. Beckett notes that between 1750 and 1830, some 4,000 acts of Parliament were passed, which enclosed 6.8 million acres of land, or

⁵⁸ G. E. Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact, 1750–1850* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 7–8.

⁵⁹ Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 159. For a discussion of the differences between enclosures by agreement and parliamentary enclosures, see pp. 156–59.

21 percent of England, and Ann Bermingham writes that “in the first half of the eighteenth century 74,000 acres of land were enclosed by acts of Parliament, and in the second half of the century the figure swelled to 750,000 acres.”⁶⁰ Parliamentary enclosures, then, succeeded in enclosing almost all of England. Additionally, the counties that had been using an open-field system the longest were finally affected by enclosure; “in some cases more than 50 percent” of the land was enclosed, and since these counties had previously operated under an open-field system, the new boundaries made the landscape look artificial.⁶¹

The first wave of enclosures (1750–80) came at a time of rising population, rising food prices, and higher land rents; enclosures converted arable fields to pasture as the cultivation of grain was replaced by raising sheep to accommodate the switch from a grain-based diet to one of dairy and meat.⁶² The change from arable fields to pasture not only altered the landscape, but it also helped to depopulate the rural countryside as shepherding required fewer hands. The second wave (1790–1830) was similar to the first in that it also came at a time of rising food prices, but it also occurred alongside the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Economist Michael Turner writes that “the war [French Revolution and Napoleonic wars] accounted for 43 percent of all parliamentary enclosures. It was also a period when marginal land [pasture and wastelands] was increasingly brought into regular or regulated cultivation,” which meant that animals would also be affected by enclosure as they would no longer have open

⁶⁰ J. V. Beckett, *The Agricultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, Ltd, 1990), 35–36 and Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 10, respectively.

⁶¹ Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 50.

⁶² See Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure*, 21–22 and Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, 19 and 81. In *The Natural History of Selbourne*, White notes that before enclosure one could not expect to have fresh meat in winter, but after enclosure the opposite was true (230).

fields in which to graze.⁶³ Gilbert White acknowledges as much in *The Natural History of Selbourne* when he writes that there are fewer quails in Selbourne because they like open fields better.⁶⁴

There are two primary views of enclosure. The first sees it as a “necessary but painful corollary to progress,” and the second sees it as “the decline from an effective economic system which fell prey to the greed of the landed.”⁶⁵ Thomas Carew expresses the latter sentiment in *A Rapture* (1772) when he writes,

Draw near,
And thou shalt scorn what were wont to fear;
We shall see how the stalking pageant goes
With borrow'd legs, a heavy load to those
That made, and bear him; not as we once thought,
The seeds of Gods, but a weak model, wrought
By greedy men, that seek t'inclose the common.⁶⁶

Regardless of which view one leans toward, it is an undeniable fact that once Parliament decreed that a section of land must be enclosed, a series of irreversible changes in land use and agricultural techniques resulted.

Although most of England's land, about 45 percent, was enclosed by 1550, the eighteenth century marked a change in enclosure from “unsystematic to systematic”; using the word “systematic” to describe parliamentary enclosure acknowledges that it is a government-sponsored change, but it also relates it to science because it followed specific laws. As this type of enclosure persisted throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, it “became . . . thoroughly interconnected with commerce.”⁶⁷ Ann

⁶³ Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, 17.

⁶⁴ White, *Natural History of Selbourne*, 24.

⁶⁵ Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 63.

⁶⁶ Thomas Carew, “A Rapture,” in *Poems, Songs, and Sonnets: Together with a Masque* (London: printed for T. Davies, 1772), 74–82, quotation p. 75.

⁶⁷ Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 49.

Birmingham acknowledges this tie much earlier, writing that since 1660, with Britain's growing imperialist and mercantilist activities, it became necessary to use the countryside, and the land it offered, to "serve the expanding market towns and colonies."⁶⁸ In this way enclosing the land became an economic investment for the future; agriculture improved the economic situation by supplying labor, food, raw materials and, wealth for population and industrial growth.⁶⁹ From 1760 onward, new agricultural techniques were developed that increased output, and enclosure became associated with productivity, which was tied to "improvement."⁷⁰ Crawford succinctly summarizes enclosure's various improvements: "A shift from the practice of fallowing to a regular cycle of crop rotations . . . allowed all fields to remain in production throughout the year, technological innovations such as horse-drawn hoeing and more efficient plows, increased varieties of crops including turnips and the so-called artificial grasses, and [there were also] experimental breeds of sheep and cows."⁷¹

The various improvements that came as a result of enclosure are collectively referred to as an "agricultural revolution," and this "revolution" made possible the Industrial Revolution.⁷² For some time, scholars thought that the main agricultural revolution began in 1770 and ended in 1830; however, it is now believed to have started

⁶⁸ Birmingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 9.

⁶⁹ Peter Mathias and John A. Davis, eds., "Introduction," in *The Nature of Industrialization*, vol. 4, *Agriculture and Industrialization: From the Eighteenth Century to Present Day* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 1–2. In *The Natural History of Selbourne*, White admits that despite the agricultural improvements brought about by enclosure, there was still scarcity of grain (182).

⁷⁰ See Beckett, *Agricultural Revolution*, 68 and Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 50. Paul Langford writes that "improvement was a favourite word of the 1760s and 1770s, carrying with it a great mass of material aspirations and moral assumptions." *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1823* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 432.

⁷¹ Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 51. Frank O'Gorman notes that "improvements in livestock, horses and cattle were one of the characteristic obsessions of the eighteenth-century aristocratic and gentry classes." *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688–1832* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 330.

⁷² For a historiography of the agricultural revolution, see Beckett, *Agricultural Revolution*, ix-x.

twenty years earlier, in 1750, and lasted fifty years longer, ending in 1880. The “agricultural revolution,” which led to increased productivity, is believed to have rested “firmly in the era of parliamentary enclosure.”⁷³ To have an agricultural revolution, there must be wide-scale technological change, which often results in an emphasis on labor by machine, not humans. During the time of parliamentary enclosures, the number of people who worked on the land decreased by half because the agricultural innovations increased productivity, which leads to an industrial revolution. Overton writes that “by definition, an industrial revolution takes place when a growing *proportion* of the work-force is engaged in industrial, or at least non-agricultural, occupations. For this to happen a small proportion of the population must be engaged in agriculture; in other words there must be a rise in agricultural labour productivity.”⁷⁴

Many scholars have speculated why it was necessary to enclose England’s land at the rate accomplished by the Parliamentary Acts of Enclosure. One of the first reasons often suggested is that enclosure was a means to an end; in both waves, the type of land enclosed helped to balance rising food costs, grain in the first wave and meat in the second.⁷⁵ Indeed, those who supported enclosure saw the real evils as “scarcity of grain, overpopulation, war, and a recalcitrant labor force,” and those that opposed it saw the evils as “a new economy of commodity relations, including speculation in currency, wage labor, and middlemen (speculation in commodities).”⁷⁶ In other words, the supporters of enclosure saw it as a means to “save themselves”; they could control how the land would

⁷³ Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure*, 150. Also see Michael Overton, “Land and Labour Productivity in English Agriculture, 1650–1850,” in *Nature of Industrialization*, 17–39.

⁷⁴ Overton, “Land and Labour Productivity,” 21. Other scholars also acknowledge the connection between agriculture and industrialization. See Mathias and Davis, “Introduction,” 2–3; O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, xiii-xiv and 21; Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, 83.

⁷⁵ Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, 36.

⁷⁶ Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 58.

be used in order to avoid scarcity and starvation caused by overpopulation; it would also give the rural laborers a “boss” from whom to take orders. These were real concerns.

Between 1750 and 1815, England did need to find a way to feed its growing population—it increased by 11 million between 1750 and 1850—and enclosure helped.⁷⁷

Interestingly, those who opposed enclosure also opposed the very things that Britain’s wars and colony-seeking missions would ensure: a globalized economy in which Britain traded with other countries.

Enclosure during the eighteenth century is important because it occurred alongside various wars, including the American War for Independence, French Revolution and Napoleonic wars; these wars forced Britain to transform its landscapes, especially during the second wave of parliamentary enclosure when land that “was hitherto uncultivated” became cultivated.⁷⁸ Mingay writes that “the disturbance of established property, and its enjoyment, has always been a source of conflict and remains so today.”⁷⁹ Enclosure, not unlike physical warfare, is a war waged on (the) land; it disrupted people’s relationships to the land and was enacted because Britain needed something to balance the disruption “real” war caused to their economy. In the eighteenth century, it became necessary to grow and raise a significant amount of crops and animals in order to keep market prices down.⁸⁰ Regulating land use through enclosure was the quickest way to do so.

⁷⁷ Overton, “Land and Labour Productivity,” 18 and Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure*, 148, respectively. In *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976), Robert Thomas Malthus argues that certain policies, including land reform that transfer laborers from luxury manufacturing to farming and a shift of national emphasis from foreign trade to agriculture, would help alleviate human suffering.

⁷⁸ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 330–31.

⁷⁹ Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure*, 4.

⁸⁰ Turner reminds us in *Enclosures in Britain* that “the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the Napoleonic wars was one of rising prices” (43–44); in this way, enclosure is linked to productivity (40).

William Cronon writes in “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting back to the Wrong Nature” that “the farm becomes the first and most important battlefield in the long war against nature.”⁸¹ According to J. V. Beckett, of all the reasons to enclose the land perhaps the most important one was “freedom of land use.”⁸² As the phrase implies, this meant farmers could do whatever they wanted to the land; in other words, they could control it. Chapter Four will explore this topic further as it looks at how people did and could interact with the land and how modern improvements changed their relationships with the land. Enclosure ensured that land would never be looked at in the same way again; gone were the days when nature was valued as “God’s creation” or as an entity that was separate from, but not subordinate to, humans; enclosure marks the beginning of our own contemporary attitudes about nature. It is there for human use, and we have only recently recognized the danger of this relationship to the environment.

The presence of various minerals was yet another reason to enclose the land. According to G. E. Mingay, “coal, [and] also iron ore, lead and copper, and stone, slate and other building materials, was in some areas an important reason for enclosure in the age of industrial expansion after 1750.”⁸³ Enclosing the land to gain access to these minerals was the first step Britain took to utilize alternative, and non-renewable, sources of energy. Prior to the eighteenth century and the iron revolution, wood, along with wind, water and animals, was one of the main sources of power as well as the most common building material. These energy sources are renewable since they can be

⁸¹ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1995), 82.

⁸² Beckett, *Agricultural Revolution*, 40.

⁸³ Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure*, 41–42.

reproduced by the natural ecological cycle and / or through reasonable management, with the latter applying specifically to trees.

However, beginning in 1708 and lasting through the end of the eighteenth century, certain discoveries and inventions would cause renewable sources of energy to be abandoned in favor of non-renewable ones.⁸⁴ As environmental historian I. G. Simmons writes, “The eighteenth century was the junction from which that road was taken with the substitution of inanimate for animate sources of power and the much increased use of mineral rather than organic substances as resources.”⁸⁵ Previous to 1708, iron had only been produced by burning small heaps of wood covered by turf and soil to create charcoal; from the charcoal people could gather small bits of pure carbon, which were then used to produce iron. Not only was this process slow, but it also created only a small amount of iron.⁸⁶ Additionally, since trees were in short supply, the blast furnaces had to be shut down for part of the year. In 1709, this process was abandoned when Abraham Darby discovered that pure carbon, and therefore iron, could be produced by smelting coke (coal), a fossil fuel and non-renewable resource.⁸⁷

Since there was more coal than there were trees at this point, the blast furnaces could be run nonstop, which led to a new problem that was solved by another invention

⁸⁴ For information on the coal and iron industry in Britain, see T. S. Ashton and Joseph Sykes, *The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1967); Charles More, *The Industrial Age: Economy and Society in Britain, 1750–1985* (New York: Longman, 1989); J. U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry*, 2 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd, 1966); H. R. Schubert, *History of the British Iron and Steel Industry from c. 450 B.C. to A.D. 1775* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Christine Vialls, *Coalbrookdale and the Iron Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁸⁵ Simmons, *Environmental History*, 120.

⁸⁶ Peat blocks were also used as an alternative to charcoal to create iron; however, this process resulted in poor quality iron, and by the late eighteenth century was “spoken as something belonging to the past.” See Schubert, *History of British Iron and Steel Industry*, 224–26.

⁸⁷ Although coal is naturally produced from the decayed matter of plants and animals, it is considered a non-renewable resource because it is being depleted faster than it can form. See G. Tyler Miller, Jr., *Environmental Science: Working with the Earth*, 6th ed. (New York: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1997).

that altered energy sources. Water had always been used to run the machinery in the mines, so in times of drought or frost this source of power was not available. In the past, lack of water had not been a problem because the mines needed to be shut down anyway as the workers waited for more trees that would produce the necessary charcoal.

Additionally, horses had always been used to empty the mines of water; however, like using charcoal to produce iron, this was a slow process, and one that became even slower since iron could now be produced almost nonstop with the introduction of coal to the process. So, in 1712 Thomas Newcomen invented a pump that was powered by steam; this began a wave of inventions that focused on steam, not animal or water, power.⁸⁸ Yet, Newcomen's engine was inefficient because only one cylinder was filled with steam, so James Watt invented a separate condenser, so that steam would not have to be converted. In this way, "the development of coal mining and the use of steam power generated from coal [became] without a doubt the central, binding narrative of the eighteenth century."⁸⁹

Despite all these developments, charcoal was still used to create wrought iron, which Vialls calls the "supreme material of the industrial revolution."⁹⁰ However, Henry Cort changed the way wrought iron was produced when he realized, like Abraham Darby had earlier in the century, that people could use coal as fuel to make it. This discovery was especially important in the mid-eighteenth century because war increased the demand for iron, which was used to build ships and manufacture weapons.⁹¹ Cort's discovery allowed the increased demand for iron to be met, and it also resulted in the

⁸⁸ For the differences between steam and waterpower, see Peter Temin, "Steam and Waterpower in the Early Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Economic History* 26, no. 2 (June 1966), 187–205, specifically p. 196. This shift affected the textile industry because now factories no longer had to be built near water.

⁸⁹ Simmons, *Environmental History*, 140. Also see p. 136 for a table of various industries and their environmental effects.

⁹⁰ Vialls, *Coalbrookdale*, 23.

⁹¹ Once the wars ended in 1815, the iron industry came to a halt, but the methods the industry used—specifically the use of non-renewable resources for energy—were not forgotten, and are still used today.

growth of other industries, including lead, porcelain, clay and brick, and limestone. The rise of these industries demanded a better transportation system, so goods could be distributed throughout England; therefore, the way structures were built changed. Wooden rails were replaced by iron ones; bridge-building in the 1770s and 1780s led to the development of canals (artificial waterways), and the first locomotive was built in 1801. In the course of one century, 1700–1800, industrial landscapes replaced natural ones.⁹²

Changes in the environment caused a variety of serious health problems, which were made worse by the bad weather that plagued the eighteenth century. The “Little Ice Age,” which spanned seven centuries and lasted throughout the eighteenth century, is defined as “an irregular seesaw of rapid climate shifts” that was characterized by periods of extreme cold followed by periods of extreme heat and periods of heavy rain followed by periods of drought.⁹³ These extreme weather patterns affected landscapes differently; marshes were associated with death while upland areas were viewed as places of health. Yet Britain as an entire nation in the eighteenth century was marked by the presence of fatal diseases, including malaria, plague and smallpox. Just as war was a primary reason for enclosure and industrialization, malaria can also be explained by looking at Britain’s global undertakings: “The story of English malaria . . . is linked, at this time, to wider

⁹² A model was first made in 1786. War had caused an increase in the price of food, and locomotives, unlike horses, required coal to keep them running, and there was plenty of it.

⁹³ Fagan, *Little Ice Age*, xiii-xiv. Evidence of the “little ice age” appears frequently in White’s *Natural History of Selbourne*. He writes about the severe weather that affected certain trees’ fruit production, which in turn affected animals (48); he also mentions “dreadful winter[s]” (133) and a “series of cold, turbulent weather” that disrupted bird migration (115, 117).

global horizons—to the movements of engineers, sailors, pathogens, and parasites between continental Europe and Britain, between Africa and the New World.”⁹⁴

The way individuals viewed and used the environment drastically changed in the eighteenth century, and this led to presumed advances in weather forecasting and the adoption of a new scientific classification system, both of which ultimately helped to solidify the separation between humans and nature. Bridget Keegan writes that “the more predictive, pattern-oriented science of today, occur[red] during the eighteenth-century” when meteorology became “urban, national and indoor” whereas it used to be “regional, outdoor, and *narrative*.”⁹⁵ New weather forecasting techniques brought people inside and away from nature. In the same way, the Linnaean system, a new way to classify plant and animal life by what Carl Linnaeus considered their sexual characteristics, promoted a hierarchy of living things, with humans at the top.⁹⁶ The developments in agriculture, industry, and science helped to fund Britain’s wars and affected their landscapes at home and abroad.

War, Poetry and Ecology: Two Examples

Charlotte Smith and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, two poets writing near the end of the long eighteenth century, provide two examples of how war and ecology intersect in women’s poetry during this period. Charlotte Smith opens her sonnet *The Sea View* with a pastoral scene in which an “upland shepherd reclines” on the hill.⁹⁷ Smith describes

⁹⁴ Mary J. Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 6.

⁹⁵ Keegan, “Snowstorms,” 78.

⁹⁶ For a more detailed account of the Linnaean system, see Patricia Fara, *Sex, Botany and Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ Charlotte Smith, “The sea view,” in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Stuart Curran (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 72.

nature as protective and all-encompassing. The land is “soft” as it “clothes the mountain brow”; the sky “mingles” with the sea and the entire scene “spreads” throughout so that even the human presence on the landscape feels its “magnificence” and “tranquility.” Suddenly, though, man disrupts this scene and unlike nature, which “spread[s] / a joy serene,” man “spoils” it with “blood.” Before the bright sun used to light the scene, but now “war-freighted ships . . . flash their destructive fire.” In the second half of this poem, Smith’s language shows the destructiveness of war. The sound of death reverberates:

When, like dark plague-spots by the Demons shed,
Charged deep with death, upon the waves, far seen,
Move the war-freighted ships; and fierce and red,
Flash their destructive fires—The mangled dead
And dying victims then pollute the flood.

The use of alliteration emphasizes death spreading throughout “Heaven’s glorious work.” Using the word, “pollute,” which can refer to being either morally or physically impure, Smith equates war with an ecological concern and with the corruption of the environment.

Ecology was first defined in 1869 as the relationship between organisms and their environments, and deep ecology goes even further to assert that non-humans are more important than humans in this relationship. Anna Letitia Barbauld’s poem, *The Caterpillar*, is a representation of the definition of ecology as the speaker of the poem sees “life, / and fellowship of sense with all that breathes” when she watches the “individual existence” of a single caterpillar.⁹⁸ The title of her poem sounds innocent enough and the beginning of the poem confirms one’s first impression; however, after

⁹⁸ Anna Letitia Barbauld, “The Caterpillar,” in *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 172–73.

line ten, the caterpillar becomes a metaphor for the senseless destruction of innocent lives, both human and non-human. In her poem, Barbauld realizes a connection with all creatures. She emphasizes the caterpillar's similarity to humans when she writes, "I have sworn perdition to thy race." Outside the contexts of this poem, this statement could easily refer to humans, such as the French, a topic that relates to Chapter Two. She makes the connection even more emphatically at the end of the poem; the speaker says that when "the hero weeps, / he is grown human." To say that man only "grows human" when he feels for his fellow creatures stresses the idea that we are all connected. Until we "feel the touch of pity," we are no different from the caterpillar; we are ending lives when we kill people *and* caterpillars. The mass killing of caterpillars is described as a "slaughter" that destroys the domestic. At the beginning of the poem, the caterpillar is a "houseless wanderer" because its family has been destroyed by the speaker:

I have sought
With sharpened eye and persecuting zeal,
Where folded in their silken webs they lay
Thriving and happy; swept them from the tree
And crushed whole families beneath my foot.

The speaker in Barbauld's poem, like Smith's, suddenly switches to a real war, which also destroys domestic places: "horrid war, o'erwhelm[s] / peaceful villages." Just as the speaker did not feel "the touch of pity" when killing thousands, so too the "victor" and "hero" does not feel pity when destroying "cities, fields / And peaceful villages." The poem ends with the image of a "single sufferer," a human this time, not a caterpillar. However, the speaker clearly shows that there is no difference between the two. Both are part of life; both have "individual existence[s]."

The Chapters

Each chapter in my dissertation will focus on one way Britain funded the many wars it engaged in throughout the century. In the first chapter, “‘Fruitless conquest’ and the ‘Suff’ring World’: Anna Seward’s *Monody on Major André* (1781) and Helen Maria Williams’s *Peru* (1784),” I examine how these two major poems are conscious considerations of commerce, empire and war. A very common eighteenth-century saying was “Tis the longest purse that conquers now, not the longest sword.” Seward and Williams explore the possibilities of an empire of trade to show the potential pitfalls and promises of Britain’s empire. The poets suggest a new imperial model, one that does not reject commercial pursuits altogether, but instead calls for interconnectedness between people and the natural world.

The discussion about imperialism that begins in the previous chapter continues in “‘Brothers in Science’ and ‘a softer form’: Knowledge, Women, and Harmony in Anna Seward’s *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780) and Anne Bannerman’s *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* (1794).” In these poems, Seward and Bannerman challenge the eighteenth century’s reliance on science as a strategy for building empire. In *Elegy* and *Verses*, Seward and Bannerman show that knowledge is just another weapon nations use in war, and the damage it causes is just as destructive—to the environment and to lives—as the “real” weapons of war. Both poets suggest that the course of Britain’s empire has almost irreversibly destroyed the harmony of the world as it has wreaked havoc on natural spaces as well as domestic ones.

Chapter Three examines the result of Britain’s increased pursuit of knowledge, specifically its participation in a global economy. In “The ‘tribes fuliginous invade’ ‘the

green earth': War on Nature in Anna Seward's *To Colebrook Dale* (1787) and *Colebrook Dale* (1791) and Anne Bannerman's *The Genii* (1800)," I examine Seward's and Bannerman's critique of Britain's "empire of industry." In both poems, these poets reveal that the advances in applied science, which have led to industrialization, ultimately result in the earth's destruction. Yet, neither Seward nor Bannerman offers criticism without offering a solution; indeed, as much as Seward and Bannerman criticize the root causes of industrialization, their poems offer a conservationist message. Their poems not only show what will continue to happen if Britain insists upon becoming an empire of industry, but they also show how humans in the eighteenth century could begin to conserve the environment.

In the final chapter, "'Time can ne'er restore': Improvement Questioned in Anna Seward's *The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape* (1790) and Charlotte Smith's *Beachy Head* (1807)," I examine how Seward's and Smith's poems decry the damage done to nature by modern civilization. In *The Lake*, Seward focuses her critique on the physical damage improvement causes while in *Beachy Head* Smith focuses on how the introduction of luxuries—the improvements in people's lives—destroys individuals' relationships with the land. Read together, *The Lake* and *Beachy Head* reveal the end of an era: humans' relationships with the natural world have been permanently changed.

In the conclusion, I focus on Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants* (1793) and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812) and show how themes present in poems written between 1780 and 1800 by Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams, and Anne Bannerman are also present in Smith's and Barbauld's poetry. Thus, I demonstrate

a continuum of poetry that demonstrates women poets' environmental awareness of the impact of war on natural and domestic spaces.

I began my introduction with a close reading of Mary Leapor's poem *The Beauties of the Spring* and offered it as a counterargument to Linda Colley's statement that asserts that we do not know how British civilians responded to the various wars and innovations of the eighteenth century. What follows is further proof that British civilians, in particular British women poets, did respond to the succession of wars by showing the irreversible damage they triggered in the natural world. In this way, women poets became the "unacknowledged legislators"—until now—for Britain and its landscapes.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, vol. 1, ed. Mary Shelley (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), 57. Simmons writes in *Environmental History* that despite the changes the environment was undergoing, there was "not very much legislation, which directly affected the environmental matters enacted" (145).

Chapter One

“Fruitless conquest” and the “Suffering World”: Anna Seward’s *Monody on Major André* (1781) and Helen Maria Williams’s *Peru* (1784)

In the eighteenth century, Britain attempted to propagate a view of empire that did not require conquering foreign lands; instead, it relied upon mutually beneficial relationships with its colonies.¹⁰⁰ According to historian Jack P. Greene, Britain “had become a country that defined itself against Spain not just in terms of religion and liberty but also in terms of its peaceful ‘pursuit of trade’ in Europe and America, which, ‘rather than conquest,’ stood as ‘a sign of England’s virtuous difference’ from ‘Spanish tyranny, Spanish cruelty, and Spanish ambition.’”¹⁰¹ Suvir Kaul argues that poetry was one means to disseminate Britain’s view of empire; he writes, “poetry was a unique and privileged literary form for the enunciation of a puissant (and plastic) vocabulary of nation, particularly one appropriate to a Britain proving itself (in fits and starts, to be sure) great at home and abroad.”¹⁰² Alexander Pope’s *Windsor-Forest* (1713) and James Thomson’s

¹⁰⁰ For more information on Britain’s status as an empire of trade, see Brewer, *Sinews of Power*; Christie, *Wars and Revolutions*; Earl A. Reitan, *Politics, War, and Empire: The Rise of Britain to a World Power, 1688–1792* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1994); Kathleen Wilson, “Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, 1720–1785,” in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London: Routledge, 1994) and *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁰¹ Jack P. Greene, “Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2:26. Richard Helgerson also discusses the differences between the English and Spanish empires, see *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 185.

¹⁰² Kaul, *Poems of Nation*, 5.

The Seasons (1735) helped Britain define itself by its “peaceful pursuit of trade.” In *Windsor-Forest*, Pope attests to how products contribute to the power of Britain’s empire:

Let India boast her plants, nor envy we
The weeping Amber or the balmy Tree,
While by our Oaks the precious Loads are born,
And Realms commanded which those Trees adorn.¹⁰³

Pope argues that Britain’s oak trees make it possible for the nation to colonize distant lands, which will give Britain access to and control of India’s envied flora. His poem proves that both “land and people form the basis of national power.”¹⁰⁴ British trees, “our Oaks,” have made it possible to trade—“precious Loads are born”—and in doing so, Britain will be able to “command” other countries, which includes the people living there as well as the land and the products it helps to produce. Pope’s poem reiterates the notion that trade will result in a peaceful imperial reign where conquest and slavery will “be no more.”¹⁰⁵ Twenty-two years later, James Thomson expresses a similar sentiment in *The Seasons*; he describes summer as the time of year when “busy commerce binds the round of nations in a golden chain.”¹⁰⁶ Both Pope’s and Thomson’s poems describe a kind of “golden” age as Britain’s empire of trade brings nations together and ends conquests.

Throughout the century, poets explored the possibilities of an empire of trade. Of course not all poets agreed with Pope and Thomson’s assessment of trade, which promoted the notion that an empire of trade was also a peaceful empire. In *The Task*, published fifty years after Thomson’s *The Seasons* in 1785, William Cowper suggests that Britain’s colonial pursuits have changed the nation’s people and led to strife because

¹⁰³ Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Christie, *Wars and Revolutions*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, 17. The full stanza is “O stretch thy Reign, fair *Peace!* from Shore to Shore, / Till Conquest cease, and Slav’ry be no more.”

¹⁰⁶ James Thomson, “Summer,” in *The Four Seasons, and Other Poems* (London: printed for J. Millan and A. Millar, 1735), 3–64, quotation p.10

Britain's colonial assets have introduced luxuries to Britons, which have made them greedy. Their "pride and avarice" ultimately leads to class warfare and "makes man a wolf to man."¹⁰⁷ Cowper's poem warns of the local dangers an empire based upon trade creates; however, certain female poets highlight the global dangers of an empire of trade. Paula Backscheider reminds us that women poets often "eschew the great imperial themes" as they embark upon "a different national project, one both more personal and at least as challenging: daring Great Britain to live up to its past and its stated ideals."¹⁰⁸ In *Monody on Major André* (1781) and *Peru* (1784), Anna Seward and Helen Maria Williams, respectively, question whether Britain has successfully "defined itself against Spain" and is a civil empire—one that recognizes "the idea of universality, a world-wide humanity"—since Britain's "pursuit of trade" and quest for power led to wars, which oppressed people and ravaged the natural world.¹⁰⁹

Born almost twenty years apart, Anna Seward and Helen Maria Williams appear to be a study in contrasts.¹¹⁰ Anna Seward was born in Eyam, Derbyshire, on December

¹⁰⁷ William Cowper, "The Winter Evening," in *The Task, a poem, in six books. By William Cowper, To which are added, by the same author, An epistle to Joseph Hill, Esq. To which are added, an epistle and the history of John Gilpin* (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1785), 137–80, quotation p. 142.

¹⁰⁸ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 143. In this chapter, I argue that Seward and Williams consider the natural world a part of humanity. I will consider the first edition of Williams's poem because she focuses on Peru and its environment. In her revisions of *Peru*, specifically, *Peruvian Tales* (1823), Williams focuses on the characters' experiences and shortens the discussion of nature. For more information on the differences between *Peru* and *Peruvian Tales*, see Jessica Damián, "Helen Maria Williams' Personal Narrative of Travels from Peru (1784) to *Peruvian Tales* (1823)," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 24 paragraphs.

¹¹⁰ For biographical information on Anna Seward, see Margaret Ashmun, *The Singing Swan: An Account of Anna Seward and Her Acquaintance with Dr. Johnson, Boswell, and Others of Their Time* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1931); Jennifer Kelly, introduction to *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738–1785*, vol. 4, *Anna Seward* (Brookfield, VT: Pickering and Chatto Publishers, Ltd., 1999), ix–xxi; Brewer, "'Queen Muse of Britain': Anna Seward of Lichfield and the Literary Provinces," in *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 573–612; Hesketh Pearson, "Anna Seward," in *The Swan of Lichfield: Being a Selection from the Correspondence of Anna Seward* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1937), 13–34. For biographical information on Helen Maria Williams, see Caroline Franklin, introduction to *Poems*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1996), v–xvii; Gary Kelly, "Helen Maria Williams," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Reform Writers, 1789–1832*. Edited by

12, 1742, but spent most of her life at the Bishop's Palace in Lichfield, where she continued to live after her father's death in 1790 and until her own in 1809. Educated at an early age by her father, Seward began writing poetry at age ten; Erasmus Darwin encouraged her to continue doing so. However, she did not begin to pursue writing as a craft until 1775, when, at thirty-three, she joined Lady Miller's Batheaston Circle. In 1780, at the beginning of her poetic career, she experienced the deaths of her mother, adopted sister, Honora Sneyd, and close friend, John André. The last two deaths influenced her future poetry, and her elegies to Captain Cook, John André, and Lady Miller brought her national and international recognition as she became known as the "Queen Muse of Britain." Despite her fame, she was known for avoiding the popular literary circles of London, preferring instead a provincial life.

In contrast, Helen Maria Williams embraced London's and, later, France's literary circles. Born on June 17, 1761, Williams moved from London to Scotland, the former home of Williams's mother, after her father passed away when she was eight years old. While living in Scotland, Williams received an informal education from her mother and began to write poetry. In 1781, Williams's mother returned to London with her daughters. Encouraged to pursue her literary talents, one year later, twenty-one year old Williams published her first poem, *Edwin and Eltruda*, by subscription. Of the fifteen hundred subscribers, many were women writers, including Joanna Baillie, Elizabeth

Gary Kelly and Edd Applegate, vol. 158 (Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1996), 360–67; Deborah Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2002); David Rivers, *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors of Great Britain, arranged according to an alphabetical catalogue . . . and including a list of their works, with occasional opinions upon their literary character*, vol. 2 (London: printed for R. Faulder, 1798), 387–88; Janet Todd, "Helen Maria Williams," in *British Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide*. Edited by Janet Todd (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1989), 720–22; Carol Shiner Wilson, "Helen Maria Williams," in *An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers*, ed. Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 680–82.

Carter, Hannah More, and Anna Seward. The success of *Edwin and Eltruda*, which critics labeled a “pacifist poem,” brought her to London and made her a fixture in its literary circles. When Williams first began publishing poetry, she was considered “unsophisticated,” but by the 1790s she was known as a political thinker, abolitionist, and revolutionary idealist.¹¹¹

Despite their biographical differences, Seward’s and Williams’s poetry reflects their association with intellectual circles. Growing up in Lichfield, Seward was surrounded by an elite circle of intellectual men who comprised the Lunar Society. The members of this society, including Seward’s mentor Erasmus Darwin, “advocated cultural change, political reform, technological and scientific innovation, and economic development.”¹¹² Many of the members of the Lunar Society were Whig proponents of liberty and, therefore, adamantly opposed Britain’s efforts to put down the American Revolution. Josiah Wedgwood, one Lunar member, went so far as to call the American War a “waste of ‘blood and treasure.’”¹¹³ Seward’s *Monody* echoes Wedgwood’s remarks, but is not Seward’s first poem to criticize the American War. Written in 1780 and set “during the American War,” *Inviting Mrs C — to Tea on a Public Fast-day* expresses Seward’s opposition to the American War; however, unlike Lunar Society members, who celebrated a “progressive, commercial, Whig Britain,” Seward blames Britain’s pursuit of goods, specifically tea, for the war and questions the environmental impact of commerce.¹¹⁴ In the poem, Seward alludes to British imperialism and criticizes

¹¹¹ Rivers, *Literary Memoirs*, 2:387–88.

¹¹² Kelly, “Introduction,” x.

¹¹³ Jenny Uglow, *Lunar Men: Five Friends whose Curiosity Changed the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 260.

¹¹⁴ Brewer, “‘Queen Muse of Britain,’” 595.

it when she writes that it “hurl’d” its “conquering javelin round the world.” Indeed, she equates Britain’s quest for power to murder:

O! Indian shrub, thy fragrant flowers
To England’s weal had deadly powers,
When Despotism, with impious hand,
To venom turn’d thine essence bland,
To venom, subtle, foul, and fell,
As steep’d the dart of Isdabel!”¹¹⁵

Referring to Joseph Warton’s poem, *The Dying Indian* (1755) in which a dying hunter tells the story of the colonization of his people by the Spanish, Seward compares Spanish and British imperialism. Equally important, Seward criticizes British imperialism not only because it leads to murder, but also because it transforms a product of the natural world, a “fragrant flower,” to a weapon. In “Defending Local Places: Anna Seward as Environmental Writer,” Sylvia Bowerbank argues Seward often used her writing to “prevent misguided ‘improvements’ and to promote sound environmental practices.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, in “Sensuousness in the Poetry of Eighteenth-Century Women Poets,” Margaret Anne Doody explores Seward’s use of the “Pythagorean theme,” which allowed her to express “the respect that *should* be given to the animal and sensory nature.”¹¹⁷ *Inviting Mrs. C— to Tea* is not a “Pythagorean poem,” but Seward’s critique of commerce and war springs from the negative effects they have on the natural world; in other words, commerce and war, which arise from “cruel Man,” create barriers between

¹¹⁵ Anna Seward, *Inviting Mrs C— to Tea on a Public Fast-day*, in *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, vol. 2 (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 55–57, quotation p. 56. This poem was published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1791.

¹¹⁶ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 161. Bowerbank examines *Llangollen Vale* (1796) to prove that Seward prefers nature over commerce. Although Bowerbank argues that Seward’s environmental tendencies are present in her later work, evidence of these tendencies is present in *Inviting Mrs C— to Tea on a Public Fast-day*. Specifically, Bowerbank acknowledges Seward’s footnotes to the poem as evidence of her anti-commerce and anti-industrialization beliefs (187).

¹¹⁷ Margaret Anne Doody, “Sensuousness in the Poetry of Eighteenth-Century Women Poets,” in *Women’s Poetry in the Enlightenment*, 25–26. Emphasis mine.

humans and the natural world that make it difficult to show “respect” to “the animal and sensory nature.”¹¹⁸

Just as Seward’s work examines topics prominently discussed in the Lunar Society, so too does Williams’s work; in particular, her work often gives voice to the dissenting community’s pacifist views and encourages political reform as it promotes dissenting principles, including the universal rights to equality and liberty. Williams’s mother raised her daughters in the Presbyterian tradition, and members of the family were known as “dedicated Protestants.”¹¹⁹ According to Deborah Kennedy, Williams’s religious upbringing was reflected in her political ideals because the eighteenth century’s “philosophical interest in emotions and morals was relevant” to Dissenters’ “fight for individual liberty and freedom.”¹²⁰ Upon returning to London in 1781, Williams met Andrew Kippis, a dissenting minister and member of the Club of Honest Whigs, a group of men who, like the Lunar Society, assembled to discuss politics and science. Kippis became an important figure in Williams’s life because he encouraged her to express her religious and political beliefs in her poetry, introduced her to literary and Whig circles, and promoted her work. Williams’s first book of poetry, *Poems*, published in 1786, is “notable for a strong vein of anti-war sentiment.”¹²¹ In several poems, including *Edwin and Eltruda*, set during the War of the Roses, and *An American Tale*, where events take place during the American Revolution, Williams “criticizes the tragic effects of war.” Specifically, critics focus on how Williams’s poems emphasize war’s devastation to

¹¹⁸ In *On the Future Existence of Brutes*, Seward blames man for brutes’ deaths; she writes that “But since full oft the pangs of dire disease, / Labour, and famine, and oppression hard, / From cruel Man, the blameless victims seize” (Seward, *Poetical Works*, 2:59).

¹¹⁹ Deborah Kennedy, “Poetry of Sensibility,” in *Helen Maria Williams and Age of Revolution*, 23.

¹²⁰ Deborah Kennedy, “‘Storms of Sorrow’: The Poetry of Helen Maria Williams,” *Man and Nature: Proceedings of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10 (1991): 77.

¹²¹ Franklin, “Introduction,” 1: viii.

families. Even though this is a significant aspect of the latter poems, it is not the only aspect. In her introduction to Williams's *Poems*, Caroline Franklin notes that Williams followed other women writers' examples and expresses "the heroine's sensibility" through her "sympathy and active charity not only for the poor, but also for the animal kingdom."¹²² Franklin concludes her comment with an oft-quoted passage from Williams's first poem, *Edwin and Eltruda*, which shows Eltruda sighing over an injured insect and rescuing a falling bird's nest. Kennedy also refers to this passage and argues that it provides evidence of Eltruda's ability to "alleviate suffering in her community" and represents Williams's own "humane beliefs" that were "a concern of hers for all of her life."¹²³

Williams also displays her "humane beliefs" when she explores the relationship between commerce, conquest, and imperialism. In *Ode on the Peace*, published after the conclusion of the American War in 1783, Williams depicts war as a "stain on the image of a civilized nation." She writes that the war has changed Britain; it once "rose, in infant glories drest, / Fresh from the sparkling wave, and rear'd [its] ample breast," but now "streams of blood / Tinge the impurpled plain, and swell the ample flood."¹²⁴ Despite the war's effect on Britain, Williams suggests that the end of the American war will issue in a new era for Britain, in which the ideal of liberty will guide its imperialist and commercial pursuits. As with her other anti-war poems, Williams begins *Ode on the Peace* by calling attention to war's destructiveness in the public and private spheres; war "thunders o'er the groaning ground" and causes families to "pour the complaints of hopeless

¹²² Franklin, "Introduction," 1: ix.

¹²³ Kennedy, "Poetry of Sensibility," 25 and "Storms of Sorrow," 81.

¹²⁴ Kennedy, "Poetry of Sensibility," 28 and Helen Maria Williams, *An Ode on the Peace* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1783), 4 and 5, respectively.

woe” when they lose their loved ones.¹²⁵ However, when peace arrives, specifically on “BRITAIN’S rocky steep,” the tone of the poem changes. Peace replaces war to revive both the natural world—it “sheds o’er Nature’s form the rays of living light”—and trade. Whereas Seward blames commerce, particularly Britain’s desire for tea, for the American War in *Inviting Mrs. C — to Tea*, in *Ode on the Peace*, Williams describes commerce as Britain’s opportunity to spread its progressive views: “Commerce rears her languid head” to “bless [. . .] each less indulgent Clime.”¹²⁶ Britain will lead by example:

For BRITAIN! fears shall seize thy foes
While freedom in thy senate glows,
While Peace shall scatter o’er thy cultur’d plain
Each Glory, Pleasure, Grace, her fair attendant train.¹²⁷

Ode on the Peace represents Williams’s belief that the ideals of liberty will transform the world. Susan Lanser writes that Williams’s poetry often “forge[s] an aesthetic in which ‘feminine values of mercy, attachment, and empathy’ displace ‘masculine notions of conquest and exploitation,’” which Williams believed “threaten[ed] both the private and the public good.”¹²⁸ A similar case can be made for Seward, whose poetry explores the ways in which conquest is a threat.

In the 1780s Seward and Williams wrote poems that called for social change as they criticized war and expressed their environmental views.¹²⁹ *Monody* and *Peru* are instructive in the context of discussions of empire and ecology. In *Monody*, published the year after Seward wrote *Inviting Mrs C— to Tea on a Public Fast-day*, Seward continues

¹²⁵ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 5.

¹²⁶ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 10 and 13, respectively.

¹²⁷ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 15.

¹²⁸ Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser, eds., introduction to *Letters Written in France*, by Helen Maria Williams (New York: Broadview Press, 2001), 20.

¹²⁹ Fraistat and Lanser, “Introduction,” 18.

to combine her critique of war with her environmental views.¹³⁰ *Monody* is Seward's personal reflection of one soldier's tragic death, and in recent years has been understood as a poem that reflects upon the state of British imperialism at the end of the eighteenth century.¹³¹ While I agree that *Monody* is a poem about the British Empire, I will assert that Seward's argument about empire resides in her depiction of André and his relationship to the natural world. Seward constructs André's personality in ecological moments in order to make several points about war and its impact on the environment. In *Monody*, Seward emphasizes how war disengages humans from, and disrupts, the natural world. Seward viewed war as a futile imperial act and preferred an empire that ruled in ways that recognized the interrelatedness between humans and nature.

Peru, set during the sixteenth century, tells the story of that country's conquest by Spain. In the poem, Williams dramatically follows the lives of several native Peruvians after Spanish conquistadors, Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro, invade their country. Throughout the six cantos that comprise the poem, Williams introduces her readers to several native Peruvians. In Canto I, Williams presents the Incan monarch Atalbia and his wife, Alzira, as well as her father Zorai. In the next canto, Williams reports on these characters' encounters with the newly-arrived Spanish. Canto III follows the Spanish conqueror, Pizarro, as he attempts to take over Peru's capital, Cuzco; during this canto, Williams also introduces Las Casas, who will become an important ally of the Peruvians. Cantos IV deals with the trials Manco-Capac, Atalbia's successor, and his

¹³⁰ Seward expresses her anti-war sentiments in other poems. In *Verses to Captain Elliot*, written in the 1780s, Seward describes Bellona's "gore-stain'd shield," which calls attention to the human casualties of war. Several years after this poem, in 1810, Seward wrote *Elegy, Written as from a French Lady, Whose Husband Had Been Three Years Prisoner of War at Lichfield*. In this poem, Seward refers to war as the "fiend of human kind." Seward, *Poetical Works*, 2:53 and 3:377, respectively.

¹³¹ See Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 252–67 and Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 268–315.

wife and their infant face while he attempts to defeat Almagro's troops; in Canto V, Williams introduces her last characters, Zamor, a poet, and his lover Aciloe, who has been taken captive by the Spanish. In her detailed description of Peru's native inhabitants and its landscape, Williams emphasizes what is lost when countries pursue war in order to gain access to goods that will bring them wealth.

Peru is the longest of Williams's anti-war poems and provides the most insight into Williams's political beliefs not only about war, but also about Britain's imperialist missions. In *Peru* Williams warns against commerce's potential problems and reminds Britain that the ideals of liberty and equality, not wealth, must guide their commercial pursuits. Williams portrays Spain's empire as an allegory of Britain's empire.¹³² The Spanish Empire represents the kind of empire Britain will become if it continues to pursue other countries' products, which simultaneously help Britain become a global commercial power and threaten its status as a civil empire. Williams uses Peru, the land itself, to make her anti-colonial argument because she shows how "human events" destroy the natural world. Williams's poem warns Britain of the potential dangers of a commercial empire. By 1815, according to Janet Todd, Williams "could be wry about her earlier enthusiasm for liberty" and even as "she continued to hold her liberal principles," she also "welcomed the end of empire"; *Peru* should be read as an early expression of this sentiment since her poem shows Britain the consequences of becoming an imperial power.¹³³

¹³² See Alan Richardson, "Epic Ambivalence: Imperial Politics and Romantic Deflection in Williams's *Peru* and Landor's *Gebir*," in *Romanticism, Race, and Imperial Culture, 1780–1834*, ed. Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 265–82. In this essay, Richardson argues that since *Peru* appeared a year after the end of the American War, "a poem set in the Americas could hardly fail to suggest a home application" (267).

¹³³ Todd, "Helen Maria Williams," 721.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Spanish and British empires relied upon their colonies in the Americas to increase their wealth and imperial status. In *A New and Accurate History of South America* (1756), Richard Rolt writes that “the Spaniards owe all their opulence to their possessions in Chile, Peru, Mexico and the Antilles” and that “Great Britain is indebted to her colonies in North America, and her islands in the West-Indies, for the augmentation of her trade, the increase of her wealth, and the support of her navy.”¹³⁴ Rolt then lists the various products—gold and silver from the mines in Chile and Peru as well as North America and the Caribbean island’s tobacco and sugar plantations—that Spain and Britain, respectively, relied upon for trade. Both the Spanish and British empires assumed that their colonies existed for their sole commercial benefit; Spain used the gold and silver to pay off its debt while Britain used its colonies to supply its people with various commodities and to help grow British industries, including its metal and textile ones.¹³⁵ In *An Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce* (1756), Adam Anderson writes,

How happy then is the change in our national circumstances, since we have had American plantations, the demand from whence, all kinds of merchandize, having so greatly excited our people at home, to the improvement and increase of our old manufactures, and to the introduction of new ones: whereby, and likewise by the vast increase of the productions of our American plantations, we have got rid, for the most part, though not as yet entirely, of a precarious dependence on other nations.¹³⁶

Anderson expresses Britain’s indebtedness to the American colonies. Not only have the American colonies’ vast natural resources helped Britain revive old industries and create

¹³⁴ Richard Rolt, *A New and Accurate History of South-America . . . With a full description* (London: printed for T. Gardner, 1756), 5.

¹³⁵ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 177. O’Gorman writes that “by the 1750s, British re-exports of goods from the American colonies represented no less than 40 per cent of all Britain’s exports” (177–78).

¹³⁶ Adam Anderson, *An Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce, from the earliest accounts*, vol. 1 (London: printed at the Logographic Press, 1787–89), xlvi.

new ones, but the colonies have allowed Britain to rid itself of “a precarious dependence on other nations.”

Examining the possibilities of an empire of trade, *Monody* and *Peru* show the potential pitfalls and promises of Britain’s empire. Seward and Williams suggest a new imperial model, one that does not reject commercial pursuits altogether, but instead calls for interconnectedness between people and the natural world. In this chapter I will use Robert Kern’s definition of ecocriticism to guide my reading of *Monody* and *Peru*. In “Ecocriticism: What is it Good For?” Robert Kern writes that ecocriticism is a “literary tool” that offers “a kind of reading designed to expose and facilitate analysis of a text’s orientation both to the world it imagines and to the world in which it takes shape.” In his essay, Kern writes that “ecocriticism becomes most interesting and useful when it aims to recover the environmental character or orientation of works whose conscious or foregrounded interest lies elsewhere.”¹³⁷ Both poets describe war in ways that emphasize its human and environmental impacts. In “Some Principles of Ecocriticism,” William Howarth writes that “the dogma that culture will always master nature has long directed Western progress, inspiring wars, invasions, and other forms of conquest that have crowded the earth and strained its carrying capacity.”¹³⁸ Seward’s and Williams’s poems address how empire potentially “masters nature”; however, instead of linking humans’ mastery over nature to a specific environmental issue, Seward and Williams reveal that war, in and of itself, is an environmental issue. In *Monody* and *Peru*, Seward and Williams examine the interconnectedness between humans and nature as well as commerce and conquest to show that societies that “master nature” in order to establish

¹³⁷ Robert Kern, “Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For?” in *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993–2003*, ed. Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 260.

¹³⁸ Howarth, “Some Principles of Ecocriticism,” 77.

and secure their empire are ultimately left with nothing. Both *Monody* and *Peru* are poems chiefly concerned with what is at stake in Britain's imperial quest; however, in writing about the dangers created by a government based upon trade, Seward and Williams inevitably highlight the devastation such a government causes to the natural world. Although they focus on the consequences of an empire based upon trade, they show that if the ideals of sensibility, specifically respect for the natural world, guide a nation then it is possible to be a civil, commercial empire.

Both *Monody* and *Peru* "take shape" in a world consumed by war as Britain attempted to secure its prominence as an imperial power. Published in 1781 and 1784 respectively, *Monody* and *Peru* appeared at a consequential time for Britain's empire. Britain's imperial power was at a low in the 1780s.¹³⁹ By 1781, British support and enthusiasm for continuing to fight the American Revolution had all but disappeared; many of its citizens believed it was "the most bloody, expensive, and impracticable war, that the nation ever was involved in."¹⁴⁰ At the same time, Túpac Amará II led an uprising in Peru; though unsuccessful, the Peruvian revolution connects to the American colonists' successful revolt against Britain.¹⁴¹ In the late eighteenth century, Britons also

¹³⁹ For more information on Britain's imperial status at the end of the eighteenth century, see Christie, *Wars and Revolutions* and Harriet Guest, introduction to *Small Change*, 1–18.

¹⁴⁰ John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769–1782* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 152.

¹⁴¹ Williams mentions Amará's revolt at the end of *Peru*. For more information on the significance of Williams's reference as well as *Peru*'s 1786 publication date, see Richardson, "Epic Ambivalence," 267. Richardson writes that Williams's reference to Amará's rebellion "poses a more overt connection between South and North American revolutions and anti-colonial movements." Furthermore, he argues that Williams's reference to Amará as a "chief of India's royal race" is her way to connect the "Spanish conquest in the Americas" to the "consolidation of British control over Bengal." He also discusses the significance of *Peru*'s 1786 publication date, and links it to several historical events, including the signing of the Peace of Paris as well as the passing of the East India Act. Williams's reference to Amará as a "chief of India's royal race" is her way to connect the "Spanish conquest in the Americas" to the "consolidation of British control over Bengal."

saw their military stretched thin because they were at war not only with America, but also with France, Spain and Holland.¹⁴²

The loss of the American colonies in 1783 threatened Britain's imperial status, not only because they depended upon the colonies for their increased wealth, but more importantly because the American Revolution revealed the contradictions between the philosophical underpinning of Britain's empire on one hand and its practices on the other. Prior to the American Revolution, Britain defined itself as an empire focused on commerce, not conquest; civility, not brutality; and liberty, not slavery; however, the Revolution exposed the failings of Britain's empire. Even though trade, in the eighteenth century, was "the study of all civilized nations," after the American war, Britons realized that an empire based upon commerce did not necessarily lead to a civil empire.¹⁴³ The Peruvian revolts in the 1780s proved that to become a commercial empire, a nation usually had to conquer both people and land.

Britons could look at their own environments or their colonies' environments to see that their imperial and commercial pursuits had already wreaked havoc on the land. The loss of the American colonies revealed Britain's environmental crisis and developed new ones. By 1783, Britain had "lost more than a quarter of the Empire's potential economic resources." Rising population and food prices forced Britain to expand its agricultural production. Between 1793 and 1815, two thousand Acts of Enclosure passed, double the amount that had passed between 1760 and 1780.¹⁴⁴ Britain's colonies

¹⁴² Robert E. Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham: A Social History of Provincial Science and Industry in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1963), 135. Also see Uglow, *Lunar Men*, 339. Uglow lists Britain's military engagements: "They were fighting the French in India, the West Indies, North America and Africa; the Spanish in Gibraltar, Balaeric Islands, the Caribbean and Florida; the Dutch in Ceylon and the West Indies; and the American colonies."

¹⁴³ Rolt, *New and Accurate History*, n.p.

¹⁴⁴ Christie, *Wars and Revolutions*, 113.

faced similar environmental tragedies. In *A Political Survey of Britain* (1774), John Campbell writes that “it is incontestibly evident that they [American plantations] have contributed greatly to increase our industry, and of course our Riches, to extend our Commerce, to augment our Naval Power, and consequently to maintain the Grandeur and support the prosperity of the Mother Country.”¹⁴⁵ Campbell’s statement expands upon Anderson’s by acknowledging the American colonies’ benefit to Britain’s military. The American forests made the British navy possible and also helped Britain ignore its environmental crisis.¹⁴⁶ Bowerbank discusses how the “new world” provided Britain with an excuse to dismantle their own forests, so that “by the 1650s, the resources of the forests, including Sherwood, were being steadily and indiscriminately used up.”¹⁴⁷ In *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860*, Richard Grove cites Dr. Thomas Preston, who said in 1791 that “the decline of oak trees in England was ‘not to be regretted for it is certain proof of national improvement and for Royal Navies countries yet barbarous are the right and proper nurseries.’”¹⁴⁸ Eighteenth-century literature reflects Preston’s comments. In *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760–1820*, Beth Fowkes Tobin argues that British writers portrayed the tropics as “paradisiacal” in order to justify “British intervention and management.”¹⁴⁹ The British Empire was not alone; as

¹⁴⁵ John Campbell, *A Political Survey of Britain*, vol. 2 (London: printed for the author and sold by Richardson and Urquhart, 1774), 567.

¹⁴⁶ Richard Grove writes about how the Spanish, who had also clear cut their woodland areas, discovered forested islands only to “decimate” their trees and people. *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 29.

¹⁴⁷ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 56.

¹⁴⁹ Tobin, introduction to *Colonizing Nature*, 2. Tobin uses James Thomson’s poem, *Rule, Britannia!* (1740) as an example of how the tropics are “blessed and cursed”; the climate supports many natural resources, but is also “tyrannical and corrupting” (1). For more information on British writers’ portrayals

previously mentioned, Spain mined for gold and silver in Peru and Chile to pay off their debt. In the same way Britain “used up” their forests, Spain “used up” Peru and Chile’s gold and silver mines.

Yet, the world Seward and Williams imagine is one that does not seek to destroy the earth, or humans, in order to secure Britain’s imperial status. Instead both poets imagine a world where the human world respects the non-human world; therefore, *Monody* and *Peru* show that we live in a “more-than-human world.”¹⁵⁰ Historian Frank O’Gorman notes that “it was no accident that every war in which Britain was engaged in the long eighteenth century was a commercial war in which colonial issues loomed large.”¹⁵¹ O’Gorman’s comments reflect the connection between commerce and conquest, a connection Seward’s *Monody* and Williams’s *Peru* help to prove. In both poems, Seward and Williams consciously connect commercial ambitions to war. Although they acknowledge that commerce often leads to war, which inevitably results in the disintegration of a nation’s power as well as the destruction of the natural world, in *Monody* and *Peru*, Seward and Williams suggest that it is possible for a nation to pursue commercial interests without risking military engagements. Seward’s and Williams’s poems acknowledge Britain’s reliance on foreign landscapes, but suggest that commerce and respect for the natural world do not have to be mutually exclusive. If there is a respect for the land, then it is possible to have a commercial *and* civil empire. Their

of the tropics, see Kaul, *Poems of Nation*. In this book, Kaul offers a reading of James Thomson’s *The Seasons* that supports Tobin’s argument. Jessica Damián Schelke writes about how Williams’s poem can be considered travel-writing in part because it idealizes Peru. “The Lucid Silver and the Glowing Ore: British Women Writers Mine South America, 1770–1860.” PhD diss., University of Miami, 2000, 73 and 84.

¹⁵⁰ Kern, “Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For,” 258. Kern uses David Abrams’s definition of a “more-than-human world,” which is one where nature is not “always something to be tamed or overcome, so that the natural and the human are necessarily at odds.”

¹⁵¹ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 177.

poems conclude with an image of empire that is based upon sensibility not products and suggest that a nation's wealth does not reside in products—timber, tea, gold, silver—instead, it exists in the natural world—plants and mountains—that produces those products. In their poems, Seward and Williams ask that nations honor and respect the natural world so as not to use up all of its resources. Neither Seward nor Williams argue that a commercial empire can never be a civil empire. A civil empire, according to Greco-Roman ideas, believed that there was universality among people; Seward and Williams extend this idea of universality to both the human and non-human world and propose that interrelatedness between humans and nature is the key to being a commercial empire. Seward and Williams assert that in order to be a civil, commercial empire a nation has to extend the same respect to its landscapes, at home and abroad, as it does to its people.

Humans and Nature: “Those good green people”

Both Seward and Williams relied upon elements of the culture of sensibility to express their political beliefs.¹⁵² In “The Female Poet and the Poetess: Two Traditions of British Women’s Poetry, 1780–1830,” Anne Mellor defines “the literary tradition of the female poet” as “explicitly political.”¹⁵³ Seward and Williams occupy Mellor’s category of female poet because their poetry not only “responds to specific political events” but also “argues more broadly for wide-ranging social and political reform.”¹⁵⁴ Initially,

¹⁵² In ““Storms of Sorrow,”” Kennedy argues that Williams “integrated sensibility with her religious and political ideals” (78). In ““Queen Muse of Britain,”” John Brewer does not link Seward’s use of sensibility to a specific religious conscience; instead, he writes that Seward viewed sensibility “as the key to taste in the late eighteenth century” (579).

¹⁵³ Anne K. Mellor, “The Female Poet and the Poetess: Two Traditions of British Women’s Poetry, 1780–1830,” in *Women’s Poetry in the Enlightenment*, 82.

¹⁵⁴ Mellor, “Female Poet and Poetess,” 85.

sentimental literature was not viewed as political writing; however, now critics acknowledge that sentimentality was a political tool in the eighteenth century. John Brewer writes that “poetic sensibility and a social conscience could go hand-in-hand,” and for Seward and Williams it did.¹⁵⁵ They deployed tropes of sentimental literature in order to “invoke sympathy” in people, which allowed their readers to “experience empathy” and made it possible for their poetry to “relieve political strife.”¹⁵⁶ In *Monody* and *Peru*, Seward and Williams focus on the devastations war causes to both humans and non-humans, which moves the public to feel for those people and places destroyed in the name of war.¹⁵⁷ Their poetry insists upon what Doody describes as “a rediscovery and a reassertion of human relation to animal, bird, insect.”¹⁵⁸ To Doody’s list I would add land.

In *Monody* and *Peru*, Seward and Williams construct the poems’ main characters, John André and the Peruvians, respectively, as sentimental figures in order to promote their political messages. One reviewer in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* writes that *Monody* gives “painful pleasure” to those “readers of taste and sensibility” while it relates previously unknown information about the “genius and character” of Major André, the poem’s “unfortunate hero.”¹⁵⁹ This reviewer specifically reflects upon Seward’s ability to make readers feel for other people. In *Ode on the Peace*, Williams praises Seward’s

¹⁵⁵ Brewer, ““Queen Muse of Britain,”” 580. For more information on sensibility being used as a political tool, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, “A Culture of Reform,” in *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Doody, “Sensuousness, 3–32; Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*.

¹⁵⁶ See Brewer, ““Queen Muse of Britain,”” 579 and Rivers, *Literary Memoirs*, 387–88, respectively.

¹⁵⁷ For more information on how sensibility as a movement influenced animal rights as well as women’s rights, see Barker-Benfield, “Culture of Reform”; Doody, “Sensuousness”; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

¹⁵⁸ Doody, “Sensuousness,” 10.

¹⁵⁹ Unsigned review of *Monody on Major André*, by Anna Seward, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 51 (April 1781): 178.

Monody, including Seward's ability to make André's "virtues shine." Other scholars have agreed with the reviewer's and Williams's assessment and argue that the source of André's sentimentality primarily resides in Seward's description of his relationships with women.¹⁶⁰ In *Monody*, Seward depicts these relationships as essential to André's decision to go to war in the first place, and according to Harriet Guest, André's decision to fight for the British against the Americans, even though the war was viewed as "an unwinnable civil war," is an important component of his sentimentality.¹⁶¹ Although I agree with these scholars, I also contend that Seward makes André's connection to the natural world an essential part of his sentimental description.

Seward develops André's personality, in *Monody* and the letters she chose to attach to the poem, through ecological moments that reflect her own environmental views. Along with being "Britannia's Muse," Seward has also been referred to as a "poet of place" and, recently, as an environmental writer.¹⁶² Labeling Seward as a "poet of place," Brewer and Bowerbank acknowledge her awareness of the material world. As Brewer notes, and Seward's poetry attests, places "embodied history as well as nature."¹⁶³ Much of Seward's poetry describes particular places of her youth where the

¹⁶⁰ For information on the role women play in Seward's construction of André as a sentimental hero, see Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 294 and Guest, *Small Change*, 260–61. For passages that in the second half of the poem, a part of his representation as a sentimental hero reside in the fact that he wanted to fight for the British against the Americans, even though the war was viewed as a civil and unwinnable war.

¹⁶¹ See Guest, *Small Change*, 260–61. In *Monody*, Seward argues that Andre went to war not only because his relationship with Honora failed, but also because his mother and sisters could use his commission since they lost an important source of their income when Britain ceased to control Grenada (8 and 12, respectively). However, historians have proven that Honora would not have been a factor in André's decision to go to war. James Thomas Flexner writes that it is a "sublime inaccuracy," citing André's boyhood desire to have a military career and the fact that André had joined the army two years before Honora's engagement to Richard Lovell Edgeworth. *The Traitor and the Spy: Benedict Arnold and John André* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), 33.

¹⁶² See Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 163. In "Queen Muse of Britain," Brewer asserts that Seward's writing "gives a sense of place" (577).

¹⁶³ Brewer, "Queen Muse of Britain," 582.

environment inscribes feelings of love and loss, which shows that Seward understands the land's role in nurturing and memorializing relationships.¹⁶⁴ Seward imposes her view of nature's influence on relationships in her fictional account of André and Honora's relationship. Seward details how their relationship developed among nature:

The blushing rose-bud in its vernal bed,
By Zephyrs fan'd, and murm'ring fountains fed,
In June's gay morn that scents the ambient air,
Was not more sweet, more innocent, or fair.¹⁶⁵

Although the language used here may seem overly sentimental, Seward's life attests to the natural world's role in the development of her relationships, especially her friendship with André. The "foundational site" of Seward and André's friendship and, in the poem, Honora's and André's relationship is in "Joy's resplendent bow'rs" (*Monody*, 3).

Historian James Thomas Flexner writes about André's developing friendship with Seward and her circle of friends: "There, under the trees which he called 'those good green people,' John came to know Anna's enthusiastically artistic friends."¹⁶⁶ Here, Flexner acknowledges the role place, nature itself, plays in Seward's relationships, just as she does in her letters and poetry.

In the poem, André is in harmony with the environment, even when in the midst of war. Before André embarks upon war, Seward describes him as an artist who realistically portrays his subjects, and in doing so he enlivens them:

¹⁶⁴ See Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 172. Bowerbank writes that Seward also inscribes loss on landscapes.

¹⁶⁵ Anna Seward, *Monody on Major André. By Miss Seward . . . To Which are added letters addressed to her by Major André in the year 1769* (Lichfield: printed and sold by J. Jackson, 1781), 7. Hereafter, text reference will refer to an abbreviated title and the page number.

¹⁶⁶ Flexner, *Traitor and the Spy*, 26.

And hence thy pencil, with his colours warm,
Caught ev'ry grace, and copied ev'ry charm
Whose transient glories beam on Beauty's cheek,
And bid thy glowing Ivory breathe and speak. (*Monody*, 4)

In this passage, “the land speaks”; his artwork not only reflects his environment, but he makes it come alive.¹⁶⁷ In an attempt to portray the “real” André, who intended to publish a natural history of America, Seward describes how his art “caught” and “copied” his surroundings.¹⁶⁸ However, Seward quickly returns to her construction of André. Once he embarks upon a military mission, André’s artwork serves other purposes. According to Seward’s poem, after André’s first captivity, he is most concerned with the miniature of Honora because it serves as his “last retreat” from war’s “relentless Violence” (*Monody*, 17). By the time André served in America, his relationship with Honora had been over for quite some time, thus Seward fabricates their relationship in order to make a point about art and war. Art serves as a refuge and separates André from the violence of war, which destroys a real refuge, the natural world.

The letters Seward chooses to attach to *Monody* support her poetic construction of André. In a letter to *The Critical Review* in April 1781, Seward writes about her reason for attaching letters from André to her poem. Although these letters give the background of André and Honora’s relationship, Seward does not give this as a reason for including them. Instead, according to Seward, “many people of genius and literature” encouraged her to include them because they provided examples of “epistolary excellence” and “awakened sensibility.”¹⁶⁹ These letters, and the “awakened sensibility” they reveal, are essential to understanding Seward’s argument in *Monody*. In “Defending Local Places:

¹⁶⁷ See Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 105–47.

¹⁶⁸ See Flexner, *Traitor and the Spy*, 35. Flexner writes about André’s friend, Du Simitière, who described André’s drawings as “lively and picturesque.”

¹⁶⁹ Anna Seward to *The Critical Review*, in *The Critical Review* 51 (1781): 320.

Anna Seward as Environmental Writer,” Bowerbank comments that Seward favored André over Honora’s other suitors because he “shared her environmental sensitivities.”¹⁷⁰

In a letter dated October 19, 1769, André writes that

It has been the finest day imaginable—A solemn mildness was diffus’d throughout the blue horizon;—Its light was clear and distinct rather than dazzling; the serene beams of the autumnal sun!—Gilded hills,—variegated woods,—glittering spires;—ruminating herds,—bounding flocks,—all combin’d to inchant the eyes, expand the heart, and “chace all sorrow but despair”—In the midst of such a scene, no lesser grief can prevent our sympathy with nature—A calmness, a benevolent disposition seizes us with sweet insinuating power.—The very brute creation seem sensible of these beauties;—There is a species of mild cheerfulness in the face of a Lamb, which I have but indifferently express’d in a corner of my paper, and a demure contented look in an Ox, which, in fear of expressing still worse, I leave unattempted.¹⁷¹

This passage shares themes present in a letter Seward wrote in January 1763. In her letter, she writes about her love of Ossian’s poetry because of his descriptions of the natural world. She explains that being born “in the craggy heights of Derbyshire” and surrounded by “immense mountains” as well as “frowning rocks, broken and vast, silent and lonely vallies” influenced her relationship with the environment. Seward has “an awful reverence” for the natural world’s “dignity,” a sentiment similar to André’s “enchantment” with nature.¹⁷² Moved by the beauty of nature as it “expands the heart,” André begins to sympathize with “the very brute creation.” The inclusion of this letter becomes notable when read alongside Seward’s poem *On the Future Existence of Brutes*. According to Doody, this poem “almost entirely closes the gap between Human and Brute” just as André’s description of the lamb and ox does when he acknowledges that

¹⁷⁰ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 179.

¹⁷¹ John André to Anna Seward, London, 19 October 1769, in *Monody on Major André*, 39.

¹⁷² See Seward, *Poetical Works*, 1:lxvi.

they, too, “seem sensible” of the beauty of nature; therefore, André’s letter can and should be understood as a reflection of Seward’s own environmental views.¹⁷³

Like André, the Peruvians understand the liveliness of the natural world. In the advertisement to *Peru*, Williams writes that her purpose is to evoke “true pathos”; to do this, Williams says she will rely upon describing the “unparalleled sufferings of an innocent and amiable people.”¹⁷⁴ Modern critics of her poetry have acknowledged Williams’s success in achieving her goal. Both Deborah Kennedy and Alan Richardson cite her description of Peru’s native inhabitants as the site of her sentimentality.¹⁷⁵ However, the sentence that comes after Williams asserts her goal also reveals a site, if not *the* site, of her sentimentality. She writes that Peru’s “climate, intirely dissimilar to our own, furnishes new and ample materials for poetic description.”¹⁷⁶ Based upon this comment, it would appear that Williams “relegates the environment to the status of setting.”¹⁷⁷ Yet, Williams’s earlier poems prove that she often connected her main characters to nature as a way to express their sensibility. In Canto V, Williams introduces Zamor, a bard and lover of nature, whose relationship to the natural world corresponds with André’s, specifically his letter to Seward that details his encounter with the ox: “Nature, in Terror rob’d, or Beauty drest, / Could thrill with dear enchantment Zamor’s breath” (V.783–84). Nature enchants both André and Zamor. Williams uses her characterizations in order to show Nature’s power over people’s emotions.

¹⁷³ Doody, “Sensuousness,” 15.

¹⁷⁴ Helen Maria Williams, advertisement to *Peru, a poem in six cantos by Helen Maria Williams* (London: printed for T. Cadell, 1784), viii and vii, respectively. Hereafter, references to the poem will be cited in the text. Text references are to canto and line number of this edition.

¹⁷⁵ See Kennedy, ““Storms of Sorrow”” and “Poetry of Sensibility,” 21–51; Richardson, “Epic Ambivalence,” 265–82.

¹⁷⁶ Williams, “Advertisement,” viii.

¹⁷⁷ Kern, “Ecocriticism: What is it Good For,” 260.

From the beginning of *Peru*, Williams suggests that one of her goals is to explore the relationship between humans and the natural world. In the advertisement to the poem, she writes that Peru is “a place chiefly interesting because of the human events that unfold in it”; indeed, the “human events” consume much of the poem.¹⁷⁸ Williams describes the Peruvians, who are involved in the events of the poem, in terms of nature, which puts the natural world, not humans, at the forefront. Peru, the region, is the poem’s main character. Even the description of the native inhabitants reinforce that Peru itself is the subject of the poem. Williams describes Peru’s native inhabitants using the same language she uses to describe Peru’s land. Peru’s monarch, Atalbia, comes from nature; he descends from “a scepter’d, sacred Race, / whose origin from glowing Suns they trace” (I.73–74). He has a “pure, unsullied mind” (I.83); Williams previously used the word “unsullied” to describe Peru’s environment.¹⁷⁹ Williams also draws connections between Alzira’s father Zorai and the natural world. Specifically, Williams’s description of Zorai and the hummingbird mirror one another. Just as the hummingbird “seeks the nest / Parental care has rear’d,” so too does Zorai seek his daughter, “with fond parental love,” on her wedding day (I.42, 142).

One of the more striking comparisons between Peru’s native inhabitants and its natural history is found in Williams’s description of Atalbia’s successor Manco-Capac’s wife Cora in the last canto. Cora, alone and looking for shelter, presumes her husband has been killed during a revolt against Pizarro’s troops’ invasion of Cuzco, the capital of the Incan Empire that is located in southern Peru. Williams describes the llama’s death ritual in order to illuminate Cora’s desperate situation:

¹⁷⁸ Kern, “Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For,” 260.

¹⁷⁹ See Williams, *Peru*, I.99.

So the meek Lama [*sic*], lur'd by some decoy
Of Man, for all his unembitter'd joy,
Erewhile, as free as roves the wand'ring breeze,
Meets the hard burden on his bending knees;
O'er Rocks and Mountains dark and waste he goes,
Nor shuns the path where no soft herbage grows,
Till worn with toil, on Earth he prostrate lies,
Heeds not the barb'rous Lash, but patient dies. (VI.1183–90)¹⁸⁰

Williams cites Abbé Raynal's *History of the European Settlements* (1776) to explain why the llama chooses to give up and die; according to Raynal, llamas only give up when they are "totally exhausted, or fall under their burden." Using language reminiscent of the llama's passing, Williams describes Cora's journey:

Long, long she wander'd, till oppress'd with toil
Her trembling footsteps track with blood the soil—
In vain with moans her distant Lord she calls,
In vain the tear of mingled anguish falls;
Her moan expires along the desert wood—
Her tear is mingled with the crimson flood. (VI.1199–1204)

The description of Cora emphasizes her exhaustion; she has wandered for a long time and is "oppress'd with toil" in the same way that the llama is "worn with toil." She can no longer go on, which is evidenced by the fact that her moans and tears are "in vain."

Williams makes the llama's death mirror Cora's and in doing so, she shows the inseparability between humans and the natural world.

In *Peru*'s first canto, Williams writes a natural history of Peru, which details the country's flora and fauna and further emphasizes the similarities between humans and the natural world. Playing the part of botanist, Williams lists the various plants that grow in Peru and briefly describes the qualities of each plant. She describes types of trees, or as she calls them, "living verdure" (I.11). Her phrase bears comparison to André's description of "those good green people" and reminds her audience that nature is alive.

¹⁸⁰ Williams's spelling reflects the Linnaean name for llamas (*lama glama*) and alpacas (*lama paco*).

Indeed, many of her descriptions anthropomorphize nature, which reinforces her reverent view of the natural world. In particular, she describes cedar trees as having “lofty heads” and the guava tree’s balsam “weeps ambrosial tears,” a comment that refers to the tree’s medicinal purposes and shows how nature benefits humans (I.14, 20). She moves from Peru’s plant world to its animal one, first describing its “beasts of burden,” including the alpaca and llama, and then its bird life.¹⁸¹ Similar to her description of Peru’s plant life, Williams once again anthropomorphizes nature when she writes of the “proud” Macaw and the Humming Bird’s “parental care” (I.27, 42). Her anthropomorphization of Peru’s bird life has two different, albeit similar, effects; first it reinforces her view that nature is alive and, second, it evokes “true pathos” because it shows that birds, like humans, have familial concerns. G. J. Barker-Benfield notes that anthropomorphizing nature “stressed ‘the avoidance of cruelty, violence, brutality.’”¹⁸²

Williams’s description of Peru’s ornithological life could easily be included in a botanical book. Resuming her role as botanist, Williams describes the hummingbird’s morning ritual:

Light on the Citron’s stem his pinion spreads,
While Springs warm ray its sweet suffusion sheds,
His flutt’ring plumes their shining hues unfold,
The vivid scarlet, and the streaming gold,
The soft flower wet with Morning’s tear he views,
Sinks on its breast, and drinks th’ ambrosial dews. (I.35–40)

According to Tobin, in the late eighteenth century, Britain published the “‘finest illustrated’ botanical books ever printed.”¹⁸³ These books often described the flora and

¹⁸¹ For an interesting discussion of the Andean uses, or lack thereof, of llamas and alpacas, see Daniel W. Gade, “The Andes as a Dairyless Civilization: Llamas and Alpacas as Unmilked Animals,” in *Nature and Culture in the Andes* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 102–17.

¹⁸² Barker-Benfield, “Culture of Reform,” 235.

¹⁸³ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 172.

fauna of a particular region and helped to popularize botany. Williams's verse offers specific details that emulate paintings by other botanists. Readers can visualize the hummingbird's habitat, as it hovers over a Citron tree, as well as its food source when it "drinks th' ambrosial dew" of the tree's flowers. In a style that mirrors botanical books, Williams's passage draws upon a remarkable palette to create a canvas covered in "vivid scarlet" and "streaming gold." Tobin describes Sir James E. Smith's botanical book, *Exotic Botany*, focusing on the book's "sensory details, which delineate color, form, and aroma" in order to "enable the reader to visualize how these plants might function in their lives as objects of beauty, admiration, and desire." The purpose of Smith's botanical book was to "arouse curiosity in his readers and to teach them to desire these plants, which he promises will gratify their taste for the new"; according to Tobin, Smith's botanical book functioned as a "shopping list" for its readers and gave them the tools they needed in order to possess the natural world.¹⁸⁴ In contrast, Williams's description of the hummingbird, in which she writes that it "sinks" on the "soft flower," emphasizes the hummingbird's gentle beauty not so readers will want to possess it, rather so they will empathize with it and begin to treat the natural world with the same respect as the hummingbird.

War on Nature: "Field of Death"

André's thoughts about the lamb and the ox as well as Cora's similarities with the llama emphasize the connections between humans and nature; war also emphasizes this connection. War, even though a human invention, affects the non-human world as much as the human. Seward and Williams emphasize this aspect of war at the beginning of

¹⁸⁴ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 183–84.

their poems, thereby showing that war is an environmental issue. The word “universal” in the eighteenth century corresponds with our contemporary definition of the word “global.” In their poems, Seward and Williams show how war is universal because the wars detailed in *Monody* and *Peru* engage several nations, including Britain, France, Spain, Peru and Chile; equally important, Seward and Williams highlight the people and places implicated in war. Doody writes that Seward understood that “man-made laws and concepts not only set up great barriers between human beings, but also create an impassable divide between the human and the other living creatures of this earth.”¹⁸⁵ In *Monody* and *Peru*, war, a “man-made” concept, and the weapons used during it, separates humans from and destroys the natural world. Most wars center upon issues of land ownership and natural resources, which results in a view of land as an object to be won or lost instead of an essential part of an already existing ecosystem; Seward and Williams show how individuals view the contested land as an object.

The title of Seward’s poem suggests that it will be about a military figure, Major John André and, as such, will praise, even if in a muted way, the British military. Yet, Seward does not begin her poem by describing André or praising the military; instead, she describes a storm at sea. Her description of the natural world emphasizes the human side of war and humans’ connection to the natural world. Seward begins her poem with a terrifying image of a storm at sea that mirrors the anguish present on the land:

Loud howls the storm! the vex’d Atlantic roars!
Thy Genius, Britain, wanders on its shores!
Hears cries of horror wafted from afar,
And groans of Anguish, mid the Shrieks of War!
Hears the deep curses of the Great and Brave,
Sigh in the wind, and murmur on the wave! (*Monody*, 1)

¹⁸⁵ Doody, “Sensuousness,” 12.

Although the opening lines describe a meteorological event, it quickly becomes clear that the sounds of the storm blend with the sounds of war. The ocean's "howls" are not unlike the "Shrieks of War"; indeed, Seward includes the natural world in war when she writes that the soldier's "curses" "sigh in the wind, and murmur on the wave." This line reflects a cause of death during the Revolution as well as the difficulties that a nation encounters when fighting a war overseas. During the Revolution, drowning was a leading cause of death; therefore, the "curses" that "murmur on the wave" could refer to the soldiers who lost their lives at sea.¹⁸⁶ In this line Seward also acknowledges the ocean's role in transmitting, however slowly, information regarding the war effort in America back to Britain. Seward uses the word "vex'd" to describe the ocean. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "vex'd" refers to something that is "subject to physical force or strain." This definition also describes the British military during the American war. Britain's supply line during the war was a three-thousand mile oceanic crossing, a logistical nightmare. Since it took at least three months for any supplies to reach America, the British military, like the Atlantic Ocean, was strained. Indeed, the ocean was a deciding factor in Britain's ability to win the war since they were only able to successfully supply their army for six of the eight years they fought in America.¹⁸⁷ Beginning with a storm at sea, Seward further proves the similarities between humans and nature.

¹⁸⁶ For more information on casualties during the American War, see Michael Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflict: A Statistical Reference*, vol. 1, *A Note on Statistics Introduction 1618–1899* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1992) and Howard H. Peckham, *The Toll of Independence: Engagements and Battle Casualties of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

¹⁸⁷ Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 178.

In *Monody*, the sounds of war merge with the sounds of the storm, a natural phenomena; however, in *Peru* the sounds of nature are short-lived and replaced with the more violent sounds of war. In her ornithological description, Williams highlights the birds' sounds. Both the mocking and humming birds bring peacefulness to Peru's "vocal groves" (I.25):

The Mocking-Bird her echoing note essays,
Or sweetly trills her on preclusive Lays;
Trembling in air the luscious cadence floats,
And Passion warbles in her melting notes
The beauteous Humming Bird amid' the groves
Breathes in low, plaintive tones his gentle loves. (I.29–34)

The hummingbird's "low, plaintive tones" complement the mockingbird's "sweet" lays; both birds' sounds fill the Peruvian forest with their "luscious cadence." Williams's use of the word "land" calls attention to the fact that Spanish troops will disrupt Peru's human inhabitants as well as its animal and plant life. The sounds of war drown out the songs of Peru's "feather'd throng" (I.25):

The thund'ring Cannons rend the vault around,
And the loud Trumpets pour their shrilling sound;
While fierce in sanguine rage the Sons of Spain
Rush on Peru's unarm'd defenceless Train. (II.253–56)

The harsh sounds of cannons and trumpets have silenced the peaceful sounds of the mocking and humming birds. The mockingbird's notes no longer echo; instead, the "crash" of the "thund'ring cannons" echoes (IV.607). The "loud Trumpets pour their shrilling sound" and drown out the birds' "melting notes" and "plaintive tones" (I.32, 34). The Spanish, "fierce in sanguine rage," overwhelm the "passion" of the mocking-bird's song.

Williams writes a natural history of Peru to open her poem in order to emphasize what will be destroyed after the Spanish arrive. The paradise that existed in Canto I becomes hell once Spain invades Peru. Throughout her natural history, Williams emphasized the “sweet wild disorder” of Peru’s flora and fauna. In Peru, nature is “unsullied” (I.99) and appears “as when the World was young” (I.10). However when Pizarro’s troops arrive, they “press’d Peruvia’s Land” (II.226). Peru’s land no longer resembles “when the World was young”; paradise has been invaded, and the Spanish soldiers will leave their ecological footprint on Peru.¹⁸⁸ The changes to Peru’s landscapes are noticeable. In the first canto, Williams described Peru as a “cultur’d scene,” the “emblem of bliss serene”; it was a place where “Smiling Nature in luxuriance showers” the earth with flowers and “Beauty blossoms as it sweeps the Plain” (I.5, 8). Pizarro’s troops transform Peru from a “gentle Region blest,” where “the Virtues rose, unsullied, and sublime” (I.47, 48), to a “desolated Region,” “where Av’rice spreads the waste of War” (V.1099, 1100). “Smiling Nature” becomes “Sad Nature” as it “sickens” (II.353). Instead of trees and flowers rising from the ground, “rising heaps of Slain” bodies cover it (II.283). Peru has become a “Field of Death” (VI.1191).

In *Monody*, Seward uses André in order to show humans’ role in destroying the natural world. An early epistolary exchange proves that André and Seward do not entirely share the same view of the natural world. In a letter dated October 3, 1769, André writes about the Lichfield Cathedral’s administrator’s decision to cut down parts of the trees in the cathedral’s walk:

¹⁸⁸ Williams mentions in a footnote that “the gold mines have been for some time shut up” (VI.94).

I sympathize in your resentment against the Canonical Dons, who stumpify the heads of those good green people, beneath whose friendly shade so many of your happiest hours have glided away—but they defy them; let them stumpify as much as they please, Time will repair the mischief—their verdant arms will again extend, and invite You to their shelter.¹⁸⁹

In this passage, André views the trees as monuments to the “happiest hours [Seward] glided away,” and in doing so, he acknowledges that nature embodies history.

Additionally, Seward’s *On the Future Existence of Brutes* and *Ode on the Pythagorean System* express interconnectedness between the human and natural worlds in the same

way as André’s description of the trees. Referring to the trees’ outer-most branches as “the heads of those good green people,” André anthropomorphizes the natural world.

However, he and Seward diverge regarding the natural world’s ability to heal itself.

André believes that cutting down a tree only temporarily destroys it; he believes that

“time will repair the mischief” and “their verdant arms will again extend.” Believing that

the trees will be able to repair themselves, André fails to understand the intricacies of the

natural world; some trees, once cut, will never be able to grow again. Seward knows that

nature is not so easily repaired. In a letter dated February 13, 1765, four years before she

met André, Seward describes a mountain visible from her birthplace, Eyam, a small

village in Derbyshire: “the towers and turrets of these lofty rocks are, however,

continually growing less and less distinct, picturesque, and noble; broken and ravaged, as

from time to time they are, and will farther be, for the purposes of building, and of

making and mending roads, and this by the force of gunpowder, and by the perpetual

consumption of the ever-burning lime-kilns.”¹⁹⁰ Here, Seward describes how nature is

irreversibly altered, “broken and ravaged,” in order to make life more convenient for

¹⁸⁹ John André to Anna Seward, London, 3 October 1769, in *Monody on Major André*, 34.

¹⁹⁰ See Seward, *Poetical Works*, 1:clvii.

humans and constantly reminds the letter's recipient that the changes to the mountainside are caused by humans—"the force of gunpowder" and the "perpetual consumption of the ever-burning lime-kilns."

Seward uses André's art in order to further emphasize the ways humans disrupt the natural world. She characterizes André's artistic abilities as the source of his "glory," but also as the cause of his eventual death. André's artistic talent, not his ability to fulfill "warrior duties," secures his glory, and ultimately leads to his death (*Monody*, 18).

Imagining the benefits of André's artistic talents, Seward describes how he draws a map:

Dependence scarcely feels his gentle sway,
He shares each want, and smiles each grief away;
And to the virtues of a noble Heart
Unites the talents of inventive Art.
Thus from his swift and faithful pencil flow
The Lines, the Camp, the Fortress of the Foe;
Serene to counteract each deep Design,
Points the dark Ambush, and the springing Mine;
Till, as a breathing Incense, André's name
Pervades the Host, and swells the loud acclaim. (*Monody*, 19)

Mapping is usually a "mode of gaining control over the world," a statement that links map-making to imperialism, but initially André's map seems to do the opposite.¹⁹¹

Despite the ongoing war, André lays down the sword and grasps his pencil; in this way, Seward separates André from the colonists, who clutch the "fatal implements of war" in their "bloody hands" (*Monody*, 16 and 15, respectively). In this passage, Seward imagines André drawing a military map that highlights the locations of "the dark Ambush, and the springing Mine." By detailing the location of these man-made "weapons," André's map could potentially save lives. Instead of focusing on how to

¹⁹¹ Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein, introduction to *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, by Martin Brückner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.

continue the war, André's map gives Britain a chance to end it.¹⁹² Seward suggests that the map will bring about peace because it will "counteract each deep Design." Earlier in the poem, Seward established André's motivations for going to war—he lost his true love, Honora, and he wanted glory for his country—yet this is the first time André achieves glory. His glory comes from the pencil, not the sword; it comes from a desire for peace, not war.

Yet, by describing André as "serene" while he draws the map, Seward makes André complicit in the war. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "serene" means to be "untroubled" or "unperturbed"; André, then, is content to draw the map, to take part in Britain's war effort. Indeed, by drawing the map, André, not Britain, will be glorified as his name "pervades the Host, and swells the loud acclaim." Even though André draws the map of enemy territory in order to help the British conclude the American war, it is still a map and as such it makes the land an object, which highlights the devastation war brings to the natural world. The art André produces in America does not acknowledge the liveliness of the natural world; instead, it calls attention to the ways humans disrupt it. In "The Uses of Landscape: The Picturesque Aesthetic and the National Park System," Alison Byerly discusses the spectator's role in English landscaping; she writes that "it is the spectator who engages the machinery of the picturesque aesthetic, mentally manufacturing a work of art where before there had been a work of nature."¹⁹³ André's map is not an English landscape painting and does not "engage the machinery of the

¹⁹² It is important to note that André's purpose in the war was to serve as a spy. When he was appointed as Henry Clinton's adjutant-general, part of his job was to handle correspondence between Clinton and the American spies. Through his position, André came in contact with Benedict Arnold, who was planning to turn over West Point to the British. For more information on André as a spy, see Edgeworth, *Traitor and the Spy* and Andy Trees, "Benedict Arnold, John André, and his Three Yeoman Captors: A Sentimental Journey or American Virtue Defined," *Early American Literature* 35, no. 3 (2000): 246–73.

¹⁹³ Alison Byerly, "The Uses of Landscape: The Picturesque Aesthetic and the National Park System," in *Ecocriticism Reader*, 55.

picturesque aesthetic”; however, Seward does consider it a work of art when she writes that his map “unites the talents of inventive Art” (*Monody*, 19). André’s map is simultaneously a geographical representation of enemy territory and a work of art. In order to create this work of art, André had to become a spectator. When André draws the map, Seward describes it as if he is in a trance; he “smiles each grief a way” and his pencil moves “swiftly” to depict the enemy’s territory. He remains “serene” even as the “relentless violence” of war surrounds him. As a spectator, André replaces nature with humans and their “technologies.” Not the wilderness, but the “dark Ambush” and “springing Mines” surround him.

Still, Seward does not reproach André for participating in war; instead, she blames America, the land and its inhabitants, because it embodies war’s destructive quality. America’s landscape contrasts with Britain, specifically London. Seward describes London as André’s “peaceful home”; however, America is anything but peaceful (*Monody*, 10). Seward writes that Bellona “rages o’er the slain” as the colonists “prepar’d to drench with blood the thirsty Land” (*Monody*, 10 and 15, respectively). All of this fighting has polluted America; at one point Seward even describes America as “the polluted plain” (*Monody*, 23). The word “pollute” had two meanings in the eighteenth century; it was used to describe someone or something that was either morally or physically impure. Seward’s description of the colonists as well as the land draws upon both definitions of these words; therefore, when she writes that America is “the polluted plain,” she means that Americans are morally impure, primarily because they have allied with France, and that America, the physical land, has been polluted by war. Seward’s portrayal of the Anglo-American colonists emphasizes their lack of

environmental awareness. Seward refers to the Anglo-American colonists as “Ruffians” because they value the “idle ornament” and the “useless spear” (*Monody*, 16). Seward presents the colonists as war hungry:

They drag him captive from the long-fought field.—
Around the Hero croud th’ exulting Bands,
And seize the spoils of War with bloody hands;
The sword, the tube, that wings the death from far,
And all the fatal implements of War. (*Monody*, 15–16)

Here, the colonists’ hands are covered with evidence of war’s impact on humans, even as their hands reach out for weapons that will ensure an even greater death toll. This description shows that the Americans are bloodthirsty, and their thirst drenches the land.

Both poems emphasize the other side’s lack of feeling for other human beings as well as the natural world. Williams’s description of the Spanish conquistadors mirrors Seward’s description of the colonists. When Williams first introduces the Spanish in Canto II, she immediately contrasts them with the natives:

The feather’d Canopy they graceful raise,
Whose varied hues reflect the morning’s rays.—
And now approach’d Iberia’s warlike Train,
Majestic moving o’er Peruvia’s Plain,
In all the savage pomp of armour drest,
The glittering Helmet, and the nodding Crest. (II.233–38)

The Peruvians greet the Spanish in their native dress, which not only reflects “the morning’s rays,” but also their close relationship to the natural world. Previously, Williams compared the Peruvians to the various birds that lived in Peru, and here she once again shows their connection to Peru’s ornithological life as they raise their “feather’d Canopy” to welcome the Spanish. In contrast, the Spanish soldiers are removed from the natural world as they move in a “warlike train.” Their uniforms are “savage,” and their helmets “glitter,” a word that foreshadows their reason for being in

Peru—they seek access to its gold and silver mines. Williams also relies upon tropes of sentimental fiction when she uses predatorial birds to describe the Spanish. Right before they kidnap Alzira, who is “the dove-like prey,” Williams refers to the Spanish as “human vultures” (II.298). In another scene, Williams compares the hummingbird’s sudden death at the claws of a condor to the Spanish soldiers’ slaughter of natives who they witnessed retrieving gold from a mountain spring (IV.757–74). According to Barker-Benfield, late eighteenth-century novels often portray men as “predatory ‘wild beasts’” and women as “birds of prey” in order to make readers feel for women, with an indirect result being that readers would begin to feel for the natural world as well.¹⁹⁴

The human sounds of death overwhelm the natural world, which make it seem as if the natural world, along with humans, is also dying. Several times throughout the poem Williams describes nature’s physical reaction to empire in order to stress war’s environmental impact.¹⁹⁵ For instance, in Canto V Williams describes how Aciloe “hears the moan of Death in every Gale” and “sees a purple Torrent stain the Vale” while she searches for her lover Zamor (V.853, 854). The word “every” emphasizes that there is no escape from the tragic effects of war; it is everywhere. Indeed, the wounded and dead leave a permanent mark on the land when their blood “stain[s] the Vale” and makes the land “crimson” (V.870). Even Zamor’s blood will eventually cover the ground (V.976).

The Futility of War: “An absurd and ruinous attempt”

In *Monody* and *Peru*, Seward and Williams show the destructiveness of war in order to express their view that war is a futile act. Seward uses *Monody*’s first six lines to

¹⁹⁴ Barker-Benfield, “Culture of Reform,” 234.

¹⁹⁵ See Williams, *Peru*, II.353; III.398; IV.723.

establish the connection between humans, the natural world, and war; in the next eighteen lines she begins to raise doubts about the effectiveness of war. Seward herself opposed British participation in the American Revolution, and nine years after the publication of *Monody*, in a letter to Helen Maria Williams, Seward wrote that British involvement was “an absurd and ruinous attempt” to punish the colonists for their rebellion against Britain.¹⁹⁶ In the letter, she addresses how war, for any reason, is an exercise in futility. Seward describes the relationship between Valour and Mercy:

Bids steel-clad Valour chace that dove-like Bride,
Enfeebling Mercy, from his awful side;
Where long she sat and check'd the ardent rein,
As whirl'd his chariot o'er th' embattled plain;
Gilded with sunny smile her April tear,
Rais'd her white arm, and stay'd th' uplifted Spear.

Previously, Mercy, “that dove-like Bride,” an image which relates her to peace, successfully blocked Valour from overtaking the already “embattled plain.” Her actions caused him to “stay th' uplifted spear,” which helped to prevent further violence. However, soon “steel-clad Valour” will overtake “Enfeebling Mercy” when he conspires with Vengeance; he “bids Vengeance mount the car, / And glut with gore th' insatiate Dogs of War” (*Monody*, 2). Although these lines describe the colonists as “th' insatiate Dogs of War,” Seward’s description claims that there are no victors in war. She expresses this sentiment earlier in the image of General Cornwallis throwing the “victor garland to the winds” (*Monody*, 1). This image anticipates the mood at the end of the stanza; both imply that nothing good can ever come of war because war, even after it is over, is an “insatiable” act.

¹⁹⁶ Anna Seward to Miss [Helen Maria] Williams, Colton, 12 December 1790, in *The Letters of Anna Seward, written between the years 1784 and 1807*, ed. A. Constable (Edinburgh: A. Constable and Company, 1811), 3:45.

Seward illustrates her view of war by rejecting revenge and showing what it does to the environment. After Washington decrees that André should be hanged, Seward imagines the British response; she moves back and forth between vengeance and mercy, similar to the poem's opening scene. Seward first explores more violent warfare as an option and pictures Britain's army "with resistless fire" preparing for battle. They sharpen their swords and move to confront Washington; Seward imagines British troops attacking Washington in a scene similar to the American's murder of André.¹⁹⁷ Seward writes,

And when thy Heart appall'd and vanquish'd Pride
Shall vainly ask the mercy they deny'd
With horror shalt thou meet the fate they gave,
Nor Pity gild the darkness of thy grave! (*Monody*, 25–26)

André begged to be able to die a hero's death by firing squad, but instead was hanged, which signified him a traitor. In this passage, Washington faces a similar humiliation; with his pride defeated and his pleas unanswered, British soldiers pitilessly kill him. However, in the next stanza, Seward rejects, with an allusion to a scene in *The Illiad*, her imagined version of Washington's death. She compares Achilles decision to return Hector's body to his father, Priam, to Britain's decision not to seek revenge on the colonists. She alludes to this scene because she wants Britain to be an empire that, like Achilles, recognizes the universality of humanity; therefore, she rejects revenge and writes that "'tis Cowards only know / Persisting vengeance o'er a fallen Foe" (*Monody*, 26). Seward juxtaposes the British, who will not resort to "persisting vengeance," to the colonists, who have proven to be "cowards" since they killed André after he confessed

¹⁹⁷ See Seward, *Monody*, 24. Seward refers to Washington as a "cool determin'd Murderer of the Brave."

and after Britain had all but lost the war.¹⁹⁸ Yet right after this stanza, Seward once again contemplates revenge; however, this time it resides in the dirt of André's grave instead of in the British Army. Seward asserts that the dust from André's grave "like Abel's blood, shall rise / And call for justice from the angry skies" (*Monody*, 27), but this never happens within the poem. Seward once again dismisses revenge and instead embraces sensibility by imagining flowers growing from André's grave.

The description of André's floral tomb stands in opposition to Washington's grave, which symbolizes what the desire for revenge does to the land. She writes that "For Infamy with livid hand shall shed / Eternal mildew on the ruthless head" (*Monody*, 26). George Washington was—and in many ways still is—a symbol for America, so to argue that his grave is covered in "eternal Mildew" suggests that America itself is covered in "mildew" and, therefore, is an unhealthy environment. Eighteenth-century garden manuals often discussed remedies for mildew because it was known to be "very hurtful, and almost pernicious" to plants.¹⁹⁹ Seward, who suffered from various ailments, including "'fierce hereditary coughs' and recurrent lung problems," would have also recognized mildew's affects on humans' health.²⁰⁰ Additionally, Mary Dobson notes in her "Chronology of Epidemic Disease and Mortality" that there was a high mortality rate in 1780, a year before *Monody*'s publication, because there was "some form of an

¹⁹⁸ Seward's timeline in *Monody* is historically inaccurate. According to her poem, Britain offered, unsuccessfully, to end the war before the Americans killed André (*Monody*, 23–24). However, there was no prior peace treaty before Britain signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which ended the war. Furthermore, at the time of André's death on October 2, 1780, Britain was not ready to give up fighting. It was only after General Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, more than a year later, on October 17, 1781 that the British realized they had lost the war. For more information on the end of the American War, see Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 540–44; 554–58 and O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth-Century*, 195–200.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Browne, *A method to preserve peach and nectarine trees from the effects of the mildew; and for destroying the red spider in melon frames, and other insects, . . . in the open garden*. By Robert Browne (London: printed, by subscription, for the author, 1786), 2.

²⁰⁰ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 181.

‘ENTERIC FEVER’ or ‘new’ pathogens introduced by soldiers returning from the American War of Independence,” which could have been a result of “MOULD POISONING from infected grain.”²⁰¹

Williams also contemplates revenge and writes about the Peruvian response to their “potent Foe,” the Spanish (VI.1138). In *Peru*, Williams re-imagines Manco-Capac’s, Atalbia’s successor, unsuccessful rebellion against the Spanish. In her description of Manco-Capac’s revolt, Williams omits important details included in her source materials. According to Abbé Raynal’s *History of the European Settlements*, Manco-Capac founded the city of Cuzco and “taught his new subjects to cultivate the ground.”²⁰² When Manco-Capac decided to attack the Spanish, who occupied his city and were equipped with more powerful weapons, he did so because his people would “be visited by a scourge even more formidable than their invaders”: famine.²⁰³ Since the Spanish had occupied Cuzco, they relied upon Incan agriculture to sustain them and proceeded to consume all of their grain so that the Peruvians had little to eat. Williams, at first, does not focus on the Peruvians desire for sustenance when she details Manco-Capac’s rebellion; instead, she focuses on the “unequal Contest,” which suggests that revenge, even when used to benefit a group of people, is still ineffective (VI.1145). After Manco-Capac’s rebellion fails, Williams reveals what happens when “vengeance still pursues”: victims of the Spanish conquest “stray / In drooping Poverty’s chill, thorny way” and “feel pale Famine’s agony severe” (VI.1340–43).

²⁰¹ Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease*, 444.

²⁰² Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*. Translated from the French by J. Justamond, vol. 2 (London: printed for T. Cadell, 1776), 254.

²⁰³ William H. Prescott, *The Conquest of Peru* (New York: New American Library, 1961), 349.

In a footnote that returns the reader to Manco-Capac's rebellion, Williams addresses Peruvian Túpac Amará uprisings in Peru between 1780 and 1781. Although Amará's attempt was also unsuccessful, Williams views the event optimistically: "An Indian descended from the Inca's [*sic*], has lately obtained several victories over the Spaniards, the gold mines have been for some time shut up, and there is much reason to hope that these injured nations may recover the liberty of which they have been so cruelly deprived."²⁰⁴ Williams views the rebellion positively because "the gold mines have for some time shut up"; since the natural world is no longer involved, Amará's rebellion, according to Williams, gives hope to the Peruvians for their future freedom. Additionally, Williams's footnote serves as a reminder to Britain; Williams believes that if the Peruvians are free, then the ideals of civility and liberty are at work in the world, which also means that the natural world will not have to suffer any longer.

Indeed, Williams shows how Spain's quest for gold converted them into unfeeling and, therefore, uncivil people in order to warn Britain of the dangers of its commercial pursuits. The quest for gold brings out the worst in the Spanish; when Alphonso's troops see the Natives getting gold from a stream, they are transfixed and transformed by it:

Iberia's Sons beheld with anxious brow
 The shining Lure, then breathe th' unpitying Vow
 O'er those fair Lawns to pour a sanguine Flood,
 And dye those lucid Streams with waves of blood. (IV.761–64)

Here, Alphonso and his men are "unpitying" when they slaughter the natives in order to seize their gold. Ironically, the Spanish soldier's actions will make it harder to find gold because the once "clear current" now is altered into "waves of blood" (IV.758). Gold not

²⁰⁴ See Williams's footnote in Canto VI, p. 94.

only causes warfare between two cultures, but it also leads to the civil war between Almagro and Pizarro's troops:

Pizarro holds the rich seducing Prize
With firmer grasp—the fires of Discord rise—
Now fierce in hostile rage each warlike train
Purple with issuing gore Peruvia's plain. (VI.1297–1300)

Williams saves the worst of war, “kindred blood,” for last (VI.1302). Once again, gold transforms the Spanish and “seduces” Pizarro, who is full of “hostile rage.” Previously, native bodies had covered Peru's land; however, now, in a particularly gruesome image, Spanish soldiers' “gore” covers “Peruvia's plain.” Williams's description of Pizarro's and Almagro's battle bears similarities with Britain's actions in the American War.

Toward the end of the war, many Britons viewed the war as a civil one and understood that their government's desire to control the American colonies' natural resources was the cause of the revolution.

Seward's construction of André explores the results of pursuing conquest in order to gain land, products, wealth, and power. Seward implies that André was forced to go to war when, in fact, he had always wanted a military career and hoped it would bring him personal glory. Seward attempts to downplay André's personal reasons for joining the military because she believed that a person could not achieve glory on the battlefield. She juxtaposes André's and Honora's unrealized marriage to another kind of marriage, one that unites André to war:

Honora lost! —my happy Rival's Bride!
Swell ye full Sails! and roll thou mighty Tide!
O'er the dark waves forsaken Andre bear
Amid the volleying thunders of the War!
To win bright Glory from my Country's Foes,
E'en in this ice of Love, my bosom glows. (*Monody*, 8)

According to the poem, André's lost opportunity for love is one reason why he decides to go to America, but the preceding passage suggests another reason, too: glory. André's words are reminiscent of the beginning of the poem; here he is a "Glorious Sufferer", not simply because he suffers the loss of his true love, Honora, but also because he decides to "win bright Glory" for his country (*Monody*, iv). In at least two other instances, Seward connects war to glory; André will answer "Glory's call" in order to "win bright Glory from [his] Country's Foes" (*Monody*, 11 and 8, respectively). These lines have to be read alongside Seward's letter to Miss Knowles, which shows that Seward felt that it was impossible to achieve glory through war: "You and I however, shall close our dispute in perfect unison, equally deprecating the horrors of war; detesting it on all less than necessary occasions, and lamenting the delusive fires of false glory, that gild the fatal conflicts of restless ambition."²⁰⁵ The "horrors of war" are often the result of "the delusive fires of false glory." Although Seward wrote this letter five years after *Monody's* publication, it clearly expresses sentiments in *Monody*. Seward writes that "glory" has a "potent ray," and while it may be able to "chace the clouds that darken all his way", ultimately the pursuit of glory is a poison (*Monody*, 13).²⁰⁶

Worthless Products: "glitt'ring bane"

In a letter attached to *Monody*, André uses his imagination and envisions the career of merchant as one that would give him the glory he knew a military career promised. In doing so, André's letter, like Seward's poem, suggests mercantilism is a

²⁰⁵ Anna Seward to Miss Knowles, Coleshill, 19 January 1786, in *Letters*, 1:110–11.

²⁰⁶ The connection between glory and poison is not unlike Seward's poem, *Inviting Mrs. C — to Tea on a Public Fast Day*, written in 1780, when she suggests that Britain's quest for power has turned tea into a venomous weapon.

kind of imperialism because it, too, often depends upon gaining control of land, at least its natural resources. On October 19, 1769, André imagines what it would be like to become a merchant, the occupation of his late father:

I no longer see it in so disadvantageous a light. Instead of figuring a Merchant as a middle-aged man, with a bob wig, a rough beard, in snuff colour'd cloaths, grasping a guinea in his red hand; I conceive a comely young man, with a tolerable pig-tail, wielding a pen with all the noble fierceness of the Duke of Marlborough brandishing a truncheon upon a sign-post, surrounded with types and emblems, and canopied with conrnuopias that disemboque their stores upon his head; Mercuries reclin'd upon bales of goods; Genii playing with pens ink and paper;—while in perspective, his gorgeous Vessels “launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames,” are wasting to distant lands the produce of this commercial Nation—Thus all the mercantile glories croud on my fancy, emblazoned in the most resulgent colouring of an ardent imagination—Borne on her soaring pinions I wing my flight to the time when Heaven shall have crowned my labours with success and opulence . . . [but] when the fabrick is pretty nearly finished by my shattered Pericranium, I cast my eyes around and find John André, by a small coal fire, in a gloomy Compting-house in Warnford Court, nothing so little as what he has been making himself, and in all probability never to be much more than he is at present.²⁰⁷

In André's imagination, being a merchant is similar to being a celebrated war hero.

Imagining a merchant, he sees his work as important and mighty as the Duke of

Marlborough's; his pen becomes a weapon that he “wield[s] . . . with . . . noble

fierceness.” Additionally, his work allows him to travel to distant lands, albeit

vicariously, through “the produce of this commercial Nation,” and in doing so, he is able

to achieve the glories he thought possible only in the military. Although he invokes

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, his description of trade mirrors Pope's in *Windsor-Forest*

when he attributes his imagined “success and opulence” to “mercantile glories.”

However, just as Seward knows war cannot bring glory, so too does André. He realizes

²⁰⁷ John André to Anna Seward, London, 19 October, 1769, in *Monody on Major André*, 36–37.

that his view of mercantilism is a fiction and writes that his “fabrick,” or fabrication, has “shattered” his skull. He ends this letter on a pessimistic, though realistic, note, but writes less than one month later on November 1, 1769 that he has “completely subdued his aversion to the profession of a Merchant” and will pursue it for Honora’s sake. In his last letter on the subject, he writes that he will be a different kind of merchant, one whose focus is on a woman, Honora, instead of on the products, or what he calls “vile trash,” that are the real focus of merchants.²⁰⁸

Seward blames Britain’s pursuit of trade for the war that ultimately led to André’s death. Many Britons at the time did not feel that the war was solely the colonists’ fault. Britain, too, was unhealthy; it suffered from avarice. Seward gives voice to British opposition to the American war and, in doing so, argues against an imperialism dependent upon products to secure the empire’s wealth. Seward writes angrily about Britain’s decision to go to war with America:

When haughty Britain, in a luckless hour,
With rage inebriate, and the lust of pow’r,
To fruitless conquest, and to countless graves
Led her gay Legions o’er the western waves. (*Monody*, 22)

Seward connects her country’s “lust of pow’r” to “fruitless conflict.” According to Grove, the fact that late seventeenth-century poets incorporated fruitfulness as a theme into their poetry was “a product of a very real and emerging awareness of the variety and diversity” of the natural world.²⁰⁹ Throughout the poem, Seward has suggested that war

²⁰⁸ John André to Anna Seward, Clapton, 1 November, 1769, in *Monody on Major André*, 46. Ironically the two careers, merchant and military, collide when André is assigned to manage the correspondence with Benedict Arnold for the surrender of West Point; the correspondence between the opposing sides was “disguised as a mercantile transaction” and ultimately led to his death; it also brought him the glory he believed possible from a career in the military and made him like the merchant of his imagination, a celebrated war hero. Richard Garnett, “André, John,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁰⁹ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 40.

is futile, but here she blatantly states that it is “fruitless.” Her use of the word “fruitless” instead of “fruitful” suggests that Britain failed to recognize the natural world as anything other than a source of wealth. Britain wanted to control America because it wanted to control its natural resources, which had made Britain’s imperial status possible. In a footnote, Seward comments that André believed his commission would help his mother and sisters financially because “the loss of Grenada has much affected their income” (*Monody*, 12). By referencing Grenada, Seward intentionally calls attention to their tumultuous status as a British colony. The 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years’ War, granted Britain control of Grenada, but the French regained control of the island after winning the Battle of Grenada in 1779; their victory was short-lived, though, and the island was given back to the British in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the American Revolution. Grenada was economically important for both Britain and France; it provided forests as well as sugar and spices, with the latter two being its most important exports.²¹⁰ Seward refers to Grenada in order to show how Britain’s desire for products, timber and sugar in this case, negatively affects both people but also landscapes.

Unlike Seward, Williams never uses the word “fruitless”; however, she argues throughout *Peru* that the quest for gold and power is worthless. Peru abounds with apocalyptic predictions, which warn of the devastation that will result from Spain’s pursuit of gold. Peruvia’s genius, depicted as a female, foretells Peru’s future in words that also describe Britain after their loss of the American colonies:

²¹⁰ See Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 166–67. Grove discusses environmental policies regarding deforestation that developed in Grenada as being “direct forerunners and models for almost all later colonial forest-protection policies” (166).

I see my lov'd, my favour'd Clime
 Consum'd, and fading in its bounteous prime:
 Yes, dear, devoted Land, I read thy doom,
 My sad prophetic soul can pierce the gloom.
 Yet not in vain my groaning Realm shall bleed,
 Europe's dire Sons shall mourn the ruthless deed:
 Ah Clime abhor'd be gold the glitt'ring bane
 That strews with black'ning ills thy hostile plain. (I.201–8)

In the same way that Seward uses André to teach a lesson in *Monody*, Williams uses Peru. Neither Peru's "impassion'd tear" nor her struggles will be in vain (I.213).²¹¹ Peruvia's genius describes Peru as a land "consum'd" and "fading in its bounteous prime." She blames gold for the fate of Peru's land; it is the "glitt'ring bane" that will "strew with black'ning ills thy hostile plain" and will "consume" its land.²¹² In the eighteenth-century, Britain's desire to become a world-wide empire meant that landscapes around the world, and their own, would be "consum'd." Peruvia's genius warns that "Europe's dire Sons shall mourn the ruthless deed"; indeed, Britain regretted its actions against the colonies because the successive wars not only raised their national debt but also brought an end to their "bounteous prime." At the end of *Peru*, Williams remarks that gold served no purpose; it does not prevent the Spanish from turning against one another nor does it save Pizarro's life. She writes, "How unavailing now the treasur'd ore / That made Peruvia's rifled bosom poor" (VI.1349–50). Just as Seward refers to Britain's attempt to control the Americans as "fruitless," so too does Williams see Spain's quest for gold. The gold is "unavailing" because its effect is contradictory. It should have made Peru wealthy; instead, it made her "bosom poor." Williams's use of

²¹¹ Williams constantly uses feminine words to describe Peru and its inhabitants. For further discussion of her feminization of Peru, see Richardson, "Epic Ambivalence."

²¹² Coal will come to be known as "black gold"; although Williams would not have known this, her poem draws an interesting connection between the devastations of gold and silver mining and coal mining. Coal mining would become more prevalent as the century progressed. I will look at Seward's Colebrook Dale poems, which discuss coal mining's environmental implications, in Chapter Three.

the word “rifled” reminds readers that the paradisiacal Peru presented at the beginning of the poem no longer exists.

From the beginning, Williams sets out to show the consequences of an empire’s pursuit of wealth at any cost. She writes,

When borne from lost Peruvia’s weeping Land
The guilty treasures beam’d on Europe’s Strand,
As press’d her burden’d Plains the sordid Ore,
Each gentle Virtue fled the tainted Shore;
Sighing each mental Charm forsook the Place,
Each sweet Affection, and each moral Grace;
Affrighted Love foresaw the deep’ning gloom,
And wav’d in liquid air his downy plume;
Chill’d by the sullen scene he wings his flight,
While heaps of treasur’d Ore entomb Delight. (I. 215–24)

Again, the land has a physical reaction to empire; it “weeps” after the Spanish seize the “guilty treasures.” Throughout this stanza, Williams clearly argues that gold corrupts; she refers to it as “guilty” and “sordid”; it also “entombs Delight” rather than resurrects it. More importantly, it is the reason why “each gentle Virtue fled” and “each mental Charm forsook” Peru. These lines call attention to the potential for a commercial empire to become an uncivil one, which Williams has already proven to be the case for the Spanish empire. Gold has brought the Spanish to Peru, and they will leave it “tainted” as war consumes the land. The natives, however, view gold as their livelihood. It is not “shining Lure”; instead it is “golden feed” (IV.758). Williams offers the natives’ view of gold as an instruction; the natural world should be acknowledged as a source of sustenance, not wealth.

Spain thought the gold would make them powerful, but Williams shows that nature is more powerful and that humans have no recourse against the natural world, no matter how much gold they have. Williams writes about real environmental issues that

arise from war, including droughts and famines, two environmental disasters that affect both the Peruvians and Spanish. Williams uses the instances of drought and famine, which always involve the Spanish, to clarify her point: gold cannot save lives. When Almagro's troops leave Chile, where they have gone in order to capture Cuzco, he chooses a path that circumvents the Andean mountains:

Shuns Andes' icy Shower, its chilling Snows,
The arrowy Gale that on its summit blows,
And roaming o'er a burning Desert, vast,
Meets the fierce ardours of the fiery Blast:
Now as along the sultry Waste they move,
The keenest pang of raging thirst they prove;
No rosy Fruit its cooling juice distills,
No flows one balmy drop from crystal Rills,
For Nature sickens in th' oppressive beam,
That shrinks the vernal Bud, and dries the Stream,
While Horror, as his giant Stature grows,
O'er the drear Void his spreading Shadow throws. (IV.715–26)

Here, Almagro's troops tried to avoid the severe cold of the Andean mountains only to find themselves facing its opposite, the "sultry Waste" of a desert. Williams's description of the wind and sun invoke the Spanish conquest. The word "arrowy" to describe the gale and the "fiery Blast" of the desert bring to mind the weapons used in war.²¹³ Additionally, the sun's "oppressive" heat could also describe Spain's goal regarding Peru's native inhabitants; Spain intends to force the Peruvians to submit to their power in the same way the sun's beams "shrink the vernal Bud." This is also reminiscent of the way Britain attempted to oppress the American colonists. Almagro's decision exposes that humans are helpless against the natural world. The soldiers have

²¹³ See Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*. Clodfelter discusses Tupac Amaru's 1780 rebellion; although this occurred more two centuries after the Spanish first invaded Peru, Clodfelter notes that Amaru's rebellion "really belonged to the sixteenth-century and the era of Spanish conquistadors and Inca empires"; therefore, his discussion provides some evidence for the weapons used during the Spanish conquest of Peru. Additionally, Clodfelter's discussion of the War of the American Revolution details the weapons used, many of which are mentioned in Williams's poem (178–203).

no recourse to the world around them; they experience “the keenest pang of raging thirst” and find “no rosy Fruit” to satisfy their need. Several Spanish soldiers died during the journey from Peru to Chile just as several British soldiers died travelling to America and fighting in the American War.

Peace: The “Benignant Power” of Nature

In *Monody*, Seward explores the many reasons André chose to fight against the Americans, but perhaps the reason she emphasizes most is that he believed that after the war concluded, “its deeper tones shall whisper, e’er they cease, / More genuine transport, and more lasting peace” (*Monody*, 10). Indeed, right before his capture by the Americans in 1780, Joshua Hett Smith writes that André “spoke of the war and said that if Britain had her way, ‘peace was an event not far distant.’” André’s comments on peace come shortly after he describes “the richness of the scenery” around him, scenery that Smith writes “insensibly beguiled the time.”²¹⁴ What is suggested, though not stated, by this conversation is that the natural world inspires discussions of peace and hope for its realization.

And if the natural world flourishes, then trade will as well. In *Ode on the Peace*, Williams revises James Thomson, who attributed commerce to bringing nations together in a “golden chain,” and writes that the end of war brings Peace, which will “spread fair

²¹⁴ Smith was the brother of Chief Justice William and served as Benedict Arnold’s deputy. He did not know André was a British soldier. In the cited passage, Smith is travelling with André as far as Pine Bridge, after which point André should be able to safely return to New York. Robert McConnell Hatch, *Major John André: A Gallant in Spy’s Clothing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), 240. For more information on Major John André and Benedict Arnold, see Flexner, *Traitor and the Spy*; Hatch, *Major John André*; Barry K. Wilson, *Benedict Arnold: A Traitor in our Midst* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).

Concord's golden chain."²¹⁵ Concord, instead of discord or commerce, issues forth a golden age; commerce still plays an important role, but Williams announces that the type of trade that ensues will not be predicated on hierarchical relationships; instead, the purpose will be to share Britain's wealth in order to "bless . . . each less indulgent Clime."²¹⁶ Before the American war, commerce often benefited only Britain, which meant that other countries suffered; however, Williams sees the end of the American war as a new beginning for Britain and its commercial goals. Now, Britain will share its colonial products with other nations.²¹⁷

Williams juxtaposes the natural world to Peru's natural resources. She refers to gold as a "gaudy" and "glitt'ring Toy" that has power over "artless" minds (I.108, 113, 110). Nature, however, is "pure" and "simple"; those who "scorn" gold will be able to experience "the delicious thrill of gen'rous Joy," which does not reside in treasure but instead in the natural world (I.111, 113, 114). In *Ode to Peace* (1786), published two years after *Peru*, Williams refers to peace as "Nature's festival."²¹⁸ Referring to peace as a "purer glory" that "cheers the gladden'd earth," Williams invokes *Peru*. Williams argues that peace is the real treasure. She describes Gasca, the poem's messenger of peace, as the antithesis of gold:

Without one mean reserve he greatly brings
A massive Treasure, yet unknown to Kings:
No purple pomp around his Dome was spread,
No gilded roofs hung glitt'ring o'er his head;
Yet Peace with milder radiance deck'd his Bower,
And crown'd with dearer joy Life's evening hour. (VI.1442–48)

²¹⁵ Helen Maria Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 14.

²¹⁶ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 13.

²¹⁷ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 14. She describes how Britain will share the gems from India's "glitt'ring" mines as well as "breathes Sabeen sweets o'er the chill Northern Gale."

²¹⁸ Helen Maria Williams, *Ode to Peace by Helen Maria Williams* (London: 1786), 1.

Gasca represents the ultimate treasure, peace. Williams juxtaposes him to the Spanish; while they are filled with “hostile rage,” Gasca does not bring “one mean reserve” and because of that “no purple pomp” or “gilded roofs” surround him. In the beginning of *Peru*, the color purple was a sign of alpacas wandering on the hillside, but after the Spanish arrived it represented the blood that covered Peru’s landscapes.²¹⁹ Gasca is not surrounded by “purple pomp” because he does not seek power through conquest. Although peace does not stand out—it has a “milder radiance”—it brings joy, which, unlike gold, only brought devastation. The reference to “joy” also brings the natural world back into the poem because Williams has referred to nature’s ability to give joy throughout *Peru*.²²⁰

Nature serves as a shelter from the outside world, which is being torn apart by war. She uses the following phrases to describe the natural world: “the shelt’ring Earth” (III.556), “the shelt’ring Wood” (V.1013), and “the shelt’ring Grove” (V.1044). The natural world is the “bosom of the Earth” where the poem’s Peruvian characters seek refuge (II.20). After Alzira witnesses the Spanish strangle her husband Atalbia to death, she turns to the natural world for comfort:

Slow in the breeze I see the light grass wave
 That shrouds with tender tufts my Love’s dark Grave:
 There on its wand’ring wing, in mildness blows
 The mournful Gale, or wakes his deep repose—
 I’ll press the cold turf to my fainting heart,
 Tho’ the lone Thistle points its thorny dart,
 And wounds me while it drinks the tears I shed,
 Those tears that oft revive its drooping head—
 I weep no more—but ah! (II.331–39)

²¹⁹ See Williams, *Peru*, I.22 for a description of the paco’s “purple fleece.” After this description, the color purple is used to describe human blood (III.585; IV.609, 681; V.849; VI.1300, 1348).

²²⁰ See Williams, *Peru*, I.114 and V.844

In this passage, nature not only reflects Alzira's sadness but also relieves it. The natural world becomes the site for Atalbia's funeral; the grass "shrouds" his grave and the "mournful Gale" offers a kind of eulogy. Alzira lays down on the ground, which brings her both closer to Atalbia's body and the land itself. Her closeness to Atalbia's grave does not end her suffering; instead, she "weeps no more" because she sees a flower rising from his grave, which she feels will "guard his rest" (II.342). With confirmation that Atalbia will not be alone, Alzira takes her own life. Her suicide, too, is surrounded by the natural world; indeed, she believes "yon blue sky" will give her a "taste of peace" (II.370). When she kills herself with a dagger that has been left on the ground, Williams implicates the Spanish, the only characters in the poem to use weapons, in her death.

In *Peru*, Williams emphasizes nature's healing power in order to reinforce the danger and tragedy of war. The poem's muse pleads with nature to protect the Peruvians from the Spanish:

Oh Nature! the destroying Band oppose,
Nature, arrest their course! thy come thy foes—
Benignant Power! where thou with lib'ral care
Hast planted Joy, they come to plant Despair— (V.841–44)

Here, Williams describes Nature as a god; she characterizes it as a "Benignant Power," the only entity strong enough to stop the Spanish. Unlike the Spanish who rule through force and fear, Nature rules through love; it plants joy while the Spanish "plant Despair." Nature gives life the Spanish seek to destroy. The characters in the poem seek nature because it has an awesome power to revive itself. In the poem's last canto, Williams describes an earthquake. During the second half of the eighteenth century, there were at least two notable earthquakes; the first one, written about extensively, occurred in Lisbon in 1755 at a time when Portugal was attempting to expand its empire, while the second

took place in Mendoza, Argentina in 1782.²²¹ Many observers of the Lisbon earthquake viewed it as a just punishment from God, and the earthquake in Peru is viewed similarly.²²² The earthquake in the poem happens right after Manco-Capac's rebellion, a pivotal moment because it seems as if the Peruvians have lost their opportunity to defeat the Spanish. However, the earthquake functions like a revolution; it is an "instance of great change" and marks the beginning of the end of Spain's conquest. In this way, it punishes the Spanish while rewarding the Peruvians. Indeed, during the earthquake Cora and her infant daughter reunite with Manco-Capac right before Cora dies, which means her child will not be an orphan. Williams juxtaposes Manco-Capac's rebellion, where "raging Slaughter burns," to the earthquake, and she exaggerates its effects in order to reinforce her view of war's impact on the natural world.²²³ Williams introduces the earthquake with a disturbing image of mass suicide as a group of birds fly into the side of a cliff; the image of their bodies falling through the air mirrors the bodies of "Peruvia's vanquis'd train" that "lay cold and senseless on the sanguine Plain" (VI.1169–70). During the earthquake, as in war, the natural world is in upheaval with "Ruin low'ring o'er the Plain" as the "Earth groaning heaves with dire convulsive throws" (VI.1234, 1229). Yet, Williams notes a difference between the natural disaster and war.

²²¹ For more information on the Lisbon earthquake, see T. D. Kendrick, *The Lisbon Earthquake* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1955). A search in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO) also yields numerous results ranging from eye-witness accounts to sermons.

²²² See *The Old Maid* by Mary Singleton, no. 5 (13 December 1755), 27–28. Written under the pseudonym Mary Singleton, in this publication Frances Brooke sees the earthquake for what it actually is—a natural disaster. Brooke, who knows that "this world is not the place where virtue is to meet its reward and vice its punishment," views the Lisbon earthquake as a "dreadful calamity" and a "shocking occasion."

²²³ In *Magnitude 8: Earthquakes and Life along the San Andreas Fault*, Philip L. Fradkin writes that fire was the "third destructive force" of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19. For more information on fire and the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, also see Kendrick, *Lisbon Earthquake*.

Throughout the poem, Williams has shown how war destroys the environment; however, the earthquake's destructiveness is temporary:

Now o'er the West in melting softness streams
A luster milder than the morning beams,
A purer dawn dispell'd th' incumbent Night,
And Nature glow'd in all the blooms of Light. (VI.1255–58)

After the earthquake Williams portrays an image of renewal. This passage all but erases the Spanish presence in Peru; “softness streams” from the West and the sun, not gold from the mines, provides the “luster.” Peru, no longer a “suff’ring world,” becomes pure and “unsullied” once again (VI.1430 and I.99).

Inter-relatedness

In *Ode on the Peace*, Williams posits that if sensibility triumphs, then nature will revive itself, and this happens in both *Monody* and *Peru*.²²⁴ The final images of the poem represent a fundamental component of ecology: inter-relatedness. In “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy,” Neil Evernden writes that “the really subversive element in Ecology rests not on any of its more sophisticated concepts, but upon its basic premise: inter-relatedness.” In Ecology, inter-relatedness is more than a “casual connectedness”; instead, it involves “a genuine *intermingling*.”²²⁵ *Monody*'s opening stanza begins and ends with scenes of human devastation, both in people mourning and soldiers dying. Seward concludes the opening stanza and the poem with the image of André's “ignominious grave”:

²²⁴ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 10. Williams writes that “The sun now darts his orient beams . . . And sheds o'er Nature's form the rays of living light.”

²²⁵ Neil Evernden, “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy,” in *Ecocriticism Reader*, 93.

Yet on thy grass-green Bier soft April-Show'rs
Shall earliest wake the sweet spontaneous Flow'rs!
Bid the blue Hare-bell, and the Violet there
Hang their cold cup, and drop the pearly tear!
And oft, at pensive Eve's ambiguous gloom,
Imperial Honour, bending o'er thy tomb,
With solemn strains shall lull they deep repose,
And with his deathless Laurels shade thy brows! (*Monody*, 27)

In many instances throughout *Monody*, Seward uses nature metaphorically, as when she describes André's "blooming honours"; however, in this last passage, when she describes André's grave, Seward refers to real flowers that literally bloom (*Monody*, 24). In "Ecocriticism: What is it Good For?" Kern writes that one object of ecocriticism is "to amplify the reality of the environment in or of a text, even if in doing so we resist the tendency of the text itself to relegate the environment to the status of setting, so that it becomes a place chiefly interesting because of the human events that unfold in it, or to see its significance as primarily symbolic, so that it becomes something essentially other than itself."²²⁶ The last scene in *Monody* has been primarily read as symbolic, with the environment serving as a metaphor for Britain's imperial status.²²⁷ However, the environment in this scene is not a metaphor; instead, it reflects Seward's botanical knowledge and her environmental sensitivities.²²⁸ Bowerbank writes that Seward, in letters to her female friends, "records and honors their achievements in land stewardship, knowing that, along with good taste, an understanding of environmental science and

²²⁶ Kern, "Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For," 260.

²²⁷ See Guest, *Small Change*, 264. In her reading, Guest focuses on how the poem's final stanzas reflect "pastoral sentiment" and personify Imperial Honour.

²²⁸ For further discussion regarding Seward's interest in botany, see Sam George, "Forward Plants and Wanton Women: Botany and Sexual Anxiety in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Botany, Sexuality and Women's Writing 1760–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) and Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). George discusses Seward's involvement in Lichfield's scientific community as well as her botanical writing (135–38).

exertion of labor is needed to sustain a welcome home for Hygeia.”²²⁹ Seward’s awareness of the natural world in this scene moves beyond the sentimental to the scientific.

Hare-bells, a British wildflower, and violets, a flower cultivated in gardens, grow side-by-side from André’s grave. The presence of these flowers on American soil is an example of what Alfred Crosby calls “ecological imperialism.”²³⁰ According to Crosby, ecological imperialism is a negative result of European colonialism; however, in Seward’s poem, the corresponding images suggest that this example of ecological imperialism is positive because it has helped end the war. In this way, the final scene speaks to botany’s role in social reform. During the late eighteenth-century, botany was considered a “tool of empire,” and as such it could be used to “amass national wealth.”²³¹ Yet, botany was also considered an alternative to military conquest. According to Ann B. Shteir, during the late eighteenth century people believed botany represented an alternative to the traditional methods of gaining power because botanical exploration did not involve killing or cruelty.²³² At the beginning of the poem, Imperial Honour was dead and “dusky wreaths” hung “round Honour’s shrine”; however, at the poem’s end, Imperial Honour is alive, “bending o’er [André’s] tomb” (*Monody*, 2). Additionally, the land is “grass-green” and covered in flowers whereas before it was covered in blood.

In a scene similar to the end of Seward’s *Monody*, Williams describes Las Casas’s grave, which also suggests social reform. Williams first introduces Las Casas in Canto

²²⁹ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 163.

²³⁰ Alfred Crosby, “Ecological Imperialism: The Overseas Migration of Western Europeans as a Biological Phenomenon,” in *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, ed. Donald Worster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 103–17.

²³¹ Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10 and 5, respectively.

²³² Shteir, *Cultivating Women*, 2.

III and describes him as “that amiable Ecclesiastic who obtained from his humanity the title of Protector of the Indians.”²³³ Even though he is Spanish and travels with Almagro’s soldiers, Las Casas does not share the Spanish conquistadors’ attitudes; instead, he seeks peace for and befriends the Peruvians. For instance, when Pizarro’s troops capture Zilia’s father, a Peruvian priest, Las Casas enters the scene to comfort her; similarly, when Alphonso’s troops happen upon a paradisiacal valley on their return from Chile, where Alphonso captures and falls in love with Aciloe, daughter of the ruler to the valley, Las Casas convinces Alphonso to release her and reunites her with her lover, Zamor.²³⁴ When Las Casas dies, Sensibility appears to bury him. In the last canto, Sensibility “chas’d th’ empurpled bloom” (VI.1374) by planting various flowers, including “the softer Lily” and “the simple Vi’let” (VI.1376, 1385). Although these flowers signify Las Casas’s sensitivities, they also can be read as “real nature.” Sensibility restores the previously blood-soaked landscape with life. Seward’s poem ends with a similar image of flowers growing from André’s grave, which replaces scenes of violence and death with those of growth. Seward and Williams conclude their poems by describing real nature, which reminds Britain that being a commercial empire does not have to involve conquest.

Both *Monody* and *Peru* end on a nonviolent note. Seward shows the British soldiers with their weapons at their side and Williams’s muse asks that “beauty blossom” and “pleasure rest” in Peru. Throughout *Monody*, Seward issued the following refrain: “While André lives he may not live in vain” (10 and 14). At the end of the poem, Seward uses the same language to describe Britain’s attempts to save André’s life; she writes,

²³³ Williams, *Peru*, 34.

²³⁴ See Williams, *Peru*, III.485–90 and V.1015–20.

“Vain were an Army’s, vain its Leader’s sighs” (*Monody*, 26). She specifically does not include André in this statement because his life was not in vain. In her poem, André’s death represents the symbolic end of the war. Although the war did not officially end until 1783, more than three years after André was hanged, in the poem’s final lines the British army “with inverted spear” surround André’s grave. Similar to Mercy’s ability to help “stay th’ uplifted spear” at the beginning of the poem, at the end, André’s death stops future violence. Williams refers to Seward’s *Monody* in *Ode on the Peace* and restates Seward’s point that André’s death was not in vain because it brought peace. More importantly, his memory will continue to “still” Britain’s “guard.”²³⁵ In *Ode on the Peace*, Williams also cites André’s death as the reason the war ended because it made Britain’s soldiers experience emotion:

Britain’s drooping Legions rest;
For him the blades they sternly grasp, appear
Dim’d with a rising sigh, and sullied with a tear.”²³⁶

Here, the soldiers’ weapons “appear dim’d” as their sighs and tears over their fellow soldier’s death take precedence over the war. Williams’s interpretation of *Monody*’s final scene, as well as the end of *Peru*, emphasizes sensibility; the ability to feel, for both Seward and Williams, is the only weapon that can resist vengeance thereby preventing further violence.

Seward’s and Williams’s purpose in writing *Monody* and *Peru* was to remind Britain of the kind of empire it was supposed to be—one that embodied virtues of liberty and civility. Both poets use the natural world in their poems in order to show the devastation war causes and to promote a message of peace. They do not reject

²³⁵ Williams, *Ode to Peace*, 2.

²³⁶ Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, 7.

commercialism altogether; instead, they suggest that an empire can be both civil and commercial if it recognizes the inter-relatedness between humans and the natural world. Yet, despite Seward's and Williams's plea for Britain to be a civil, commercial empire, an empire that maintains colonies often fails to respect the natural world. In the next chapter, I will examine how Anna Seward and Anne Bannerman challenge the eighteenth century's reliance on science as a strategy for building empire by showing that it is not a humane and beneficial tool.

Chapter Two

“Brothers in Science” and “a softer form”: Knowledge, Women, and Harmony in Anna Seward’s *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780) and Anne Bannerman’s *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* (1794)

Many Britons felt that advancements in applied science and increased knowledge about the world would allow Britain to become a more humane empire, the kind Anna Seward and Helen Maria Williams argue for in *Monody on Major André and Peru*, respectively.²³⁷ Instead of increasing their empire through the use of force, Britons believed that scientific explorations would advance Britain’s economic and imperial ambitions. In “Two-Way Traffic,” a recent review in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vanessa Smith writes that “the eighteenth-century Pacific was where British imperialism staked its better reputation.”²³⁸ By the end of the eighteenth century, the British Navy was “growing rapidly in size and complexity,” and at the same time, applied science also underwent a “massive expansion.”²³⁹ The growth of Britain’s navy as well as the increased interest in science helped to ensure the expansion of Britain’s empire in the

²³⁷ In this chapter, I will use the term “applied science” to refer to actual sciences, including botany, natural history and geography. In contrast, the term “science” will refer to knowledge, which is how eighteenth-century people would have understood the word; in this way, the terms “science” and “knowledge” are interchangeable.

²³⁸ Vanessa Smith, “Two-Way Traffic,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 4 (Summer 2009): 611. Also see also Richard Drayton, “Knowledge and Empire,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 2:230–52.

²³⁹ John Gascoigne, “The Ordering of Nature and the Ordering of Empire: A Commentary,” in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, ed. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 112 and Christopher Lawrence, “Disciplining Disease: Scurvy, the Navy, and Imperial Expansion, 1750–1825,” in *Visions of Empire*, 84–85, respectively.

eighteenth century. The Royal Navy was Britain's means of dominating the sea; it "protected and advanced British imperial interests."²⁴⁰ Just as Britain's naval prowess helped it dominate the globe, so too did developments in applied science. David Mackay details the rise of science in the eighteenth century: "British science was emerging from the lethargy which appeared to pervade it in the first half of the eighteenth century, and there was growing confidence in its capacity to categorize and explain the phenomena of the natural world."²⁴¹ Here, Mackay refers to advances in specific fields, especially natural history; however, his statement shows how the pursuit of knowledge, in general, was on the rise in the eighteenth century. Even though the discoveries made as a result of scientific experiments were valued for their own sake, Britain's pursuit of knowledge was still an imperial one because it allowed Britain to "order nature" and, thereby, dominate it.²⁴² Indeed, the man who developed the system for categorizing nature, Carl Linnaeus, although not British, believed that nations could only become powerful if they became knowledgeable about nature.²⁴³ Knowledge about the world definitely helped Britain to expand its empire, in part because it worked in conjunction with Britain's military.²⁴⁴ Londa Schiebinger stresses that certain scientific fields, like botany, were "an

²⁴⁰ Lawrence, "Disciplining Disease," 80.

²⁴¹ David Mackay, "Agents of Empire: The Banksian Collectors and Evaluation of New Lands," in *Visions of Empire*, 53.

²⁴² Gascoigne, "Ordering of Nature," 107. In the introduction to *Visions of Empire*, David Miller connects the Enlightenment's interest in re-evaluating the self to the eighteenth century's "urge to seize nature, to classify it, represent it, and thereby exploit it"(3).

²⁴³ Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 7. Schiebinger also wrote that "Across Europe, eighteenth-century political economists—from English and French mercantilists to German and Swedish cameralists—taught that the exact knowledge of nature was the key to amassing national wealth, and hence power" (5). Simon Shaffer expresses a similar sentiment: "The study of living nature was an exercise of power." "Afterword," in *Visions of Empire*, 337.

²⁴⁴ See Gascoigne, "Ordering of Nature," 112. Gascoigne writes that there was an "increasing sway of science in that most important agent of empire" and that "the spread of empire was linked to the successful refashioning of nature and its products."

essential part of the projection of military might.”²⁴⁵ These beliefs about the role increased knowledge could play in a nation’s progress were discussed throughout England.

It is, however, widely acknowledged that there were “repercussions” to the “discovery of new worlds (in nature and humankind) in the eighteenth century.”²⁴⁶ In *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860*, Richard Grove offers a history of “the destructive impact of European economic activity on the people and environments of the newly ‘discovered’ and colonised lands.”²⁴⁷ Both European agricultural methods and botanical experiments helped to “promote a rapid ecological transformation in many parts of the world.”²⁴⁸ During voyages to the South Pacific, James Cook participated in transforming the landscape. Before leaving England, his ships were loaded with various animals and seeds. In his journal, Cook writes that the purpose of transplanting animals and seeds to distant lands was to “convey some permanent benefit to the inhabitant.” Indeed, he would often plant British vegetables, including turnips and strawberries, on the islands he visited in order to “add fresh supplies of food to their own vegetable productions.” Despite Cook’s good intentions, the gardens he planted throughout the South Pacific “were small instances of an ambitious programme to rearrange the biological map, which had far-reaching effects, in some cases, devastating ones, on ecologies throughout the world.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 10 and 5, respectively.

²⁴⁶ David Philip Miller, “Introduction,” in *Visions of Empire*, 1.

²⁴⁷ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 3.

²⁴⁸ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 6.

²⁴⁹ Nicholas Thomas, *Cook: The Extraordinary Voyages of Captain James Cook* (New York: Walker and Company, 2003), xxii.

David Miller argues in the introduction to *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature* that critics have tended to separate “scientific, economic, imperial, political, and cultural ‘aspects’ of Pacific exploration.”²⁵⁰ In this chapter, I will examine Anna Seward’s *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780) and Anne Bannerman’s *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* (1794) to begin to break down these boundaries. Although Seward’s *Elegy on Captain Cook*, a poem about a British explorer turned national hero, may appear to have nothing in common with Bannerman’s *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory*, an explicit anti-war poem composed during Britain’s long and controversial war with France, a closer examination reveals that they both comment upon the role science plays in Britain’s imperial designs.

These poems challenge the eighteenth century’s reliance on science as a strategy or justification for empire. During the eighteenth century, there existed an “enlightenment commitment to the usefulness of knowledge.”²⁵¹ While some believed that knowledge would allow Britain to become a more humane empire, Seward’s and Bannerman’s poems show the consequences of the Enlightenment’s pursuit of knowledge and, therefore, power. In *Elegy* and *Verses*, Seward and Bannerman, respectively, reveal that science, rather than being a humane, beneficial tool for Britain’s empire, is suspected of being the opposite. Increased knowledge about the natural world changed the way people understood and interacted with it. The natural world was no longer considered an unknowable entity; instead, it was viewed as something that could—and should—be figured out. Harold Fromm, an ecocritical scholar, has defined the shift in people’s perspectives about the role the natural world plays in their lives as moving “from

²⁵⁰ Miller, “Introduction,” 1.

²⁵¹ Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 21.

transcendence to obsolescence.”²⁵² Both poets suggest that the course of Britain’s empire has almost irreversibly destroyed the harmony of the world as it has wreaked havoc on natural spaces as well as domestic ones; the poets show that Britain’s use of knowledge to secure power has damaged not only the environment, but also, and just as devastatingly, families. Seward and Bannerman link the destruction of the environment to the devastating loss women feel when their fathers’, husbands’, and sons’ lives are sacrificed in order to satisfy an empire’s desire for more land, subjects, and, ultimately, power, which allows the poets to write about “proper” female subjects, the domestic, while making a political statement.²⁵³ The harmony that used to exist in nature and in homes has been inhumanely, and tragically, destroyed. Seward and Bannerman show that knowledge is just another weapon nations use in war, and the damage it causes is just as destructive—to the environment and to lives—as the “real” weapons of war.

Anna Seward moved to Lichfield in 1754 when she was thirteen years old; this move put her in contact with several intellectual circles that would influence her thinking and poetry throughout her life. Two years after Seward arrived in Lichfield, in 1756, Erasmus Darwin also called Lichfield home. Darwin moved to Lichfield in order to set up a medical practice; upon his arrival, he quickly befriended Matthew Boulton, who shared his interest in applied science and technology. These two men, along with James Watt, Josiah Wedgwood, and Joseph Priestley, formed the Lunar Society, a group that met regularly from 1775–90. Lunar Society members were major proponents of science

²⁵² See Harold Fromm, “From Transcendence to Obsolescence: A Route Map,” in *Ecocriticism Reader*, 30–39. I will continue to discuss Fromm’s theory in Chapter Three.

²⁵³ See Gioia Angeletti, “Women Re-writing Men: The Examples of Anna Seward and Lady Caroline Lamb,” in *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender*, ed. Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli (Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 250. Angeletti writes that Seward “is able to find a lady-like, seemingly innocuous, way of criticizing those values that allows her to avoid public censorship while remaining true to herself and resolute in her intentions” (250).

and viewed developments in natural history and other applied sciences as the road to progress and industrialization.²⁵⁴ Members of the group were responsible for many of the inventions that helped to usher in the Industrial Revolution. James Watt's steam engine and Josiah Wedgwood's industrialization of pottery manufacturing helped to ensure that Britain would become a leading commercial nation. James Priestley's scientific discoveries of various elements, including oxygen and nitrogen, helped to change the direction of chemistry, which ultimately helped to advance the notion that humans could know the natural world, an essential philosophy of the Enlightenment that was used to justify Britain's imperial missions.

Science and technology had little to do with Anna Seward's initial relationship with Erasmus Darwin. In Darwin, Seward found a fellow literary companion; the two quickly developed a friendship and would meet to discuss literary topics.²⁵⁵ Their friendship, however, ensured that Seward would be included when members of the Lunar Society would visit Darwin. From the Lunar Society and Darwin, in particular, Seward learned about the "principle of complementary," which united "the Linnaean science with the charm of landscape."²⁵⁶ In other words, Seward did not oppose science when it worked to enhance the natural world. The "principle of complementary," however, did not always guide the Lunar Society's interaction with the environment; for this reason, Seward had an uneasy relationship with Society members. Although Lunar Society members were "at the leading edge of almost every movement of its time in science, in

²⁵⁴ For more information on the Lunar Society, see Schofield, *Lunar Society of Birmingham*; Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*; Uglow, *Lunar Men*.

²⁵⁵ It is well recorded that Seward helped inspire and compose Darwin's most famous poetic work, *The Botanic Garden*.

²⁵⁶ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 175. For Seward, the "principle of complementary" means that one uses a landscape's natural, or already present, features and enhances them by planting various classes of plants, the knowledge of which comes from the Linnaean system. By using knowledge of the Linnaean system, a person could ensure that the vegetation planted would complement the landscape's features.

industry and in the arts, even agriculture,” some of their efforts were criticized because they “darkened skies with smoke and devoured human labour.”²⁵⁷ Members of the Lunar Society believed that technology could help to create “paradise on earth.”²⁵⁸ For Lunar Society members, the natural world was to be used, not admired. Seward used her poetry to speak out against viewing nature through a utilitarian lens and opposed changes to the natural world that came about as a result of the “destructive appetites and forces of man.”²⁵⁹ For instance, Seward did not appreciate when Darwin changed his estate, “sacrificing beauty [for] convenience.”²⁶⁰ Yet when Francis Mundy published *Needwood Forest* in 1776, Seward wrote several poems, including *Epistle to F. C. R. Mundy* and *The Fall of Needwood Forest*, that praised Mundy for “investing” the forest environment “with nonutilitarian value.” Unlike Mundy, who “spoke on behalf of forests,” members of the Lunar Society spoke on behalf of science and progress.²⁶¹ *Elegy*, even as it praises James Cook, is an early expression of Seward’s caution against the use of applied science as a strategy for Britain’s imperial progress.

In *Elegy*, Seward tells the story of Captain James Cook’s three voyages to the South Pacific between 1768 and 1779. During this time, Britain experienced various political conflicts, including the Wilkite riots and the War of American Independence; according to Harriet Guest, the years of Cook’s voyage were “a period of major reassessment and reconfiguration of British national imperial identity.”²⁶² Despite the turmoil the British government experienced, Cook’s voyages provided some relief:

²⁵⁷ Uglow, *Lunar Men*, 501 and 499, respectively.

²⁵⁸ Uglow, *Lunar Men*, xvii.

²⁵⁹ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 177–78.

²⁶⁰ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 175.

²⁶¹ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 177–78.

²⁶² Harriet Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation: James Cook, William Hodges, and the Return to the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

“National confidence, still weakened by the aftermath of the seven years war, and further shaken by the advent and progress of the American war, was bolstered by accounts of the voyages, and tales of daring ventures to waters and coasts previously uncharted by European explorers.”²⁶³ In her poem, Seward attempts to show all the sides of Cook’s voyages—the dangers, the successes, and the tragedies; in doing so, she anticipates the disillusionment Anna Laetitia Barbauld expresses thirty-two years later in her poem, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812).

Similar to Anna Seward, whose poetry was influenced by her early exposure to intellectual groups and ideas, Anne Bannerman’s poetry was influenced by her father’s career as well as her membership in Edinburgh’s literary circles.²⁶⁴ Born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1765, Bannerman’s father’s career as a “running stationer,” which meant he was “authorized to sell and sing broadside ballads,” exposed Bannerman to poetry early in life.²⁶⁵ By the late 1790s she was considered a gifted poet and a member of the Edinburgh poetic circle; indeed other members of this group, including Dr. Robert Anderson, who was editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and Thomas Park, encouraged her to publish her work. Although she was part of “an important (and masculine) Edinburgh literary circle,” Adriana Craciun argues that she was a “marginal member.”²⁶⁶ Despite the limited role she played in Edinburgh’s poetic circle, Bannerman still chose to dedicate

²⁶³ Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*, 7–8.

²⁶⁴ The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that Bannerman was born in 1765; however, Andrew Elfenbein, a Bannerman scholar, reports that she was born in 1780. For biographical information on Anne Bannerman, see Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*; Adriana Craciun, “Bannerman, Anne,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and “In seraph strains, unpitied, to destroy’: Anne Bannerman’s femmes fatales,” in *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 156–94; Andrew Elfenbein, “Lesbianism and Romantic Genius: The Poetry of Anne Bannerman,” *English Literary History* 63, no. 4 (1996): 929–57 and *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

²⁶⁵ Craciun, “Anne Bannerman’s femmes fatales,” 157. Today, Bannerman is best known for her ballads.

²⁶⁶ Adriana Craciun, “Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad,” in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 207.

her first book of poetry, *Poems*, which appeared in 1800, to Anderson; it received positive reviews and continued to sell through 1806.²⁶⁷ Her second work, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), was by all accounts a critical failure in the eighteenth century; Anna Seward harshly criticized both Bannerman and her publication, writing that it showed Bannerman lacked “invention,” “that prime essential in poetry.”²⁶⁸ After the disappointments of a failed publication and the death of her mother and brother in 1803, Bannerman’s career continued to diminish. She published *Poems: A New Edition* in 1807, which contained some revised and new work; however, this collection also sold poorly. For financial purposes, she served as a governess, but still died in debt in 1829 in the marine town of Portobello.

Bannerman may have been an “isolated poet,” but her poetry often expressed public, political sentiments.²⁶⁹ Andrew Elfenbein writes that Bannerman “push[ed] the limits of acceptable poetry in ways that most women writers never did.”²⁷⁰ One way she “pushed the limits” was by using her poetry to express her political views, in particular her anti-war sentiments.²⁷¹ Her first collection, *Poems*, contained several political poems, including *The Spirit of the Air*, *The Genii*, *The Soldier*, and *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory*. Some of the views expressed in her poetry reflect the tragedies she experienced in her life. For instance, in *The Soldier*, Bannerman “re-creates the

²⁶⁷ Craciun, “Anne Bannerman’s femmes fatales,” 156 and 158.

²⁶⁸ Anna Seward to Thomas Park, Esq., Lichfield, 25 September 1800, in *Letters*, 5:325. Despite the criticism *Tales of Superstition* received in the eighteenth century, it is Bannerman’s best known work today. See Craciun, “Anne Bannerman’s femmes fatales,” 160–61 and Elfenbein, “Lesbianism,” 947. Seward also attacked Samuel Johnson and Charlotte Smith. For her criticism of Johnson, see *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 56 (February and April 1786): 129 and 302, respectively and *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 57 (August 1787): 684. I discuss Seward’s criticism of Smith in Chapter Four.

²⁶⁹ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 341.

²⁷⁰ Elfenbein, “Lesbianism,” 951.

²⁷¹ Elfenbein, “Lesbianism,” 937. In “Queen Muse of Britain,” Brewer writes that Anna Seward also used her poetry to express her Whig politics.

imaginative situation of [Charlotte] Smith's *Written at the same place, on seeing a seaman return who had been imprisoned at Rochfort* (1784).²⁷² Bannerman's poem, however, is more personal and acknowledges the cost of war, a cost she experienced when her brother, a surgeon with the East India Company, "drowned off the coast of Africa" in 1803.²⁷³ *Verses*, too, offers a personal statement on the costs of war and empire.

Illuminating "a Nation's woe"

Both Anna Seward and Anne Bannerman begin their poems with images that link them to the nation. As national poems, Seward's *Elegy* and Bannerman's *Verses* take up the issue of British imperialism. Seward's *Elegy* opens on a scene that shows a nation mourning the loss of their hero, British explorer Captain James Cook. Seward portrays the muses, who are now almost completely mute as their "silver lyres . . . vibrate sad and slow."²⁷⁴ The image of a nation mourning the loss of an admiral was not a strange one in the eighteenth century because the public viewed them as "Britannia's most cherished guardians, the seaborne defenders of king, constitution and country."²⁷⁵ As Padhraig Higgins writes, "Admirals took on a variety of meanings in popular political culture, with their exploits represented as exemplifying a number of competing political narratives

²⁷² Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 342.

²⁷³ Craciun, "Anne Bannerman's femmes fatales," 157.

²⁷⁴ Anna Seward, *Elegy on Captain Cook. To which is Added An Ode to the Sun. By Miss Seward*. (London: printed for J. Dodsley, 1780), A2. Hereafter, text reference will refer to an abbreviated title and page number. In *Small Change*, Guest writes that the poem's opening scene "claims to express national but private sentiment" (259).

²⁷⁵ Gerald Jordan and Nicholas Rogers, "Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England," *Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 3 (July 1989): 202.

concerning the fate of the nation and empire.”²⁷⁶ Although “most admirals in the eighteenth century achieved popularity by spectacular victories,” Cook’s popularity was because of his personality, rather than his actual accomplishments, primarily because he ultimately failed in every voyage to discover that which he set out to find.²⁷⁷ Kathleen Wilson writes that Cook’s fame was special because he was not a military hero; indeed, he represented the antithesis of most national heroes: “After decades of war and the celebration of leaders whose fame rested on more militaristic and sanguinary acts performed in the service of their country, Cook represented not only an alternative masculinity, but also a new kind of national hero, one who demonstrated both English pluck and humanity, sense and sensibility, to best advantage.”²⁷⁸ Many viewed him as a “dedicated servant of humanity to whom ‘the rights of man were sacred’ and proselyte of European principles of domestic affection, ‘chastened love,’ and ‘parental duty.’”²⁷⁹ These comments prove that Cook came to stand for a new definition of empire, one that relied upon humanitarian motives, not militaristic ones.

Seward attempts to show a new, “enlightened imperialism” in *Elegy*.²⁸⁰ She continuously credits “HUMANITY” as Cook’s reason to travel, writing that

²⁷⁶ Padhraig Higgins, “Bonfires, Illuminations, and Joy: Celebratory Street Politics and Uses of ‘the Nation’ during the Volunteer Movement,” *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 42, no. 3–4 (Fall-Winter 2007): 188.

²⁷⁷ Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 122. For more information on the “failures” of Cook’s journeys, see Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*, 9.

²⁷⁸ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 62. For more information on admirals as heroes, see Wilson, *Sense of the People*, 140–65 and 253–68.

²⁷⁹ Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*, 9–10.

²⁸⁰ Guest, *Small Change*, 259.

It was HUMANITY!—on coasts unknown,
The shiv'ring natives of the frozen zone,
And the swart Indian, as he faintly strays
'Where Cancer reddens in the solar blaze,'
She bade him seek. (*Elegy*, 4–5)

According to Seward's poem, Cook's missions were more about helping native people and less about exploring the world and discovering new specimens for Britain's benefit.

In *Elegy*, Seward re-imagines Cook's reasons for leaving Britain; his missions were in pursuit of humanity, not knowledge, even though Cook was commanded on his first voyage to

report on all aspects of lands discovered and to bring back specimens, drawings and surveys, very much on the lines of the 1666 and 1704 Royal Society instructions to naturalists. The expedition was to 'study nature rather than books and from the observations made of the phenomena and effects she presents, to compose such a history of her as may hereafter serve to build a solid and useful philosophy upon.'²⁸¹

According to Seward's *Elegy*, Cook's mission is neither to discover how other people live nor to bring back knowledge, plants, or animals to London; instead, his mission is to "bring soft comforts," or, in other words, to bring British culture to the natives' "barren plain." In *Elegy*, a nation mourns because its people have lost a hero, who strove to help humanity by "plant[ing] the rich seeds of her exhaustless shore" and by "unit[ing] the savage hearts, and hostile hands, / In the firm compact of gentle bands" (*Elegy*, 5).

Cook was described as a "martyr" and "godlike hero"; the surgeon on Cook's last voyage, David Samwell, described him as "a sublime, almost Christ-like hero."²⁸² These descriptions are underscored in Seward's poem. Seward describes Cook as a "dove of human-kind" (*Elegy*, 8), a selfless and sensitive captain:

²⁸¹ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 313–14. Cook had naturalists and artists on board during all of his voyages.

²⁸² Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*, 9.

While o'er the deep, in many a dreadful form,
The giant Danger howls along the storm,
Furling the iron sails with numbed hands,
Firm on the deck the great Adventurer stands;
Round glitt'ring mountains hears the billows rave,
And the vast ruin thunder on the wave.—
Appall'd he hears!—but checks the rising sigh,
And turns on his firm band a glist'ning eye.—
Not for himself the sighs unbidden break,
Amid the terrors of the icy wreck;
Not for himself starts the impassion'd tear,
Congealing as it falls;—nor pain, nor fear,
Nor Death's dread darts, impede the great design,
Till Nature draws the circumscribing line. (*Elegy*, 7)

Seward imagines Cook as a “fearless hero,” who is “firm” in the face of “giant Danger.”

Yet the image of Cook that consumes the poem is the one that follows these lines when Seward describes Cook “as a hero of sensibility and humanity”; it is Cook’s emotion, not the lack of it, which makes him stand out.²⁸³ He tries to remain a strong leader, but cannot help crying for his men. He “turns on his firm band a glist’ning eye”; his “impassion’d tear” falls for them. Cook’s emotions represent the kind of empire Britain wants to be—one that feels for other people and places.

In *Elegy*, Seward also portrays another “nation” mourning the loss of Captain Cook, which helps to show the connection between Britain and other parts of the world. After Cook’s violent death, Seward describes a Tahitian mourning ritual. By the time of his death, Cook had visited Tahiti four times. Cook’s first visit, in April 1769, was not Britain’s first. Two years earlier, members of the *Dolphin* had laid claim to the island, calling it King George’s Land. When Cook’s crew arrived in 1769, they saw a completely different Tahiti—not a paradise, but instead a place where, as Cook writes, “a very great revolution must have happen’d” because many houses were destroyed and

²⁸³ Guest, *Small Change*, 258.

items that were once plentiful had become scarce.²⁸⁴ In many ways, Cook’s first visit to Tahiti was also one of upheaval; it was “marked by mutual generosity one moment and tension and antagonism at another.”²⁸⁵ When Cook returned a few years later, for his second and third visits, the Tahitians welcomed his crew immediately.²⁸⁶ Cook’s fourth, and final, visit was not as positive as his first three; by the time of his last visit, Tahitians had previously been visited by the Spanish, who “behaved differently to the British: they had maintained their distance, refraining from sexual contacts. They had not allowed people on their ships, and there had been no killing.”²⁸⁷ Cook’s last visit to Tahiti, then, was less than he had hoped for, yet Seward describes a mourning ritual that is reserved for Tahitians of rank: “Gay Eden of the south, thy tribute pay, / And raise, in pomp of woe, thy Cook’s Morai!” (*Elegy*, 15).²⁸⁸ The ritualistic behaviors of Omai—the Tahitian islander brought back to England and later used by the British to “confirm the global scope” of their imperialism—and Oberea, the most powerful woman in Tahiti, “communicate political meanings.”²⁸⁹ Seward’s description of a Tahitian mourning ritual serves to reinforce Cook’s posthumous reputation. The way the natives “lavish spoil on Cook’s Morai” and the way Oberea “bemoan[s] thy Hero’s doom” are actions meant to reinforce Britain’s status as a humane empire (*Elegy*, 16).²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ Thomas, *Cook*, 63.

²⁸⁵ Thomas, *Cook*, 66.

²⁸⁶ For more information on Cook’s second and third visits to Tahiti, see Thomas, *Cook*, 186–87 and 230–34.

²⁸⁷ Thomas, *Cook*, 334.

²⁸⁸ For a detailed view of a Tahitian funeral ceremony, see Thomas, *Cook*, 71–73. In these pages, Thomas describes a Tahitian woman’s funeral as observed by Joseph Banks during Cook’s first visit to the island in 1769.

²⁸⁹ Higgins, “Bonfires, Illuminations, and Joy,” 174. For more information on Omai, see Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*. For more information on Oberea, see Thomas, *Cook*.

²⁹⁰ On his first visit to Tahiti, Cook observed a Morai and wrote that “if it is a Religious ceremony we may not be able to understand it, for the Misteries of most Religions are very dark and not easily understud [*sic*] even by those who profess them.” Thomas comments that Cook’s statement shows that he “took the

Yet, the manner of Cook's death was anything but humane, which reveals the trouble with Britain's imperial strategy. Seward compares Cook's death to Orpheus's dismemberment by the Thracian women in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

Near, and more near, with rage and tumult loud,
Round the bold bard th' inebriate maniacs crowd.—
Red on th' ungrateful soil his life-blood swims,
And Fiends and Furies tear his quiv'ring limbs! (*Elegy*, 15)

The similarities between Cook and Orpheus are striking. Orpheus was killed, according to the myth, because the Thracian women became jealous of his music, which Seward writes he “bore” “to the Thracian shore,” not unlike the way Cook “bore” plants and animals to the Pacific Islands. Seward's description of Orpheus's death, where “inebriate maniacs” “tear his quiv'ring limbs” mirrors in many ways Cook's horrific death at the hands of the Sandwich Island natives. At Kealakekua Bay, the site of his death, the natives pushed Cook into a shallow channel and stabbed and beat him until he no longer moved. Unable to swim, Cook had no way to escape the natives' advances, and his crew, who watched the entire scenario unfold, misunderstood his signals, so they did not come to his rescue.²⁹¹ As David Miller argues, Cook's death revealed “how little Europeans understood the peoples of the South Pacific.”²⁹² In *Speaking for Nature*, Sylvia Bowerbank uses Francis Bacon's writings to offer an environmental reading of Orpheus's death. According to Bacon, Orpheus's death symbolizes the fact that nature can only be controlled for a limited amount of time. Bowerbank, citing Bacon in *De Sapientia Veterum*, writes that ““so great was the power of his [Orpheus] music that it moved the

human species as a unity, and he assumed that every particular people had its own variations on broader human institutions.” Thomas, *Cook*, 65.

²⁹¹ Anne Salmond, *Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 413–14.

²⁹² Miller, “Introduction,” 13.

woods and the very stones to shift themselves and take their stations decently and orderly about him.’ Wild nature reasserts herself, however, in the form of the Thracian women who tear Orpheus to pieces.”²⁹³ The same reasoning can be applied to Cook’s death. Just as Orpheus dominated nature, so too did Cook. Indeed, at the time of his death, he was returning to the Sandwich Islands for the third time. During his previous visits, the islanders had assumed he was a god; however, on his last visit, they realized that Cook was a mere mortal and began to question his intentions for their land and people. Seward masks her critique of empire by focusing on the natives as “human fiends”; however, her comparison to Orpheus adds an element of jealousy to the poem (and to Cook’s death) that can be understood as a result of imperialism’s goal to control people and land.

In the same way Seward invokes public ritual to signify national sentiments, so too does Anne Bannerman. In contrast to Seward’s *Elegy*, which describes nation(s) mourning, Bannerman opens *Verses* with a portrait of an illumination. The image is meant to represent the illumination that celebrated the British victory in the fight between the *Brunswick* and the *Vengeur* at the battle of the Glorious First of June 1794.²⁹⁴ This battle was Britain’s “first great naval victory in the Great War with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France (1793–1815) that was to leave [them] supreme on the seas throughout the nineteenth century.” According to Michael Duffy and Roger Morriss, Lord Howe’s victory over France led to “three nights of patriotic demonstrations” and the public “insisted on all houses illuminating their windows in celebration of the victory.”²⁹⁵ Illuminations, a form of public ritual, were to help “reinforce social power or produce

²⁹³ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 11.

²⁹⁴ Joyce Fullard, ed., *British Women Poets, 1660–1800* (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing Co., 1990), 379.

²⁹⁵ Michael Duffy and Roger Morriss, eds., introduction to *The Glorious First of June 1794: A Naval Battle and its Aftermath* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 2.

collective sentiment.”²⁹⁶ Seward’s opening image “produces collective sentiment” as the muses’ sorrow spreads throughout Britain; likewise, the beginning of Bannerman’s

Verses describes a “collective sentiment” as it portrays a national celebration:

Hark! ’tis the note of joy—the trumpet’s voice
Swells in the wind, and bids the world rejoice;
From street to street, in artificial light,
The blaze of torches glitters on the night;
Loud peals of triumph rend the startled sky:
Rejoice! It is the shout of victory.²⁹⁷

This passage highlights the urban landscape that surrounded many illuminations. The images at the beginning of *Verses* mark a national celebration: “the trumpet’s voice” that “swells in the wind” and the “loud peals of triumph” that “shout of victory” describe a nation celebrating their first major naval victory in what would become a long war.

The streets bathed in “artificial light,” however, serve another purpose in Bannerman’s poem. Public rituals, like illuminations, could also be forms of protest. Higgins writes that “public rituals of commemoration and celebration could also be created or appropriated by the opposition, or even by ‘the people,’ as forms of protest through which ideas of ‘the nation’ were mobilized to express alternative understandings of government authority.”²⁹⁸ The illumination at the beginning of *Verses* emphasizes the tragedy of war, a tragedy Bannerman acknowledges in the closing lines of the poem’s opening stanza: “Yes! Tho’ enthroned upon a thousand graves, / Rejoice! for Conquest rides the crimson’d waves” (*Verses*, 7–8). In these two lines, Bannerman uses the image of an illumination to reflect another kind of public sentiment. In 1794, the year

²⁹⁶ Higgins, “Bonfires, Illuminations, and Joy,” 173. Higgins also writes that illuminations were important because they served as a “public register of political sentiment” (185).

²⁹⁷ Anne Bannerman, “Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory,” in *British Women Poets*, quotation p. 378, lines 1–6. Hereafter, text reference will refer to an abbreviated title and line numbers.

²⁹⁸ Higgins, “Bonfires, Illuminations, and Joy,” 174.

Bannerman composed her poem, Britain was awash in protest literature opposing the war with France.²⁹⁹ Many British citizens did not support the war with France because they felt as if the nation needed time to recover from its defeat in the War of American Independence.³⁰⁰ In “Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England,” historians Gerald Jordan and Nicholas Rogers write that Britain’s naval victories in the 1790s “proved a tonic to the war effort and Pittite policy.”³⁰¹ As often as celebrations of naval victories gave loyalists a chance to rejoice in Britain’s constitutional rule, they also gave “radical societies” an opportunity to protest British foreign policy and government. The illumination that inspired *Verses* came, according to Jordan and Rogers, “in the wake of the Scottish convention and considerable anxiety about activities of the popular radical societies and their links with Revolutionary France.”³⁰² Bannerman gives voice to these societies as she *illuminates* the real effects of war. She does not exaggerate the casualties possible in a naval battle. Indeed, in the battle on the first of June, Britain’s victory came with the loss of 290 British sailors’ lives and another 858 wounded; additionally, approximately 4,200 French sailors were killed or wounded when the British captured six French ships and sunk another, the *Vengeur*.³⁰³ One French

²⁹⁹ For more information on British protest of the war with France, see Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*, 169–98. Anna Letitia Barbauld spoke out against the war in *Sins of government, sins of the nation; or, a discourse for the fast, appointed on April 19, 1793. By a volunteer*. (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1793).

³⁰⁰ For more information on British opposition to the war with France, see Duffy and Morriss, “Introduction,” 2 and John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700–1832* (New York: Longman, 1992). For information about the popularity of Britain’s victory on the “Glorious First of June,” see Pieter van der Merwe, “The Glorious First of June: A Battle for Art and Theatre,” in *The Glorious First of June 1794*, 132–58.

³⁰¹ Jordan and Rogers, “Admirals as Heroes,” 211.

³⁰² Jordan and Rogers, “Admirals as Heroes,” 212.

³⁰³ Duffy and Morriss, “Introduction,” 2 and 5. With the exception of the battle for Trafalgar, for the British, their victory on the first of June would be the deadliest of any fought throughout the war with France.

participant reported that “the battle was ‘the hardest fought and the bloodiest of any witnessed in the eighteenth century.’”³⁰⁴

Bannerman reveals the history of violence that surrounds all attempts—past, present and future—to extend a nation’s empire. Like the poem’s title, this poem serves to illuminate the real effects of war by showing a wide view of history. Bannerman’s poem travels from the Rhine River in Germany to the Andes Mountains in South America to the Tartars in China and asks whether violence has always been the way nations gain power. Bannerman wonders about the history of violence:

Ah did our years thro’ circling ages flow,
Or Fate secure the heart from private woe;
Did strength for ever in the arm reside,
Or the firm frame retain its youthful pride. (*Verses*, 93–96)

These lines suggest that there are two options: either violence has always been present, “thro’ circling ages flow” and “strength for ever in the arm reside,” or Fate, an imaginary element, has protected “the heart from private woe” and allowed the youth, “his firm frame retain,” not to be corrupted by the glories of war. In this same stanza, Bannerman compares the Tartar-Chief to the “polish’d youth.” The Tartar-Chief “ends his fiery course” (*Verses*, 106), “expiring on the plain, / Amid the multitudes his arm has slain” (*Verses*, 103–4), and the youth has been “rear[ed] to arms” (*Verses*, 107), an upbringing that has left him without feeling:

³⁰⁴ Duffy and Morriss, “Introduction,” 5.

Glory flatters with deceitful charms,
Chills each fine impulse of the glowing soul,
And, pressing onward to the laurel'd goal,
Forgets that feeling ever warm'd his breast,
Or pity pleaded for the heart opprest. (*Verses*, 108–12)

Bannerman suggests that war has transformed man from a feeling, sensitive being to one who only seeks the “deceitful charms” of Glory. Although Bannerman does not state it specifically, her comparison between the Tartar-Chief and the youth suggests that the once “polish'd youth” will eventually find himself in the same position as the Tartar-Chief; in this way, Bannerman’s poem also shows that the possibility of an enlightened empire is unlikely.

Voyages of Exploration and Conquest: “Mark the full tide of Desolation spread”

In Myra Reynold’s *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry*, she examines how “classical English poets” wrote about the ocean. She argues that the poets’ treatment of the ocean in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries remained “exceedingly commonplace and unimaginative”; for these poets, the ocean was nothing more than “a waste of waters” that was “dangerous at times, and always wearisome.”³⁰⁵ Bernhard Klein writes that by the mid-eighteenth century, however, “the negative image of the evil sea and its many associated dangers is traditionally seen to be replaced . . . with an emerging conception of the ocean—in the contexts of colonization, economic modernization and global trade—as a technically manageable but socially sensitive space.”³⁰⁶ In *The Ocean Bards: British Poetry and the War at Sea, 1793–1815*, H.

³⁰⁵ Reynolds, *Treatment of Nature*, 15. She specifically cites Edmund Waller, John Dryden, Edward Young, and William Falcolner’s poetry.

³⁰⁶ Bernhard Klein, introduction to *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 2 and 4, respectively.

George Hahn writes that the ocean served several purposes while Britain strove to protect itself from invasion in the eighteenth century. First, it was a “defensive moat” that separated Britain from other countries, especially France; however, instead of remaining an object that enclosed Britain, it eventually became an object that represented freedom.³⁰⁷ Britain soon claimed the ocean as its own; according to Hahn, “like John Locke’s view of ownership deriving from labor on the land, to the nation the sea was made British property by the work of the Royal Navy.”³⁰⁸ In the eighteenth century, the Royal Navy achieved its imperial goals by engaging in battles with other nations as well as by providing ships that would embark on scientific explorations.³⁰⁹ Both voyages of conquest and exploration required a “mastery of the seas,” which Britons believed “ensured peace, plenty, and freedom.” If Britain won naval battles and successfully dominated distant lands’ products and people, then they would “rule the waves,” which would “improve English wealth through commerce” and “preserve and convey English liberty.”³¹⁰ By the end of the eighteenth century, the ocean was not viewed as a vast space filled with danger; instead, it was a “trade lane” that represented freedom.³¹¹

Yet Seward’s and Bannerman’s poems return to earlier conceptions of the ocean and emphasize the ocean’s menace and isolation. For example, in *To the Ocean* (1800), which appeared in *Poems* alongside *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory*, Bannerman writes angrily about the ocean because “danger lurks within” it; she emphasizes that the ocean serves as a reminder of the “luckless crew[s]” who have lost

³⁰⁷ H. George Hahn, *The Ocean Bards: British Poetry and the War at Sea, 1793–1815* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 8.

³⁰⁸ Hahn, *Ocean Bards*, 9.

³⁰⁹ For more information on the Royal Navy’s role in Britain’s scientific voyages, see Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 143–68 and 295–328.

³¹⁰ Hahn, *Ocean Bards*, 12 and 8, respectively.

³¹¹ Hahn, *Ocean Bards*, 9.

their lives in its depths.³¹² Bannerman's *To the Ocean* acknowledges the ocean's dangers, which all ocean voyagers faced, whether their voyage was for military or scientific purposes. By centering their poems on the ocean, Seward and Bannerman show the similarities between "voyages of discovery" and naval missions. Both were an "important element of imperial expansion."³¹³ In *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*, Londa Schiebinger cites the eighteenth-century director of the Madrid Botanical Garden, who argued that a naturalist was more beneficial to an empire than soldiers.³¹⁴ What the director's comments reveal is that applied science played a major role in a country's imperial expectations. For Britain, in particular, much of its imperial status in the eighteenth century can be attributed to "the fecund coupling of naval prowess to natural history," which helped to hold "together Britain's far-flung empire."³¹⁵

In *Elegy*, Seward tries to represent Cook's voyages as anti-imperial; however, her description of a sailor's life closely resembles that of a soldier's.³¹⁶ Seward begins her poem by portraying Cook's decision to travel as a brave one; he is "dauntless" when he chooses to "scorn" "danger" and pursue "inglorious rest" (*Elegy*, 3). Although bravery is often associated with soldiers, Seward's description of sea travel as "inglorious" distances it from the military, which trains soldiers to participate in war in order to secure glory.³¹⁷ Despite her efforts to separate sea travel from war, Seward ultimately connects

³¹² Anne Bannerman, "To the Ocean," in *Poems by Anne Bannerman* (Edinburgh: printed by Mundell and Son, 1800), p. 82, lines 3 and 11, respectively.

³¹³ Lawrence, "Disciplining Disease," 80.

³¹⁴ Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 7–8.

³¹⁵ Gascoigne, "Ordering of Nature," 113.

³¹⁶ See Guest, *Small Change*, 258. Guest argues that Seward's portrayal of Cook leaving behind London, a place that represents "metropolitan corruption," makes his expeditions seem "anti-imperial."

³¹⁷ In *Monody on Major André*, Seward discusses how André pursued a military career in the hopes of achieving glory. See Seward, *Monody on Major André*, 18.

it to war when she uses war rhetoric to describe Cook's voyages. In this way, Seward ultimately shows how voyages of exploration are another tool used by the British Empire. She writes that the coral waits to "ambush" (*Elegy*, 10) the ship and compares the "polar gale" to "fierce arrows" (*Elegy*, 5). Additionally, Seward reveals that a sailor's life is not unlike a soldier's; on a ship and in the field, life is regimented and "unvaried" as well as isolating; Seward describes the ocean as the "desart seas" (*Elegy*, 10). Danger awaits both the sailor and the soldier; whether on the ocean or on land, "incumbent horror low'rs" (*Elegy*, 5).

The title of Bannerman's poem suggests that it will only deal with war, yet the body of her poem proves otherwise. Like Seward's work, Bannerman's poem focuses on the role of science in the British Empire; however, in contrast to Seward, who attempts to mask the connections between applied science and imperialism early on in *Elegy*, Bannerman reveals the true purpose of science in *Verses*. Bannerman blames Europeans and their pursuit of knowledge for transforming natives from people who embraced "the arts of peace" to those "impell'd by hatred" and guided by revenge (*Verses*, 22–23). Bannerman links knowledge to death:

‘Accurs’d the deed!’ the Sons of Europe cry,
While the tear starting, trembles in their eye;
Yes! ye may boast, from feeling’s source sublime,
That milder mercy gilds your favour’d clime;
With eager joy, you bid oppression cease,
And lull the jarring universe to peace!
Alas! Humanity would shroud the sight,
And wrap Destruction in his native night;
With breasts begirt with steel, in dread array,
The glitt’ring legions flash upon the day;
Brothers in Science, at the trumpet’s sound,
Like demons meet, and scatter death around.
Unmov’d they stand, and view the living tide
Pour, with a torrents force, on every side.
On Andes’ cliffs, untutor’d Murder low’rs,
But all his keener, deadlier arts—are ours. (*Verses*, 39–54)

In this passage, Bannerman acknowledges Europeans’ claims to sensibility, writing that the “Sons of Europe” view the violence “while the tear starting, trembles in their eye”; however, she quickly points out that while Europeans “boast, from feeling’s source sublime, / That milder mercy gilds [their] favour’d clime,” they are actually the cause of the world’s oppression and violence. Bannerman implicates science in the “untutor’d Murder” that spreads across the globe; she acknowledges theories regarding climate and cultural difference when she links the Europeans’ “milder mercy” to their “favour’d clime” and shows how Europeans’ attempt to enlighten native people, because they are supposedly inferior, ultimately destroys them. Calling Europeans murderers, Bannerman shows how the pursuit of knowledge is one reason for the many deaths that have occurred across the globe. Just as Seward employs “Humanity” to justify Cook’s mission, Bannerman acknowledges that appeals to Humanity are only a cover; it gives Europeans, those “Brothers of Science,” an excuse to “scatter death around.” She acknowledges that Europeans feign caring about other cultures when they “bid oppression cease”; instead of

“jarring the universe to peace,” Europeans prepare for war, “with breasts begirt with steel.”

In both poems, Seward and Bannerman detail how imperialism changes both people and the land. Bannerman compares the savage in her poem to a storm: “Rough as the storm that rends the icy seas, / Th’ uncultur’d savage spurns the arts of peace” (*Verses*, 21–22). Bannerman’s comparison serves two purposes. First, it reminds the audience of the relationship natives have to the natural world. Anthropologists have often noted that natives viewed the natural world as a limited resource whereas Europeans viewed it as a limitless one.³¹⁸ By referring to the natives as “uncultur’d,” Bannerman suggests that their resistance to the European culture is the problem and that it has led them to become more violent. Yet, shortly after this passage, she writes that “all his keener, deadlier arts—are ours”; in this way, Bannerman ultimately calls attention to the ways in which imperialism has changed the natives’ lives (*Verses*, 54).

The natives in *Elegy*, with their savage desires, are similar to the natives in Bannerman’s poem; however, in *Elegy* Seward implies that the native people are inherently savage whereas Bannerman blames Europeans and their imperialist, knowledge-seeking missions for transforming natives from peaceful to vengeful people. Even though some of Cook’s encounters with native peoples were pleasant, not all welcomed him. Seward describes New Zealand as a “hostile plain”; the natives are “frowning,” and they do not “fear the brave, nor emulate the good, / But scowl with savage thirst of human blood!” (*Elegy*, 8). Although the Maori were a traditionally warrior culture, Seward’s description suggests that colonization has increased their “thirst of human blood” because it has advanced them in violence. Cook writes in his journal of

³¹⁸ See Miller, “Introduction,” 14.

the ways in which Europeans have “damned,” as Nicholas Thomas describes it, the natives’ ways of life: “. . . we interduce among them wants and perhaps diseases which they never before knew and which serves only to disturb that happy tranquility they and their fore Fathers had enjoy’d. If any one denies the truth of this assertion let him tell me what the Natives of the whole extent of America have gained by the commerce they have had with Europeans.”³¹⁹ In this passage, Cook criticizes the colonial agenda because it only serves to disrupt lives that had once been content.

In addition to revealing how imperialism transforms native cultures, Seward and Bannerman also question the effects of Britain’s imperial ambitions on the natural world. Bannerman emphasizes how war and its celebrations damage the environment. The savage rests on a “blasted heath” (*Verses*, 27) and has left the natural world behind him: “He leaves his native mountains shelt’ring side” (*Verses*, 24). Additionally, Bannerman’s opening stanza, read closely, is not a celebration, but a mourning of the disruption of nature:

Hark! ’tis the note of joy—the trumpet’s voice
Swells in the wind, and bid the world rejoice;
From street to street, in artificial light,
The blaze of torches glitters on the night;
Loud peals of triumph rend the startled sky (*Verses*, 1–5)

Instead of birds singing or stars glittering in the sky, a trumpet sounds and torches light the night. Bannerman calls attention to the artificiality of the illumination not only by using the word “artificial” to describe it, but also by writing that the sky is “startled.” The word “artificial” also signals the kind of society that exists. Bannerman questions the celebration, asking “Is this a time for triumph and applause, / When shrinking Nature mourns her broken laws?” (*Verses*, 9–10). In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams

³¹⁹ Thomas, *Cook*, xxvi.

distinguishes between nature, “the material world,” and Nature, “the inherent force that directs the world.”³²⁰ According to Williams, in the eighteenth-century, Nature was not “an inherent shaping force” that exerted arbitrary power; instead, it was personified as a constitutional lawyer. Nature’s laws “came from somewhere” and its power came from Reason, which helped to construct an “ideal society.”³²¹ When Bannerman writes that “Nature mourns her broken laws,” she acknowledges the reality of imperialism; when colonizers take over people and the material world, they are turning away from Nature, from Reason; therefore, Nature “shrinks” along with the natural world. In the eighteenth-century, as developments in applied science and technology became more prevalent, the countryside began to disappear. Bannerman uses illuminations, primarily an urban celebration, to highlight the changes to Britain’s own landscape and ways of life. Without Nature, or Reason, guiding people’s actions, an “artificial,” not “ideal,” society exists. “Affrighted Nature flies” as two people fight (*Verses*, 35). Bannerman blames war and the destruction it causes for Nature’s disappearance: “the last shriek of Nature quiver[s] low” while “Desolation spread[s] throughout the globe (*Verses*, 68 and 69, respectively).

Although Bannerman’s poem reveals a much more explicit relationship between science and imperial progress, the moments in Seward’s poem where she becomes a natural historian also show how applied science is a strategy of empire that can be just as destructive as war. According to Nicholas Thomas, “what drove Cook was not the prospect of naval victory, or the spoils of conquest and colonization. Cook liked a point or a line on a chart.”³²² Cook was not interested in the obvious imperial aspects of his

³²⁰ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1983), 219.

³²¹ Williams, *Keywords*, 222–23.

³²² Thomas, *Cook*, xix.

journey; instead, he was only interested in his journey's scientific aspects. Seward's *Elegy* reveals, however, that the two are not mutually exclusive. In a move that recognizes the goal of Cook's voyages, which is to control nature, Seward describes an inaccessible island as a naturalist.³²³ When Seward takes on the voice of a naturalist, she also gives voice to the eighteenth-century's utilitarian view of nature. Describing the flora and fauna that flourish on the island, she calls attention to modern science in a footnote, referring to Flora and Fauna as the goddesses of "modern Botany" and "modern Zoology," respectively (*Elegy*, 11). As she proceeds to list the new plants contained on the island, she also considers how they could be of use to Britons. For instance in another footnote, she writes that the vegetable silk Zealanders use to make their nets "are longer and stronger than our hemp and flax; and some, manufactured in London, is as white and glossy as fine silk. This valuable vegetable will probably grow in our climate" (*Elegy*, 12). The last statement calls attention to the role of naturalists on these "voyages of discovery"; their job was to collect specimens to bring back to Britain, thus practicing ecological imperialism.³²⁴ Seward moves from describing the plant life of the island to a

³²³ Seward can only imagine what a naturalist would have found because Cook and his crew were unable to land on the island.

³²⁴ See Crosby, "Ecological Imperialism," 103–17. According to Crosby, ecological imperialism is a negative result of colonialism; one type of ecological imperialism occurs when new plant or animal species are introduced to a new environment. This passage also shows Seward's familiarity with economic geography, which Christopher Flynn defines as a system of science that "delineates the globe into markets for English goods and objects of British imperialism." "Nationalism, Commerce, and Imperial Anxiety in Defoe's Later Works," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 54, no. 2 (2000): 11. Flynn's article discusses Defoe's *Atlas Maritimus and Commercialis*, which was published in the early eighteenth century; however, a search in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO) for "historical geography" uncovers several publications that can be classified as economic geography. See Daniel Fenning, *New System of Geography: or, a General Description of the World. . . . Embellished with a new and accurate set of maps, . . . and a great variety of copper-plates, . . . By the late D. Fenning and J. Collyer* (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1780); William Guthrie, Esq., *A New System of Modern Geography: or, a Geographical, Historical, and Commerical Grammar; And Present State of the Several Kingdoms of the World*, 3rd ed. (London: printed for C. Dilly and G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1786); John Payne, *Universal geography formed into a new and entire system; describing Asia, Africa, Europe, and America; . . . also giving a general account of . . . the history of man, . . . the state of arts, sciences, commerce, . . . To which*

description of the island's animals, including the Kangaroo and Pois bird. Of the latter, she writes that "under its throat hang two little tufts of curled white feathers, call *poies*, which being the Otaheitean word for ear-rings, occasioned our giving that name to the bird" (*Elegy*, 12). Having already mentioned Linnaeus in the footnote defining Flora and Fauna, Seward once again gives voice to Linnaeus, when she writes that Europeans "gave that name to the bird." Schiebinger refers to the Linnaean method of naming plants and animals as "linguistic imperialism," "a politics of naming that accompanied and promoted European expansion and colonization."³²⁵ According to Schiebinger, "eighteenth-century nomenclature served as an instrument of empire by detaching plants from their native cultural settings and placing them within schema comprehensible first to Europeans," and this caused certain people, including Michel Adanson of France, to oppose Linnaeus's system in the eighteenth century. Those who opposed Linnaeus's system believed that it did not "conceptualize plants globally" because it did not "retain plant names indigenous to the areas where they were found."³²⁶

In Seward's poem, however, she acknowledges the "native cultural settings" when she refers to the birds' name as that of the "Otaheitean word for ear-rings"; thus, Seward's figurative embarkation on the island seems to remain less intrusive than if Cook's crew had been able to land. Throughout her description of the island, Seward refers to its "wild" qualities. The island's location on a "lone beach" suggests that it has been left alone and unadulterated. Indeed, Seward writes that "leaves of new forms, and flow'rs uncultur'd grow," which shows that the plants growing on the island have

is added, a short view of astronomy . . . (London: printed for the author, and sold by J. Johnson and C. Stalker, 1791).

³²⁵ Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 195.

³²⁶ Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 224 and 196, respectively.

remained unknown and, thus, able to flourish. Similarly, the food products are “unnam’d.” The undomesticated nature of this island stands in direct contrast to an earlier section of *Elegy* when Seward writes about Cook and his crew’s encounter with the Zealanders:

To these the Hero leads his living store,
And pours new wonders on th’ uncultur’d shore;
The silky fleece, fair fruit, and golden grain;
And future herds and harvest bless the plain.
O’er the green soil his Kids exulting play,
And sounds his clarion loud the Bird of day;
The downy Goose her ruffled bosom laves,
Trims her white wing, and wantons in the waves;
Stern moves the Bull along th’ affrighted shores,
And countless nations tremble as he roars. (*Elegy*, 9)

In this passage, Seward praises Cook, referring to him as “the Hero,” while the natives are “uncultur’d.” She also recognizes that British influences remain even after they leave the island, noting that “future herds and harvest bless the plain.” In a footnote to this passage, Seward writes that Cook’s gifts changed the natives’ cannibalistic practices. This passage is an excellent portrayal of ecological imperialism because it shows how Cook and his crew’s presence transformed the Zealanders’ land and lives; their “uncultur’d shore” is now “cultur’d” as Cook has transferred a part of England to New Zealand. According to the footnote, “the Zealanders had hitherto subsisted upon fish, and such coarse vegetables as their climate produced”; now they can subsist on grain and meat. In *Elegy*, Seward portrays Cook’s actions as heroic and the natives’ reponse to them as eternally grateful—they view him as a god-like figure because he has helped to save “famish’d thousands” (*Elegy*, 10). Cook, however, often expressed his regret at introducing the natives to new materials. In one journal entry, Cook notes that the use of iron tools caused the people of the South Pacific to give up their traditional tools made of

stone and bone: “I cannot avoid expressing it as my real opinion that it would have been far better for these poor people never to have known our superiority in the accommodations and arts that make life comfortable, than after once knowing it, to be again left and abandoned in their original capacity of improvement.”³²⁷ Despite Seward’s praise for Cook’s actions in these lines, the last two lines of this passage reveal that Britain’s empire may not be as humane as it first appears. Not only does their presence on New Zealand strike fear in other nations—“countless nations tremble”—but also, the Zealanders now live on an “affrighted shore.”

In the stanza that follows her description of the inaccessible island, Seward expresses relief that “shipwreck guards the land” (*Elegy*, 13). She compares Captain Cook to another famous ship captain, Ulysses:

So, when of old, Sicilian shores along,
Enchanting Syrens trill’d th’ alluring song,
Bound to the mast the charm’d Ulysses hears,
And drinks the sweet tones with insatiate ears;
Strains the strong cords, upbraids the prosp’rous gale,
And sighs, as Wisdom spreads the flying sail. (*Elegy*, 13)

In this description, Seward compares Cook and his crew’s inability to land on the island to Ulysses’s clever technique of hearing the Siren’s song without experiencing the consequences of it.³²⁸ In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argue that this scene from Homer’s epic is “an allegory of how Western culture

³²⁷ James Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean. Undertaken, By the Command of His Majesty, For Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere . . . In Three Volumes* (London: printed by H. Hughs, 1785), 2:136–37.

³²⁸ In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus is told by Circe that anyone who hears the Sirens’ song will “nevermore draw near / his wife, his home, his infants . . . the Sirens lucid song / will so enchant him as they lie along / their meadow”; ominously, Circe adds in the same breath: “Round about them lie heaped bones / and shriveled skin of putrefying men.” *Odyssey*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 244.

has gone wrong.”³²⁹ According to Horkheimer and Adorno, during the Enlightenment “human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted.”³³⁰ In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses and his crew exert their power over the Sirens by disconnecting themselves from their song. In Seward’s imagined embarkation of the island, she shows that the crew has disconnected themselves from the natural world because they are only focused on dominating its resources. Had the crew been able to land, they would have dominated the island’s resources, including the “valuable vegetable” that produces stronger silk (*Elegy*, 12). Seward acknowledges in her poem that the crew was saved from disaster both in not being able to land—the crew’s “earnest wishes were in vain, from the dangerous reefs and the violence of the surfs”—and in not becoming more knowledgeable about the real “richness” of the island because “Wisdom spreads the flying sail” (*Elegy*, 13).

Domestic Consequences: “Ill-fated matron[s]”

Seward’s and Bannerman’s critique of empire’s effects on native cultures and the natural world is, at times, strong; however, it remains secondary to their critique of empire’s effects on women. Both poets frame their poems around the women who are left behind when a country pursues its imperialist agenda. Employing strategies used by eighteenth-century citizens to oppose war, Seward’s and Bannerman’s ultimate critique of empire resides in its ability to destroy the domestic. In *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation: James Cook, William Hodges, and the Return to the Pacific*, Harriet Guest describes Dissenters’ opposition to Britain’s war with France:

³²⁹ See Ackbar Abbas, “Dialectic of Deception,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 2 (1999): 347.

³³⁰ See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 6.

The arguments of Wilberforce and Fox followed those of prominent dissenters in stressing the domestic consequences of war, and insisting that though the scenes of bloodshed and devastation might seem comfortably distant from mainland Britain, both their effects and the responsibility for them inevitably came home, and potentially violated the domestic intimacies of ‘once happy cottagers,’ disrupting the ties of familial affection and the mutual dependence of the generations.³³¹

Although this passage discusses dissenting opinion regarding Britain’s war with France in the 1790s and more easily applies to Bannerman’s *Verses*, Seward’s *Elegy* proves that the domestic consequences of war extend to an empire’s scientific voyages. The arguments against the war with France rest on the principle that the devastation war causes to other nations “inevitably comes home.” Similarly, in their poems, Seward and Bannerman reveal that ecological disasters are not limited to the outdoor world; instead, oftentimes the damage done to the natural world comes inside to affect domestic spaces as well.

Both Seward and Bannerman call attention to the pain imperialist missions cause women who lose their husbands, sons, and brothers. Seward describes the Otaheite’s mourning ritual, the Morai. According to Seward’s footnote,

[T]he Morai is a kind of funeral altar, which the people of Otaheite raise to the memory of their deceased friends. They bring to it a daily tribute of fruits, flowers, and the plumage of birds. The chief mourner wanders around it in a state of apparent distraction, shrieking furiously, and striking at intervals a shark’s tooth into her head. All people fly her, as she aims at wounding not only herself, but others. (*Elegy*, 15)

Interestingly, in the Otaheitian mourning ritual, the chief mourner is a woman. Seward juxtaposes Oberea, the mourning woman, with Cook’s wife; both experience “mad’ning woe.” Seward describes the native woman, Oberea, as “gaz[ing] round with dire survey”

³³¹ Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation*, 179.

(*Elegy*, 16). This image is similar to Cook's wife, who "eyes the lone flood, and deprecates the storm" while her "eager glances wander o'er the main" (*Elegy*, 16 and 17, respectively). Similarly, the mourning native woman's hair is "stain'd with gore" just as the danger surrounding the sea "sighs in [the] hair" of Cook's wife (*Elegy*, 16 and 17, respectively). Throughout the poem, Seward has made the reader feel as if the person to mourn is Cook, but the focus of the last two stanzas is Cook's wife, "an ill-fated matron"; Seward's description of Cook, whose death was "destin'd" by Humanity, resembles his wife's description at the end of the poem (*Elegy*, 17 and 14, respectively). Seward's focus shifts to Cook's wife, and the poem in some respects becomes an elegy for her, the "solicitous, and sad, a softer form" (*Elegy*, 16). Dissenters' protestations against the war with France acknowledged that war undoes the harmony of the world when it "disrupts the ties of familial affection," so too does Seward when she focuses on Cook's wife. The attention she gives to Cook's wife allows her to "address contemporary issues . . . from the viewpoint of those women who regard them as a threat against the civilizing function of love and other domestic forces, like family affections."³³² Additionally, similar to Bannerman who compares the native warrior to the British soldier, Seward's juxtaposition of the native woman to the British wife reveals how all people, despite their location, are connected. A fundamental element of ecology extends the connection between people to all living things, whether they are human or non-human. Cook's wife's dismay at the end of the poem shows that the damage Britain's imperial pursuit of knowledge caused to other countries, to other people's homes, ultimately returns home to Britian and affects the "once happy" lives of its nation's people.

³³² Angeletti, "Women Re-writing Men," 249.

Bannerman also calls attention to the women who are left behind after Conquest has triumphed. Unlike Seward, however, she does not wait until the poem's end to call attention to these unacknowledged victims; instead, she bookends her poem with their images. At the beginning and end of *Verses*, she focuses on the women left behind when a family member—husband, father, or son—goes off to war. She writes,

Hid in some dark retreat, the widow weeps
Her heart's best treasure bury'd in the deeps;
The frantic mother's cries of Heaven implore
Some youthful warrior—she shall meet no more:
From the first beam, that wakes the golden day,
To ling'ring twilight's melancholy ray,
No respite comes, their breaking hearts to cheer,
Or, from the fount of misery, steal a tear! (*Verses*, 13–20)

In these lines, Bannerman emphasizes the pain wives and mothers feel when they learn their loved ones have died; their hearts are broken and their cries seem without end. More importantly, though, Bannerman stresses the isolation these deaths cause; the widow is “hid in some dark retreat,” and the cries of the “frantic mother” are given no response. Indeed, the women are left alone to “weep unseen” (*Verses*, 136). The women's lives have been changed—they are now without a spouse, child, or both—and because of this, their homes are also transformed: “Thro' your chang'd homes, who wildly seek in vain / For those who slumber in the stormy main” (*Verses*, 133–34). War and the deaths it causes change lives and homes; families are broken, and there is “no respite” that can mend their wounds.

Imagining Home and Harmony: “for a lodge, where Peace might love to dwell”

In the same way war has destroyed Nature, the force that used to guide the world, so too has it destroyed families, which used to guide the domestic spaces of women's

lives. Bannerman shows the effect of war by summoning her imagination to conjure Nature when it, along with the environment, no longer exists. In her imagination, Bannerman pictures a world that is not as frightening as war, where people and plants thrive. The poet's vision is juxtaposed with the "savage's" dream. In the native's new world, a dystopia, "affrighted Nature flies" and "a fearful darkness dims the low'ring skies" (*Verses*, 35–36). Revenge and Murder populate the native's new world (*Verses*, 37–38). The poet, however, imagines a utopia, where violence and killing do not exist and Nature guides the world once again:

O! for a lodge, where Peace might love to dwell,
In some sequester'd, solitary dell!
Some fairy isle, beyond the Southern wave,
Where War ne'er led his victims to the grave;
Where, mid the tufted groves, when twilight pale
Peoples with shadowy forms the dewy dale,
The lone Enthusiast, wrapt in trance sublime,
Might soar, unfetter'd by the bounds of time;
Might bask in Fancy's reign, where scenes appear
Of blooms perpetual, thro' the vernal year;
Where heav'nly odours scent the zephyr's wine,
And fruits and flow'rs, in wild luxuriance spring! (*Verses*, 75–86)

In this passage, the lone Enthusiast, which some critics argue is Bannerman, imagines a new home on a "fairy isle" where Peace, instead of war, "might love to dwell."³³³ It is "sequester'd" from the outside world and surrounded by nature—"tufted groves," "dewy dale," "blooms perpetual," and "fruits and flow'rs, in wild luxuriance spring."

Bannerman views distant lands as she does her utopia; distant lands without the presence of Europeans experience the "freshness of vernal breeze" and have clear, "unclouded" days where the "sun" is "reflect[ed] in the seas" (*Verses*, 57, 64 and 58, respectively). The lands are "abundant" with "waving harvests" and fields of flowers (*Verses*, 59, 60

³³³ See Elfenbein, "Lesbianism and Romantic Genius," in *Romantic Genius*, 133 and "Lesbianism," 938.

and 61–63, respectively). Not only is the landscape in this passage devoid of war, but because of this, it is home to “tufted groves” and “peoples with shadowy forms.” Unlike the native who leaves “his native mountain’s shelt’ring side,” the natives in the poet’s imagination can “bask” in “blooms perpetual” without fear of “War le[ading] his victims to the grave.”

Interestingly, the “savage’s” dream becomes reality while the poet’s dream remains in her head. The only relief that exists resides, like Nature and the material world, in the imagination: “Such were the dreams, that sooth’d the pensive breast, / And lull’d the soul to visionary rest” (*Verses*, 87–88). At the end of the poem, the poet “welcomes the sigh, from Pity’s altar stole” and acknowledges the pain that exists in the world; however, the poet also admits that

Still, at those hours, when, hush’d in deep repose,
The happy lose their joys, the sad their woes,
May fancy lead me to the desert steep,
Stupendous frowning o’er the sullen deep;
To hear the shipwreck’d mariner deplore
His doom relentless, on the rocky shore!
Even when the winds their awful fury urge,
And, heap’d like mountains, raves the foaming surge,
Less dread the terrors of the turbid main,
Than Carnage, stalking o’er th’ ensanguin’d plain. (*Verses*, 121–30)

Here, Bannerman once again points out that relief only resides in the imagination, in the dreams that come when a person sleeps. In her dream, she will be able to hear the “shipwreck’d mariner deplore / His doom relentless”; she is able to reunite with her loved one only when she removes herself from the realities of this world. Because the reunion occurs in her imagination, which takes her to the ocean, Bannerman argues that the storm is less frightening than the blood that coats the land. The difference between the sea and

land in this stanza is one of tangibility; the ocean changes whereas the “Carnage, stalking o’er th’ ensanguin’d plain,” a clear anti-war statement, permanently remains to stain the ground.

At the end of *Elegy* and *Verses*, Seward and Bannerman focus on the women who mourn the loss of their loved ones. Morris Berman describes the view of the world prior to the Scientific Revolution: “The view of nature which predominated in the West down to the eve of the Scientific Revolution was that of an enchanted world.” Nature was alive and “the cosmos, in short, was a place of belonging,” where people were not “alienated observers,” but “direct participants” in the world.”³³⁴ At the end of *Elegy* and *Verses*, the women are alienated. In *Verses*, they stand over an “untimely urn” (*Verses*, 131), a phrase that can refer to the untimely nature of the soldier’s death—simply put, they have died too soon—or to war and its boundlessness—it has no set beginning or end. The women are left alone to “weep unseen” (*Verses*, 136) in “chang’d homes” and to “wildly seek in vain / For those who slumber in the stormy main” (*Verses*, 133 and 134). The last stanza of the poem highlights the anonymity of war; not only are the men who die nameless, but the women who are left to mourn have no identity. A world of war, Bannerman suggests, leaves nothing behind; the women mourning are invisible, and Nature only resides in the imagination. Most importantly, the only peace that exists is also invisible—Faith—because the pursuit of knowledge has destroyed the harmony that used to exist in the world. One must wait for “Time’s feeble barrier [to bound] the painful course” and bring “Joy,” which “shall reign eternal as its Source” (*Verses*, 141–42). Similarly in *Elegy*, Seward suggests that Cook’s wife will also find relief in heaven, where her husband waits for her. At the end of the poem, Humanity returns to “bear

³³⁴ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 17.

[Cook] to th' immortal plains," and the poet commands Cook's wife to "raise thy thoughts to yonder starry plain" (*Elegy*, 18 and 17, respectively). Cook's wife is a "wretched mourner" who needs to "weep [her] griefs to rest," a plea for Cook's wife to sleep eternally because her dreams will give her relief (*Elegy*, 17). The poem's conclusion, unlike Cook's death, is peaceful. Cook's wife, like the women in Bannerman's poem, appears as an alienated observer when she stands alone while her "eager glances wander o'er the main." By portraying the women as "alienated observers," Seward and Bannerman successfully show how applied science and knowledge have not only altered family dynamics, but also the way individuals interact with the natural world.

In Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook* and Bannerman's *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory*, the poets suggest that the changes to the natural world, because of the pursuit of knowledge, including advancements in applied science, are irreversible. According to the poems, relief only exists in the imagination because this is the only place where Nature guides the world and the environment flourishes; it is also the only place where individuals can reunite with their loved ones. In the next chapter, I will continue to explore how applied science affects the natural world. Specifically, I will look at the way Seward and Bannerman offer a conservationist message even as their poetry views a global imperial economy and industrialization, a result of the advances in applied science, as a threat to the environment.

Chapter Three

The “tribes fuliginous invade” “the green earth”: War on Nature in Anna Seward’s
To Colebrook Dale (1787) and *Colebrook Dale* (1791) and Anne Bannerman’s
The Genii (1800)

The optimism about knowledge and applied science that Anna Seward and Anne Bannerman critique in *Elegy on Captain Cook* and *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* lay at the heart of Britain’s increase in industrialization in the mid-eighteenth century. In *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment*, Roy Porter writes that “progress,” in the form of technology, “proved the ultimate Enlightenment gospel” and “industry a prime instance of disciplined rationality.”³³⁵ In *The Seasons*, published near mid-century in 1735, James Thomson writes that industry is the “raiser of human kind.”³³⁶ At the time Thomson published his poem, Britain was just beginning to experience a rise in industry that would come to full fruition in the nineteenth century. Although it has been argued that the industrial revolution is primarily a nineteenth century phenomenon, the eighteenth century saw the rise of particular industries, including the iron and textile industries, which made the

³³⁵ Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 436 and 431, respectively.

³³⁶ James Thomson, “Autumn,” in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981), quotation p. 146, line 47.

nineteenth century's "revolution" possible.³³⁷ Indeed, in Raymond Williams's *Keywords*, he argues that the sense of the word "industry" as "an institution or set of institutions began to come through" in the eighteenth century.³³⁸ Among the reasons for the rise of industry in Britain during the eighteenth century include Britain's increased population as well as the expansion of its overseas trade.³³⁹ By the mid-eighteenth century, Britain had a "social and economic situation conducive to industrialization," and by the end of the century, with industrialization in full swing, Britain was known as an "empire of industry."³⁴⁰ Charting the rise of its industrialization, Porter describes Britain's empire: "Industrialization gathered pace, and production grew rapidly, averaging about 9 million [pounds] a year in 1780, [and] exports had rocketed to 22 million [pounds] by the century's close."³⁴¹ With the steady rise of industry, many believed that Britain's "empire of industry" would supplant its previous empire of conquest.

For many, James Thomson's description of industry as a civilizing agent was true; industry was synonymous with progress. Proponents of industrialization, especially members of the Lunar Society, who were "at the very hub of the modern technological world," thought that the changes in Britain's society would influence its relationship with other countries and colonies; indeed, they viewed industry as "the means to beat swords

³³⁷ Although the term "industrial revolution" was not coined until the mid-nineteenth century, scholars agree that it began in the eighteenth century. See William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007); Porter, *Creation of Modern World*; I. G. Simmons, *Global Environmental History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and *Environmental History*.

³³⁸ Williams, *Keywords*, 165.

³³⁹ For information on how Britain's increased population in the eighteenth century contributed to its rise as an industrial nation, see Kenneth Morgan, *The Birth of Industrial Britain: Economic Change, 1750–1850* (New York: Longman, 1999) and Richard G. Wilkinson, "The English Industrial Revolution," in *Ends of the Earth*, 80–99. Additionally, in *Environment and Empire*, Beinart and Hughes write that "population increase has required, and been intricately related to, intensification of production and trade" (14).

³⁴⁰ Morgan, *Birth of Industrial Britain*, 2 and Porter, *Creation of Modern World*, 432, respectively.

³⁴¹ Porter, *Creation of Modern World*, 430.

into ploughshares, supplanting war with peaceful rivalry.”³⁴² As a founding member of the Lunar Society, Erasmus Darwin had an “enduring hatred of violence, cruelty, war and empire” and believed that real power resided in inventions and industrialization.³⁴³

Darwin “celebrated the promise of technological progress,” and his writings “amount to an early and full vindication of industrial society.”³⁴⁴ Specifically, in “The Economy of Vegetation,” the first part of his famous poem, *The Botanic Garden*, published in 1791, Darwin celebrates technology: it is powerful, courageous, and makes a better world possible. For instance, steam technology, Darwin writes, allows a “feast without blood!” to “nourish human kind.”³⁴⁵ For Darwin and other proponents of technological progress, industrialization not only would improve Britain’s economy by enhancing its communication and commerce with other parts of the nation, but also by increasing its trade with other nations.

However despite the progress that was made, by the end of the century, some individuals acknowledged that there were problems with industry, specifically that it “clearly ravaged nature.”³⁴⁶ Even individuals who previously advocated for “improvements” began to see their detrimental effects.³⁴⁷ For example, Arthur Young, an agricultural reformer who encouraged the enclosure of the countryside, looked upon

³⁴² Porter, *Creation of Modern World*, 436 and 431, respectively. For more information on the Lunar Society, see Maureen McNeil, *Under the Banner of Science: Erasmus Darwin and his Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) and Uglow, *Lunar Men*.

³⁴³ Sharon Setzer, “‘Pond’rous Engines’ in ‘Outraged Groves’: The Environmental Argument of Anna Seward’s Colebrook Dale,” *European Romantic Review* 18, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 76.

³⁴⁴ Donna Coffey, “Introduction: A Sense of Place,” *Women’s Studies* 31 (2002): 133 and Porter, *Creation of Modern World*, 444.

³⁴⁵ Erasmus Darwin, *The botanic garden; a poem, in two parts. Part I. Containing the economy of vegetation. Part II. The loves of the plants. With philosophical notes* (London: printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1791), quotation p. 28, line 278.

³⁴⁶ Porter, *Creation of Modern World*, 316.

³⁴⁷ In the eighteenth century, the word “improvement” was used to describe land that had been rendered more profitable either through enclosure, cultivation, or the erection of buildings. Langford writes that “improvement was a favourite [*sic*] word of the 1760s and 1770s, carrying with it a great mass of material aspirations and moral assumptions” (*Polite and Commercial People*, 432).

Coalbrookdale, the center of the coal and iron industries, and saw a landscape of natural beauty overcome by and at odds with the artificiality of the coal mining industry.³⁴⁸

Although Young does not completely dismiss the industrial landscape—he suggests the coal mining industry is more suited for places with “craggy and bare rocks”—his language does show that industrial progress overwhelms nature. Coalbrookdale, Young argues, is “too beautiful to be much in unison with that variety of horrors art has spread at the bottom”; for Young, the noises and smoke that surround the dale overtake its beauty.³⁴⁹ Young’s comments anticipate modern arguments regarding the environmental consequences of industrialization. In *The Fate of the Earth*, published in 1982, Jonathan Schell clearly states the correlation between industrialization and our modern ecological crisis: “Through the point of view of the human actor, there might be a clear difference between the ‘constructive’ economic applications of technology and the ‘destructive’ military ones, nature makes no such distinction: both are beachheads of human mastery in a defence-less natural world.”³⁵⁰ Schell’s comment reveals the similarities between industrialization and conquest in the twentieth century; however, as early as the eighteenth century, some Britons realized that an “empire of industry” was synonymous with an empire of conquest.³⁵¹ Even if advances in industry improved Britain’s economy, it also irreversibly destroyed Britain’s environments, as well as those of countries across the globe.

³⁴⁸ I will use the spelling “Coalbrookdale” to refer to the actual place; however, I will retain Seward’s spelling when I write about her two poems, *To Colebrook Dale* and *Colebrook Dale*.

³⁴⁹ Porter, *Creation of Modern World*, 315.

³⁵⁰ Donald Worster, “The Vulnerable Earth: Toward a Planetary History,” in *Ends of the Earth*, 18.

³⁵¹ Daniel Defoe argued for an empire of industry since the early eighteenth century. See Richard Frohock, *Heroes of Empire: The British Imperial Protagonist in America, 1596–1764* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) and Robert P. Marzec, *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature: From Daniel Defoe to Salman Rushdie* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Marzec offers a reading of *Robinson Crusoe* and *A Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain* that shows Defoe recognized that an empire of industry could be used to help Britain become a better empire.

As a response to industrialization, people began to “speak for nature” in the eighteenth century, which gave rise to a conservation movement.³⁵² In *Environment and Empire*, historians William Beinart and Lotte Hughes chart Britain’s conservation movement. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the movement was marked by a “benign view of nature,” but as knowledge about other parts of the globe increased and as Britain and other colonial empires began to see the environmental degradation occurring on the small islands that served as ports for their ships, the conservation movement “evolved into a multifaceted critique of overexploitation.”³⁵³ Anna Seward and Anne Bannerman, who previously questioned the benefits of knowledge and applied science in *Elegy on Captain Cook* and *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory*, also wrote poems that acknowledged the impact of overexploitation on the environment; in Seward’s *To Colebrook Dale* (1787) and *Colebrook Dale* (composed between 1787 and 1791) and Anne Bannerman’s *The Genii* (1800), both poets critique Britain’s “empire of industry.” Seward explicitly shows how industrialization exploits local environments and has resulted in the earth’s destruction while Bannerman’s poem critiques the root causes of industrialization and its results, specifically a global economy, and shows how the pursuit of resources to advance industry leads to humans’ destruction. In both poems, Seward and Bannerman reveal that the advances in applied science, which have led to an increase in industrial pursuits, ultimately result in the earth’s destruction. Yet, neither Seward nor Bannerman offers criticism without a solution, and their poems ultimately offer a conservationist message. In her *Colebrook Dale* poems, Seward suggests a seemingly practical solution that would limit industry’s progress to specific environments

³⁵² This phrase comes from the title of Sylvia Bowerbank’s book, *Speaking for Nature*.

³⁵³ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 14.

to minimize the destruction while Bannerman's poem portrays an apocalyptic conflict that serves as a warning to humans not to be tempted by the wealth imperialism can bring. Just as *Elegy on Captain Cook* and *Verses for an Illumination of a Naval Victory* question the benefits of applied science, so too in the Colebrook Dale poems and *The Genii*, Seward and Bannerman reveal the effects of a global economy; their poems not only show what will continue to happen if Britain insists upon becoming an empire of industry, but they also show how humans, in the eighteenth century, could begin to conserve the environment.

In *To Colebrook Dale* and *Colebrook Dale*, Anna Seward expresses a concern for the loss of the natural world primarily because it is the source of inspiration for poets. Other women poets expressed a similar concern; for instance, in *To ***** on his Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk*, Elizabeth Carter argues that the person who cuts down the tree is a "son of science," who sacrifices "the nobler growth of thought to taste."³⁵⁴ In "Defending Local Places: Anna Seward as Environmental Writer," Sylvia Bowerbank asks, "What sort of role do the arts—whether music, painting, drama, or poetry—play in serving the well-being of the environment and the life it sustains? To what extent can the cultivation of aesthetic feeling be said to act as a bulwark against environmental degradation and destruction?"³⁵⁵ To answer her own questions, Bowerbank briefly analyzes Seward's Colebrook Dale poems and concludes that they "call into question the very effectiveness . . . of poetry as a cultural strategy for resisting the modern conquest of nature."³⁵⁶ While it is true that Seward's Colebrook Dale poems highlight the industrial

³⁵⁴ Carter, "To ***** On his design of Cutting down a Shady Walk," in *Poems on Several Occasions*, quotation p. 40.

³⁵⁵ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 161.

³⁵⁶ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 163.

invasion of the dale and, Seward suggests, that some damage is irreversible, read together, Seward's poems not only critique what has already occurred in Britain's Severn Valley, but also act as a warning against future industrialization and urge conservation of what remains.

Much of Anna Seward's poetry honors various places in her life, and her poems on Coalbrookdale are no exception. Seward only visited Coalbrookdale once, in the fall of 1787, but her poems reveal that one visit was enough for her to see how "modern industries, in the name of 'progress,' were beginning to ravage nature."³⁵⁷ In her Colebrook Dale poems, Seward explores the industrialization of Coalbrookdale, the region along the Severn River, which was Britain's industrial center in the eighteenth century; the very presence of Coalbrookdale as an industrial center reflects Britain's own environmental problems, specifically deforestation. Since Britain was running out of trees by mid-century, a new natural resource needed to be exploited, so Britain began to pursue coal as a source of energy. I. G. Simmons argues that the switch from timber to coal is "without a doubt the central, binding narrative of the eighteenth century."³⁵⁸ Indeed, the switch to coal "helped to drive the industrial revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century."³⁵⁹ When Seward visited Coalbrookdale, the area already accounted for forty percent of Britain's iron production.³⁶⁰ Seward's letter to William Hayley detailing her 1787 visit to Coalbrookdale acknowledges this fact, as she focuses on the Iron Bridge, which opened New Year's Day 1781; she writes, "it is represented so exactly in the prints, as to leave the eye little to acquire by actual contemplation." Here,

³⁵⁷ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 162.

³⁵⁸ Simmons, *Environmental History*, 139.

³⁵⁹ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 10–11.

³⁶⁰ Morgan, *Birth of Industrial Britain*, 51.

Seward suggests that seeing the Iron Bridge in person is useless because the representation of it in print leaves nothing left to the imagination. For Seward, not only does the artwork of industrialization leave “little to acquire,” but also industrialization, specifically the changes it causes to landscapes, “leave[s] little to acquire.” At Coalbrookdale, Seward saw “a town, noisy and smouldering,” where the pollution from the iron mills “shroud, as with a sable crape, the lavish woods and fantastic rocks” as well as “sully the pure waters of the Severn, and dim the splendour of the summer’s sun.”³⁶¹ Seward’s Colebrook Dale poems reflect her visit to the site of Britain’s industrial revolution as well as her concern that the damage progress causes to the natural world (and, inevitably, to art) is not worth the gains Britain’s empire might acquire.

Just as Anna Seward’s Colebrook Dale poems reflect her love of place, Anne Bannerman’s *The Genii* reflects aspects of her life and politics. Bannerman struggled to be accepted by the Edinburgh literary circle, the group that “could have supported her and her work.”³⁶² Throughout her poetry, Bannerman constantly shows how women can rise above their circumstances and avenge the oppression forced upon them by society. In *The Genii*, Bannerman writes about a group of spirits who represent empire; they want complete control. Although she characterizes the genii as she does women in her other poems—the genii are powerful and vengeful—*The Genii* is a poem less about the oppression society inflicts upon women and more about the oppression imperialism has instituted throughout the world. In the advertisement to *The Genii*, Bannerman writes that her poem may be criticized for its “resemblance, in several points, to *The Botanic*

³⁶¹ Anna Seward to William Hayley, Lichfield, 6 Oct. 1787, in *Letters*, 1:338–39.

³⁶² Diane Long Hoeveler, “Gendering the Scottish Ballad: The Case of Anne Bannerman’s *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 97–101, quotation p. 99.

Garden.³⁶³ Indeed, both poems offer an epic portrayal of imperialism and its outcomes, including technological progress; however, whereas Darwin's poem praises how scientists and inventors use natural resources to benefit humanity, in *The Genii*, Bannerman shows how the use of natural resources does not lead to a better world; instead, she shows how the destruction of the natural world for the sake of wealth and power leads not only to the earth's but also humans' destruction. In *The Genii*, Bannerman writes an epic poem that travels across time and space to show the eventual destruction of the genii and the earth. In Bannerman's poem, the genii traverse the globe to offer a glimpse of the destruction imperialistic pursuits have caused throughout history. Travelling from South America to Iceland to Africa, Bannerman's poem shows the "global reach of [Britain's] empire."³⁶⁴ The genii's "throne," Bannerman writes, "from the bleak pole, extends thro' every zone," from the "frozen zones" to the desert (*Genii*, 197–98 and 141, respectively). The genii seem to be everywhere at once; indeed, their home is the ocean, a symbol of Britain's imperial power and the key to its global conquest.

Spirit(s) of the Natural World: "Genius of thy shades"

Both Seward's and Bannerman's poems begin with an address to spirits. Although the genius they address is different, in both poems, the genius serves the same purpose, which is to control the fate of the natural world. Seward's poem addresses the "genius loci" of Coalbrookdale. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "genius" comes from classical pagan beliefs, and in Roman mythology a genius was a

³⁶³ Anne Bannerman, "The Genii," in *Poems by Anne Bannerman*, n.p. Hereafter, text reference will refer to an abbreviated title and line numbers.

³⁶⁴ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 21.

guardian spirit; in Seward's poems, the genius is "the presiding deity or spirit" that has control of the fate of Coalbrookdale. In Seward's poems, the genius abandons his duty and is "faithless to his charge."³⁶⁵ Seward begins *Colebrook Dale* by arguing that the "Genius of thy shades" was "brib'd by Plutus"; swayed by the possibility of wealth, the genius "resign[s]" his charge.³⁶⁶ The genius's actions cause the dale to be "transform[ed]" from a place that "rival[ed]" the "Tempean vales" to "a gloomy Erebus" (*CD*, 115 and 114, respectively). By the end of *Colebrook Dale*, the genius loci has completely abandoned his moral allegiance and hangs his "apostate head" because he has given his "beauteous charge" to "inhabitants ill-suited" (*CD*, 106); instead of "the genius of the place" ruling the dale, now Cyclops rules it.³⁶⁷

Similar to Seward's genius, in Anne Bannerman's poem, the genii also control the fate of the world; however, in *The Genii*, the title comes from the Arab word, jinn, which is the collective name of a class of spirits, who can be either good or evil and interfere—for better or worse—in human affairs. In Bannerman's poem, the genii bring destruction to earth by causing natural disasters and tempting humans to use the natural world for their benefit. The fact that Bannerman's genii tempt humans relates them to James Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* (1764), which Bannerman cites twice in her poem.³⁶⁸

Ridley's work, modeled after the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, follows the education

³⁶⁵ Anna Seward, "To Colebrook Dale," in *Poetical Works*, 2:184, line 1. Hereafter, references to the poem will be cited in the text. Text references are to an abbreviated title, *TCD*, and line numbers of this edition.

³⁶⁶ Anna Seward, *Colebrook Dale*, in *Poetical Works*, 2:314, line 4 and 2: 319, line 107. Hereafter, references to the poem will be cited in the text. Text references are to an abbreviated title, *CD*, and line numbers of this edition.

³⁶⁷ In "Pond'rous Engines," Stetzer argues that by the end of the poem, Seward "assumes the tutelary role of the . . . genius loci" (79).

³⁶⁸ For references to *Tales of the Genii* in Bannerman's poem, see lines 62 and 368. Written under a pseudonym, Sir Charles Morell, James Ridley's tales were popular in the eighteenth century; they taught readers moral lessons, specifically that individuals should be patient and resign themselves to the "Designs of Providence." For more information on James Ridley and *Tales of the Genii*, see Robert L. Mack, "Ridley, James (1736–1765)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

of Patna and Coulor, the children of the iman of Turkey, Gualar. Their father believes that the best way to educate his children is to keep them secluded from the outside world; however, the genie, Moang, disagrees and believes that the children must face temptations if they hope to maintain their virtue in the real world, so she takes them to the palace of the genii where they are instructed through a series of moral fables.

The genii in Bannerman's poem and in Ridley's *Tales* do interfere with human affairs; however, whereas the genii in Ridley's work help humans, in Bannerman's poem, they are the cause of humans' destruction. In the two stories Bannerman cites from Ridley's work, "The History of the Merchant Abudah; or, The Talisman of Oromanes" and "Sadak and Kalasrade," the genii help to bring contentment to humans. In "The Talisman of Oromanes," although Abudah, a wealthy merchant, has been tormented by one genius disguised as an old hag, the majority of genii work to help Abudah discover the talisman of Oromanes. At the end of the story, after undergoing a variety of strange adventures that help to teach him that wealth cannot provide true happiness, Abudah learns to be content with his life, and another genius ends the hag's tormenting by locking her in a chest. Similar to "The Talisman of Oromanes," in "Sadak and Kalasrade," Sadak encounters a variety of trials as he searches for the Waters of Oblivion to help save his wife from the seduction of the sultan Amurath. In the end, he, like Abudah, is rescued by the genii, and at the end of the tale, they reunite Sadak with his wife. Although Ridley's *Tales* tend to show two types of genii—those who seek to harm humans and those who seek to help them—in Bannerman's poem, she focuses on the harm the genii cause. Her references to Ridley's work, however, suggest that her poem is ultimately meant to

instruct readers as it conveys an important lesson about how humans' quest for wealth and power defines their relationship with the natural world.

Bannerman's poem ultimately relates a story about an apocalyptic conflict. In the poem, Bannerman contrasts the genii with God and his spirits. The genii's violent and destructive actions begin only after God has created the earth and given Adam dominion; their actions stem from feelings of vengeance. In the previous chapter, I argued that in *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* Bannerman questions the benefits of imperialism; in *The Genii*, Bannerman moves to a full critique of imperialism by focusing on the destruction it causes. Bannerman's description of the genii simultaneously mirrors and critiques imperialism. The genii are all powerful "imperious kings," but they also rule "above the monuments of human power" (*Genii*, 95 and 52, respectively). Describing them as "imperious kings" throughout the poem, Bannerman links the genii to empire; likewise, their home is the ocean, which, as Paula Backscheider writes, is a "powerful symbol of the global reach of empire and Britain's distant sons."³⁶⁹ Yet, the genii also rule the elements, which cause natural disasters like earthquakes that destroy the work of other empires, proving that they are the most powerful. Unlike empires that rise and fall, the genii have ruled through the ages, but at the end of the poem, the genii destroy both themselves and their empire on earth. Bannerman suggests, however, that there is still hope for the future as long as Britain learns from the lessons Bannerman presents in *The Genii* and chooses to pursue power differently. The genii's destruction at the end of the poem serves to warn Britons that their pursuit of empire will result in the earth's desolation. The genii's vengeful actions, their tempting treasures, and

³⁶⁹ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 21.

imperialistic reign end in their destruction, and if Britain continues to pursue its own empire, always seeking more and more land and wealth, it too will suffer a similar fate.

Pre-industrialized Landscapes: “the green earth”

In Seward’s Colebrook Dale poems and Bannerman’s *The Genii*, both poets describe a landscape that has yet to be conquered. In her poems, Seward associates the pre-industrialized landscape with women. The picture Seward paints of the nymphs and naiads that populated and lived peacefully in the dale prior to the introduction of the coal and iron industries relies upon images from pastoral poetry. Seward’s poem celebrates and idealizes a rural, non-urbanized environment, but, at the same time, mourns its passing. As some scholars have pointed out, an important feature of the landscape is conspicuously absent: coal. Sharon Setzer writes in “‘Pond’rous Engines’ in ‘Outrag’d Groves’: The Environmental Argument in Anna Seward’s Colebrook Dale” that “the alternate spelling of Seward’s title effectively deletes the historical reality of coal from the name of the sylvan landscape.” At the beginning of her poem, instead of focusing on the natural world as a “depository of raw materials for industrialization,” Seward describes a world inhabited by female spirits who rule the thriving dale’s “soft, romantic, consecrated scenes” peacefully and democratically (*CD*, 8).³⁷⁰ Seward mourns the death of the dale. The region that used to be the “haunt of the wood-nymph” has “long vanish’d” (*CD*, 9–10); their reign is now “silent” (*CD*, 21). Seward’s elegiac tone at the beginning of *Colebrook Dale* anticipates the picturesque movement, where artists

³⁷⁰ Setzer, “‘Pond’rous Engines,’” 72. Timothy Webb also notes Seward’s alternate spelling in “Listing the Busy Sounds: Anna Seward, Mary Robinson and the Poetic Challenges of the City,” in *Romantic Women Poets*, 84.

³⁷⁰ Setzer, “‘Pond’rous Engines,’” 72.

“condemned” “intrusions into picturesque nature.”³⁷¹ Simply by mourning a past that no longer exists, Seward reveals that industrialization is an intrusion.

Similar to Seward’s poem, the opening of Bannerman’s *The Genii* also represents a pre-imperial world. In contrast to Seward’s landscape, Bannerman’s is not marked by nymphs and naiads that wander and reign together peacefully, seemingly without rules; instead, Bannerman’s landscape is marked by the elements’ obedience to the genii, on the one hand, and fear of them, on the other. Yet, despite the control the genii have over the elements—earth, air, water, and fire—in the second stanza, the speaker of the poem reminds the reader that the world “sprung” “from Chaos” (*Genii*, 13). Even as the world came from chaos, the opening stanza shows that through their “awful” force, the genii, “thron’d in terrors,” have brought an artificial order to a chaotic world. Throughout the opening stanza, Bannerman uses language of obedience: the skies are “mov’d” (*Genii*, 7), the sea “disport[s]” and “yield[s]” its riches (*Genii*, 9 and 10, respectively), and the “Ocean’s spirits own [the genii’s] sov’ reign sway” (*Genii*, 12). Although the elements obey the genii out of fear for the genii’s “dread talisman of fearful force” (*Genii*, 5), Bannerman’s description of the world suggests that it lacks real order because the planets “wheel’d their placid round” and “no fair proportions” exist (*Genii*, 14–16). The genii have only created the illusion of order; they roam the dark earth in a “frightful state” (*Genii*, 17) and “h[o]ld, in chasm’d cells, [their] drear abode” (*Genii*, 18). Using the phrase “chasm’d cell” to describe the genii’s relationship to the world, Bannerman paints a picture of a world contained, under the spell of ancient spirits. Soon, however, the genii’s spell will be broken and they will be forced out and into an ever-expanding globe.

³⁷¹ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 80.

According to Bannerman's poem, the genii survived for a long time by controlling the elements, and despite the fact that the earth was a "dark abyss," they managed the world and appeared content. Everything changes, however, when God decides to populate the earth with his own creation:

Till the green earth, in lavish beauty gay,
Spread her sweet verdure to the new-born day;
When shone the hills, beneath the solar beam,
And the moon trembled in the twilight stream;
You first beheld the earliest flow'rets blow,
And purple tinges on the concave glow,
Heard the faint flutter of the summer breeze,
When first it sported on the curling seas.
Firm on its central base, when nature stood,
And Power Omniscient found that all was good,
In this fair region, you possess'd the throne,
And o'er its varied climates reign'd alone. (*Genii*, 19–30)

Here, Bannerman describes how the genii witnessed the earth's transformation. Whereas their home used to be a "dark abyss" (*Genii*, 17), they now live on a "green earth."

Present at the beginning of creation, the genii saw the earth come alive; they "first beheld the earliest flow'rets blow, / And purple tinges on the concave glow." At this point, the genii's previous manner of ruling—by enforced discipline—shifts; the language of obedience is replaced by the language of competition. Similar to Seward's *Colebrook Dale*, Bannerman still describes a pre-imperial landscape that is marked by beauty and peacefulness; however, her description also recognizes the potential for conflict.

Bannerman describes the "new-born day" when the "green earth" "spread[s]" her beauty. By showing how God's creation "spreads" and ushers in a "new-born day," Bannerman admits the shift and shows how the genii's former world has been replaced; the genii used to rule alone over a "dark abyss," but now they exist alongside "Power Omniscient" (*Genii*, 29), who has replaced the darkness with light. The terror present in the poem's

opening lines has also been replaced by gentleness as the “Siroe gale” (*Genii*, 2) becomes a “faint flutter of the summer breeze” (*Genii*, 25).³⁷²

Nature Under Attack: “tribes fuliginous invade”

In *Colebrook Dale* and *The Genii*, Seward and Bannerman show what happens to the natural world when its spirit(s) are not consulted. Lynn White, Jr. writes about the shift from pagan animism to Christianity in “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis.” According to White, this shift led to a change in humans’ relationships with the environment. When people still believed in pagan animism, “every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit, and nothing in nature could be destroyed until the spirit of the place had been appropriately placated.” After the rise of monotheistic religions, specifically Christianity, however, White argues, “the spirits *in* natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man, evaporated. Man’s effective monopoly on spirit in this world was confirmed, and the old inhibitions to the exploitation of nature crumbled.”³⁷³ Seward’s *Colebrook Dale* opens on a world that has already been transformed. Seward describes the introduction of industrialization in the dale as “tribes fuliginous invade”; this description shows that the genius loci was overtaken—indeed the genius was bribed—and not “appropriately placated” (*CD*, 7). Similarly in *The Genii*, Bannerman clearly shows the shift from animism to Christianity. Within the poem’s first one hundred lines, Bannerman describes a world in transition.

First, the genii rule alone; then God creates Adam, thereby ousting the genii, but when

³⁷² The word Siroe could refer to Handel’s opera, *Siroe*, which opened on February 17, 1728 at London’s Haymarket Theatre. Much like Bannerman follows the succession of power on earth in *The Genii*, in *Siroe*, Handel tells the story of how Siroe became the next king of Persia even as his father initially wanted his second son, Medarse, to succeed him. For more information on Handel, see Donald Burrows, “Handel, George Frideric (1685–1759),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³⁷³ Lynn White, Jr., “The Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” in *Ecocriticism Reader*, 10.

Adam fails to follow God's commandments, the genii returns to their throne. At this point, however, the damage has already been done. As Lynn White writes, once Christianity entered the world, it became "possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."³⁷⁴

In *The Genii*, Bannerman uses imperialistic rhetoric to describe the transition from an animistic world to a Christian one. Shortly after God creates the earth, He gives dominion to Adam, a move that incites the genii's anger; they leave "scowling" and return to their palaces in the ocean's caves (*Genii*, 35). With the genii gone, God grants Adam "the earth's wide shores to his dominion" as he "assum'd the ensigns of imperial power" (*Genii*, 32 and 34). The words Bannerman uses to describe Adam's rule are markedly different from the poem's opening lines. Adam is given "dominion," supreme authority, over the earth, which allows him to create an empire. In contrast, Bannerman describes the genii's power as "sov'reign sway." To have "sov'reign sway" means that although the genii have power like Adam, their power, suggested by the word "sway," resides in the genii's ability to influence, not overtake, the elements. Although Adam's reign is short-lived, it lasted long enough to incite the genii's fury. After Adam leaves Eden, the genii regain their power, and "again, [they] saw the elements obey" (*Genii*, 44). Even though their "spells regain their primeval sway," the genii desire more than "sov'reign sway"; they now want to "rule supreme" in this changed world (*Genii*, 43 and 54, respectively).

³⁷⁴ White, "Roots," 10. While White does have a point, his argument ignores the relevance of non-Western religions. For one example of the role non-Western religions play in the treatment of the environment, see Peter Boomgaard, "Sacred Trees and Haunted Forests in Indonesia: Particularly Java, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, ed. Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland (London: Routledge, 1995), 47–62.

The genii's palaces are evidence of the changes that have occurred since God's creation. God may have filled the earth with flowers and verdant hills, but when He extended "earth's wide shores" to Adam, he also set forth the notion that humans could rule the natural world. Even though Adam failed to do this, the genii's palaces show how the natural world can be possessed. Bannerman describes the genii's home in "earth's deep caverns"; their palaces represent the fruits of imperialism (*Genii*, 56).

The long-extending palaces unfold
Their glitt'ring thrones, and canopies of gold.
Incluster'd diamonds, on the loaded spray,
In changing colours, meet the orient ray;
The burning ruby gives his blushing power,
To deck the gorgeous wreath, and silver bower.
—All powerful Genii! ye, who, rulers here,
May spurn the riches of another sphere,
From mounts of gold you lead, thro' many a soil,
And many a winding road, the shining spoil;
From cumb'ring clay the precious ore refine,
To form the treasures of the dreary mine. (*Genii*, 59–72)

The beauty God brought to the world—in the form of light and flowers—that spread across the earth serves as a contrast to the genii's "long-extending palaces." Bannerman describes God's creation as "lavish" because it spreads unrestrictedly, but the genii's palaces are lavish for another reason; they seem especially extravagant (*Genii*, 19). The genii not only rule below the earth, but they are also responsible for the metals and minerals found there. The gold, diamonds, rubies, and silver that adorn their thrones also "meet the orient ray," a phrase that acknowledges the trade in these products throughout the globe. Indeed, Bannerman attributes the trade in these goods to the genii, who "lead, thro' many a soil/ And many a winding road, the shining spoil." Trade in precious metals and minerals is the first step to capitalist transformation and the foundation for a "global

imperial economy.”³⁷⁵ While God transformed the world from a “dark abyss” to a “green earth,” the genii have transformed the “dreary mine” to a “glitt’ring” palace (*Genii*, 17 and 19).

Bannerman cites the first tale of James Ridley’s *Tales*, “The Talisman of Oromanes” as a source for this passage.³⁷⁶ Ridley’s work came at a time when translations of *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* were popular.³⁷⁷ In “Slavery, Blackness, and Islam: The *Arabian Nights* in the Eighteenth Century,” Felicity Nussbaum argues that the Islamic world portrayed in *Arabian Nights* “offered an alluring model of empire combined with a menacing eschatology.”³⁷⁸ Bannerman’s poem, and her use of Ridley’s text as a source, shows her intervention in literary trends of her day. Although the tales in *Arabian Nights* “illustrated the achievements of sovereignty through violence, force and magical events,” Bannerman’s poem shows the destruction this path to power causes not only to humans, but also to the environment. In addition to suggesting that wealth cannot bring happiness, “The Talisman of Oromanes” also has an environmental message. On his journey to find the talisman, Abudah falls asleep, and upon waking, he sees riches everywhere and is escorted to the genii “who keep watch over the earthly Paradise of Riches.”³⁷⁹ Bannerman uses the description of the genii’s “Paradise of Riches” to describe the genii’s palaces in her poem; however, what comes after this

³⁷⁵ See Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade, 1750–1850* (London: Routledge, 1999), 23.

³⁷⁶ James Ridley (Sir Charles Morell), *The tales of the genii: or, the delightful lessons of Horam, the son of Asmar. Faithfully translated from the Persian manuscript; and compared with the French and Spanish editions Published at Paris and Madrid. By Sir Charles Morell, Formerly Ambassador from the British Settlements in India to the Great Mogul*, 2 vols. (London: printed for J. Wilkie, 1764).

³⁷⁷ For more information on the popularity of *Arabian Nights*, see Felicity Nussbaum, “Slavery, Blackness, and Islam: The *Arabian Nights* in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807*, ed. Brycchan Carey and Peter J. Kitson (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 150–72 and *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, ed. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁷⁸ Nussbaum, “Slavery,” 150.

³⁷⁹ Ridley, *Tales of Genii*, 1:11.

passage in *Tales* resonates throughout Bannerman's poem. In Ridley's *Tales*, the genii tell Abudah that they control the treasure he sees because "all Things on Earth are subject to decrease."³⁸⁰ In Bannerman's poem, the genii also control the treasure but not because they are trying to protect it; rather, their palaces tempt humans to use the natural world, which will result in their accumulation of wealth but also their demise.

In *To Colebrook Dale*, *Colebrook Dale*, and *The Genii*, Seward and Bannerman show how human exploitation of the natural world has transformed it. Specifically, and not surprisingly, Seward and Bannerman detail the effects of mining, perhaps because pollution is an inevitable product of it; as Stephen J. Pyne points out, "within the mining cycle, fire figures repeatedly."³⁸¹ In Seward's *Colebrook Dale* poems, she emphasizes the iron mills' pollution, most of which resulted from smelting coal to produce iron. In "The English Industrial Revolution," Richard Wilkinson argues that "legislation to control air pollution from coal fires . . . has a long history."³⁸² In *Colebrook Dale*, Seward describes the industrialized cities of Wolverhampton, Sheffield, and Ketley; this region of the West Midlands was known as "Black Country" because of "the black smoke from the factories that blanket the area."³⁸³ Each of these cities is devoid of life; Wolverhampton is "grim," Sheffield "smoke-involved," and Ketley "dusky" (*CD*, 92, 93, and 98). There are "no aerial forms" because there is no flora or fauna; indeed, no spirit, Seward suggests, has ever or could ever reside in these places (*CD*, 100). In both

³⁸⁰ Ridley, *Tales of Genii*, 1:21.

³⁸¹ Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire: A Brief History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 132.

³⁸² Wilkinson, "English Industrial Revolution," 85.

³⁸³ Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia, eds. *British Women Poets in the Long Eighteenth Century: An Anthology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 584.

Colebrook Dale and *To Colebrook Dale*, Seward uses the word “pollute” to sum up the effect the coal and iron industries have had on Coalbrookdale:³⁸⁴

Through thy coy dales; while red the countless fires,
With umber'd flames, bicker on all thy hills,
Dark'ning the Summer's sun with columns large
Of thick, sulphureous smoke, which spread, like palls,
That screen the dead, upon the sylvan robe
Of thy aspiring rocks; pollute thy gales,
And stain thy glassy waters. (*CD*, 24–30)

Most of Seward's description in this passage focuses on fire, which in Bannerman's poem will be the source of the world's ultimate destruction. The dales, “red” with “countless fires,” refer to the color of wrought iron just after it is created by mixing iron with oxygen, and the “columns large / of thick, sulphureous smoke” refer to the kilns that use leftover coal to make bricks.

While Seward shows the all-encompassing character of technology in this passage, her sonnet, *To Colebrook Dale*, focuses on the pollution and offers a “succinct” description of the devastation industrialization causes. Writing in her preface to the 1799 edition of *Original Sonnets on Various Subjects; and Odes Paraphrased from Horace*, Seward declares that “the sonnet is an highly valuable species of Verse; the best vehicle for a single detached thought, an elevated, or a tender sentiment, and for a succinct description.”³⁸⁵ A sonnet, then, is “a highly intellectual medium,” where one idea is “pursued.”³⁸⁶ More importantly, by writing in sonnet form Seward not only “claims [an] intellectual equality,” but also defines herself outside of Lichfield's male literary group,

³⁸⁴ Pollute, in the way Seward uses the term, means to contaminate; for Seward, the iron mills damage the environment. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, however, does not cite this definition until the mid-nineteenth century.

³⁸⁵ Anna Seward, “Preface,” in *Original Sonnets on Various Subjects; and Odes Paraphrased from Horace* (London: printed for G. Sael, 1799), iii-vi, quotation p. vi.

³⁸⁶ See Daniel Robinson, “Reviving the Sonnet: Women Romantic Poets and the Sonnet Claim,” *European Romantic Review* 6, no. 1 (1995): 101 and Anna Seward, *Letters*, 1:144–45, respectively.

especially Erasmus Darwin, because she recognizes the hazards of their philosophies.³⁸⁷

This poem illustrates the contradiction of Darwin's thoughts by opening with a pastoral

scene "amid thy woods and vales, thy rocks and streams" and closing with a funeral

scene, as the "black sulphureous smoke . . . spread[s] [a] veil . . . upon the sylvan robe."

Seward's criticism of the iron mills at Coalbrookdale is deliberate, and her sonnet pursues

the effect these mills have on nature until "the wild woodland song" is "drown[ed]"

(*TCD*, 15). Although Darwin "did not see nature and improvement as antithetical,"

Seward did, and her sonnet focuses upon how industrialization effectively kills nature; it

covers—to destroy—everything.³⁸⁸ The pollution the mills cause becomes a shroud and

"funeral crape" that covers the "sylvan robe" (*TCD*, 11).³⁸⁹ The smoke is so "thick" and

pervasive that it covers everything; long after the mills shut down, Seward suggests, their

effects will remain since the "black sulphureous smoke" "pollute thy gales" and "stain"

the "glassy waters" (*TCD*, 9 and 12).

In Seward's Colebrook Dale poems, industrialization, represented as a masculine

force, invades the feminine, pre-industrialized landscape. The wood nymph, with her

"airy step," as opposed to the "troops," who "swarm" and "clamour," used to rule the

dale's wild, "pathless groves" (*CD*, 30 and 32). After Abraham Darby introduced a way

to smelt iron using coal instead of charcoal, Britain's industrial revolution began in

earnest, and the Severn Gorge area, where Coalbrookdale is located, became the "cradle"

³⁸⁷ Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 121.

³⁸⁸ Brewer, "Queen Muse of Britain," 596.

³⁸⁹ See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989). In the first part of her book, Merchant details the effects of mining.

of its revolution.³⁹⁰ Seward marks the shift from charcoal to iron by replacing the wood nymphs' reign with that of Cyclops's: "Now we view / Their fresh, their fragrant, and their silent reign / Usurpt by Cyclops" (*CD*, 20–22). In Greek mythology, the Cyclops forge iron for Vulcan, the god of fire and metalworking; in his writing, Homer describes them as wild savages who have adopted an "each man to himself" ethic.³⁹¹ Unlike the nymphs, who are "fresh," "fragrant," and "silent," Seward describes industrialization as an invasion by "tribes fuliginous" that "shout" as they "invade" (*CD*, 7 and 23). Sharon Setzer argues that Seward's poem "anticipates Max Weber's . . . commentary on 'the disenchantment of the world.'" According to Weber, the world becomes disenchanted when "it is perceived as a potential object of mastery" and when it is no longer viewed as a realm "governed by spiritual forces residing in or beyond the immanent order of nature itself."³⁹² In Seward's poems, she shows a world where the spiritual forces that used to reside in it have been overtaken by industrialization.

After industrialization takes over the dale, Seward writes that the previous "scene of superfluous grace" has been transformed to "wasted bloom" (*CD*, 1). The industrialized landscape has completely replaced the beauty of the dale. Seward remarked upon this tragedy shortly after her visit to the dale in a letter to William Hayley:

³⁹⁰ Judith Alfrey and Catherine Clark, *The Landscape of Industry: Patterns of Change in the Ironbridge Gorge* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1. For more information on Abraham Darby's invention, see Morgan, *Birth of Industrial Britain* and Vialls, *Coalbrookdale*.

³⁹¹ See Backscheider and Ingrassia, *British Women Poets*, 582.

³⁹² Setzer, "Pond'rous Engines," 78.

[. . .] A friend in Shropshire has lately shown me the wonders of Colebrooke Dale. We passed a fine autumnal day in exploring the features of that scene, where, we find, in such uncommon union, the dusky, noisy, assiduous, and indeed stupendous efforts of art, with romantic nature; where the Cyclops usurpt the dwellings of the Naiads and Dryads, and drown, with their dissonance, the woodland song; light their blazing fires on each of the many hills, and, with their thick black smoke, shroud, as with a sable crape, the lavish woods and fantastic rocks; sully the pure waters of the Severn, and dim the splendour of the summer's sun; while the shouts of the crouding barges, and the clang of their numerous engines, din through every winding valley. In short, we there saw a town, noisy and smouldering, and almost as populous as Birmingham, amidst sylvan hills, lofty rocks, and meandering waters.³⁹³

Seward's poems mirror, in language and message, this letter. In the letter, as in her poems, Seward paints a picture of "romantic nature" destroyed when "the thick black smoke, shroud, as with a sable crape, the lavish woods and fantastic rocks." The word "crape" in this passage refers to a funeral shroud; in this way, Seward argues industrialization has killed nature. Although Seward writes that the day was "fine," what she observes is the opposite. Instead of seeing romantic nature, Seward saw "a town, noisy and smouldering." When Seward compares Coalbrookdale to a town not unlike Birmingham, she levels, perhaps, her harshest criticism of industrialization. Throughout her life, Seward was known for her dislike of London and other metropolitan areas; indeed, her trip to Coalbrookdale represents one of only a few travels in her lifetime. She spent the majority of her life at home in Lichfield; she was often visited, but not often the visitor. In *Colebrook Dale*, Seward criticizes Birmingham, a city already completely industrialized.³⁹⁴ Much of her criticism relies upon the same strategies she uses at the

³⁹³ Seward to Hayley, *Letters*, 1:338–39.

³⁹⁴ In "Pond'rous Engines," Setzer argues that Seward views Coalbrookdale and Birmingham as two distinct places. While I agree that Seward characterizes Coalbrookdale as the "seat of Poetry" and Birmingham as "the mart / Of rich inventive Commerce," I disagree with Setzer's argument that Seward

beginning of *Colebrook Dale*. She describes the changes that have taken place in Birmingham since it has emerged as the “mart / Of rich inventive commerce” (CD, 51). Not only does it “creep on the circling plains, now here, now there,” but it also transforms “the hedges, thickets, trees, / Upturn’d, disrooted, into mortar’d piles” to form roads and city squares (CD, 73–76). Paul Langford details Birmingham’s growth in the eighteenth century; like other manufacturing towns, the increase in industry caused changes to the local environment, including the construction of turnpikes and canals—all of which became easier and necessary to construct as the iron industry expanded. As the production of wrought iron increased, so too did the need to distribute its products; therefore, wrought iron was used in many civil engineering projects, and, by the end of the century, it was even used in the construction of factories.³⁹⁵

The majority of contemporary criticism regarding Seward’s *Colebrook Dale* poems focuses on the rape of nature. While this is present in some of her description, I argue that Seward’s poem shows that industrialization is more of a war on nature rather than a rape of it. Nearly two hundred years before environmental historian Donald Worster wrote that industrialization was a “savage attack” on nature, Anna Seward expressed a similar sentiment in her *Colebrook Dale* poems.³⁹⁶ Seward uses the language of war to describe industrialization’s presence at Coalbrookdale. It “violates” the dale when “tribes fuliginous invade” (CD, 77, 7, respectively), and almost immediately, the

disdains the changes to Coalbrookdale and not Birmingham (75–76). Other critics, including Roy Porter and Timothy Webb, argue that Seward presents a positive view of Birmingham. In *Creation of the Modern World*, Porter writes that Seward sees how urbanization leads to civilization (315), and in “Listing the Busy Sounds,” Webb writes that Seward’s “local patriotism seems, if only briefly, to transcend” any concerns she has about the city (91).

³⁹⁵ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 418. For more information on the iron industry’s effect on the construction of turnpikes and canals, see Simmons, *Environmental History* and Vialls, *Coalbrookdale*.

³⁹⁶ Worster, “Vulnerable Earth,” 14. For more information on war as an environmental issue, see Simmons, *Global Environmental History*.

natural world seems outnumbered when “troops, / The dusk artificers with brazen throats, / Swarm on thy cliffs” (*CD*, 30–32). Not only has industrialization “invaded” the dale, but, now, even the mills fight, or “bicker,” among one another (*CD*, 25). Seward’s poem gives voice to nature’s language, but just as war drowns out the sounds of nature, so too does industrialization.³⁹⁷ The “rattling forges,” “hammer’s din,” and “hoarse, rude throats” have silenced “the wild woodland choir” (*CD*, 109, 110, and 112). In *To Colebrooke Dale*, woods and streams now “hear the toiling barge / And the swart Cyclops ever-clanging forge” (*TCD*, 2–6); Seward writes that their “rude yell / Drowns the wild woodland song” (*TCD* 15–16).

For Seward, not only the iron mills, but also the technologies they employ silence nature. Prior to 1700, the only sources of power available were wind, water, and animal. Mills relied upon water or wind to run their machinery and horse power was used to transport goods. Iron mills proved no exception initially. Iron had been discovered long before the eighteenth century; however, the methods used in creating wrought iron had hardly evolved. To create cast iron, iron ore was heated in a small charcoal fire; however, this process took a lot of time and produced very little usable iron. In order to be more efficient, mills began to use artificial wind, created by bellows, to make the fire hotter and burn more quickly. As with the previous technique, though, this one also had its problems; if the burning was not monitored closely, the iron could become spongy and, therefore, would be unusable. The use of artificial wind power did improve the function of iron mills, so much so that individuals began to build furnaces designed especially to withstand the heat. Furthermore, to ensure that the bellows would work

³⁹⁷ See my discussion of Helen Maria Williams’s *Peru* in Chapter One. For a discussion of “nature’s language,” see Christopher Manes, “Nature and Silence,” in *Ecocriticism Reader*, 15–29.

effectively all the time, humans, who used to operate the bellows, were replaced by water power that would turn a shaft in a water wheel that would create pressure on the bellows and force air into the bottom of the fire. Before 1700, this method—using charcoal to heat iron ore in a blast furnace (also known as smelting)—was used to create cast iron. While charcoal had always been used to smelt iron ore, it was not the ideal fuel because there was never enough of it since wood was in short supply.³⁹⁸

In 1709, Abraham Darby changed the iron industry forever when he discovered a method to smelt iron ore using coke, which was produced by burning coal in the open air. While Darby's discovery certainly "improved" the iron industry, it also revealed problems with the industry's technology. Using charcoal had enabled the industry's reliance on water power because it was a limited resource; there would always be a period when the mills had to be shut down to find more charcoal just as there would be periods of drought or cold weather that would limit the supply of water necessary to work the water wheel. With the introduction of coal, however, the mills could operate all the time, so a new source of power was needed to run them. In 1712, Thomas Newcomen invented the first steam engine, which not only allowed miners to go deeper to retrieve more coal and iron ore but also offered an alternative to water power. Nearly fifty years later, James Watt improved upon Newcomen's design by developing a condenser; once the steam engine's cylinder was full of steam, it would be allowed to escape to the condenser, via a valve, where it could turn back to water. Watt's steam engine not only advanced the iron industry, but it also advanced other industries, including the textile

³⁹⁸ For a discussion on the many uses of wood before and during the eighteenth century, see Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 52–79; Simmons, *Environmental History*, 140; Vialls, *Coalbrookdale*, 7 and 12.

industry because the cylinder could remain hot so it could continuously turn more water into steam.³⁹⁹

In her poem, Seward calls attention to Watt's steam engine as well as Watt himself, referring to him and other members of the Lunar Society as the "fam'd Triumvirate" (CD, 59).⁴⁰⁰ Seward describes the steam engine as a "vast engine" with "heavy and huge" arms that "extend" on the "soft-seeming breath" of the steam (CD, 54–56).⁴⁰¹ Although the transformation from water to steam is not as dramatic as Coalbrookdale's transformation from a "scene of superfluous grace" to one of "wasted bloom," Seward emphasizes how industrialization and the technologies that make it possible are overwhelming (CD, 1). In the same way industrialization "invades" the "soft" dale the steam engine "extends" on the "soft" steam (CD, 7–8, 55). Once the engine has converted the water to steam, "it leaves them soon, with clanging roar" in the same way the dale was left with the sounds of the "pond'rous engines clang" (CD, 23). Here, just as the coal and iron industry, in general, transform the dale, so too does the steam engine transform water, if only for a short period of time.

Structurally, Bannerman organizes her poem fairly chronologically, so it makes sense for her to begin her critique with the Spanish, who first colonized the Americas in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In *The Genii*, Bannerman critiques the Spanish Empire's mining of silver in Mount Potosi, located in present day Bolivia, which

³⁹⁹ See Vialls, *Coalbrookdale*, 14–21.

⁴⁰⁰ The other people Seward refers to in this passage are James Keir and Matthew Bolton. For information on their contribution to Britain's industrial revolution, see Backscheider and Ingrassia, *British Women Poets*, 583 and Uglow, *Lunar Men*.

⁴⁰¹ In "Pond'rous Engines," Setzer argues that Seward views the steam engine as "an object of fascination rather than a source of horror" (76). I contend, however, that her description of the engine brings it to life and it resembles, in many ways, the "swart Cyclops" (5) she describes in *To Colebrook Dale*.

many historians argue established world trade.⁴⁰² Almost a century before the Spanish conquistadors' arrival, Incans had discovered and mined for silver in Mount Potosi; however, they ceased mining when, as legend states, they heard a voice tell them that the silver was not meant for them.⁴⁰³ In *The Genii*, Bannerman describes the genii's intentional creation of "Potosi's silver-beaten throne" (*Genii*, 76):

You fill'd Potosi's silver-beaten throne:
From their dark channels, in refulgent pride,
Unfading light the blazing gems supplied;
Then slept your vengeance; every breath was still;
No earthquakes thunder'd your relentless will;
Till thirst of gain allur'd the spoiler's feet,
To stain the luster of your favourite feat. (*Genii*, 76–78 and 81–84)

The genii created the mine—"from cumb'ring clay the precious ore refine, / To form the treasures of the dreary mine," and the gems' "unfading light" guide the Spanish into the mine (*Genii*, 71–72). Although the silver in the mines had been exploited by the Incans prior to the arrival of the Spanish, once they arrive with their "loud axe," the Spanish disrupt and destroy the mines at an unprecedented rate (*Genii*, 79 and 85). Spain's actions in the Americas, primarily their mining of gold and silver, have "stain[ed] the luster" of the mines. The genii in Bannerman's poem wait for the Spanish to destroy their creation, so they have a reason to destroy the Spanish. Bannerman describes the genii as Spain's "tremendous and un pitying host" because they use humans' greed against them (*Genii*, 73). By filling Potosi with silver, the genii become responsible for leading "death and slaughter to the western coast" (*Genii*, 74). Bannerman's description,

⁴⁰² See Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 201–21 and Alejandra Irigoin, "The End of a Silver Era: The Consequences of a Breakdown of the Spanish Peso Standard in China and the United States, 1780s–1850s," *Journal of World History* 20, no. 2 (June 2009): 207–43.

⁴⁰³ See Lewis Hanke, "The Imperial City of Potosi, Boomtown Square," in *People and Issues in Latin American History: From Independence to the Present, Sources and Interpretations*, ed. Louis Lewis Hanke and Jane M. Rausch (New York: M. Weiner Publishers, 1990), 307–16.

however, makes it clear that were it not for Spain's "thirst for gain," the mines would not have "yield[ed] a grave" (*Genii*, 94). Throughout the rest of the poem, Bannerman shows that the destruction empires have caused on the earth have forced the genii to transform it from a "green earth" to a "general tomb" (*Genii*, 112).

Global Imperial Economies: "Conquests yet to come"

In both poems, Seward and Bannerman critique the impact global economies have on the earth. In Seward's poems, she focuses on the rise of industrialization and its relationship with commercialization; closely related, Bannerman's poem focuses on the role imperialism plays in the creation of global economies. While Seward's poem focuses primarily on a local environment, detailing the rise of industrialization in one particular part of Britain, in both *To Colebrook Dale* and *Colebrook Dale*, she acknowledges the global impact of industrialization. She ends *To Colebrook Dale* with a picture of the devastating impact industrialization will have throughout the world: "while o'er the globe / To spread thy stores metallic this rude yell / drowns the wild woodland song, and breaks the poet's spell" (*TCD*, 13–14). Here, Seward shows how the destruction industrialization has caused in the dale will spread throughout the world. In *Colebrook Dale*, Seward implicates other countries in the destruction when she writes about the products Britain receives in exchange for its iron products:

Ah! what avails it to the poet's sense,
That the large stores of thy metallic veins
Gleam over Europe; transatlantic shores
Illumine wide;—are chang'd in either Ind
For all they boast, hot Ceylon's breathing spice;
Peruvian gums; Brazillia's golden ore;
And odorous gums, which Persia's white-rob'd seer,
With warbled orisons, on Ganges' brink,
Kindles, when first his MITHRA's living ray
Purples the Orient. (CD, 34–43)

In this passage, Seward acknowledges Britain's trade with other nations and highlights the wealth that comes from Coalbrookdale's devastation; the dale is "thick" with "sulphureous smoke" while the rest of Europe "gleam[s]" because of "the large store of [Britain's] metallic veins." Seward's description suggests that only Britain's environment is exploited; however, the wealth comes at a cost not only to Britain's environment but also to its colonies' environments.⁴⁰⁴ In the eighteenth century, all the countries mentioned in this passage experienced their own environmental problems. According to William Beinart and Lotte Hughes in the introduction to *Environment and Empire*, "networks of trade and production intensified the human exploitation of nature" and the "environmental processes and technological changes in Britain impacted on the rest of the Empire."⁴⁰⁵ In order to make sure that Britons could have access to "objects of desire," including tea, sugar, and spices, Britain deforested distant lands.⁴⁰⁶ For instance, in the mid-eighteenth century Britain cleared a large amount of forest in India in order to have crop land for tea, coffee and rubber plantations.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ In "Pond'rous Engines," Setzer writes that in this passage Seward suggests that "Colebrook Dale has been not only violated but also prostituted in exchange for foreign luxuries" (74).

⁴⁰⁵ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 3

⁴⁰⁶ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 10.

⁴⁰⁷ See Simmons, *Global Environmental History*, 125.

In *The Genii*, Bannerman, unlike Seward, primarily focuses on the global impact of imperialism. She details the various consequences of imperial expansion throughout history in order to emphasize a truth about imperialism: it affects both the natural world and humans. Many of Bannerman's examples can be linked to slavery because, for her, slavery encompasses both the environment and humans. Taking the reader back to the sixteenth century, Bannerman criticizes Spanish mining in South America because it not only damages the natural world, but also inflicts diseases upon the mine workers, who were indigenous people the Spanish appropriated as slaves. The "blasts" in the mines have "pestilential breath" (*Genii*, 91). Here, Bannerman's description of the act of mining as "pestilential" relates it to diseases and death; indeed, mining has always been a dangerous business because gasses—some of which cause asphyxiation while others ignite easily—can get trapped within the mine. Christine Vialls writes that "the health of most miners was permanently damaged by the time they were fifty because of the damp and bad air in the mines."⁴⁰⁸

Bannerman also discusses pearl diving and the tragic death the pearl diver faces. Like mining which began to expand in the fifteenth century and used slave labor, pearl diving also has roots in the fifteenth century and eventually came to be a trade that only employed slaves. Also like mining, pearl diving had inherent dangers associated with it; often, divers were killed by sharks before they could return to the surface. Bannerman's poem portrays such an event:

⁴⁰⁸ Vialls, *Coalbrookdale*, 26.

Your wat'ry reign no wanderer annoys,
Nor dares your deep retreats, or gloomy joys,
Save the poor Negro, on his dangerous way,
Through the deep caverns of Panama's bay,
While the black billows thro' their fissures swell,
From fractur'd rocks to wrest the pearly shell.

Your jealous eyes, tremendous rulers! spy
The fated victim you have doom'd to die.
Thus when, all fainting with the tedious spoil,
His weak frame loaded with the sever'd spoil,
He springs on high the surface to regain,
Repair his sinking strength, and breathe again;
From some wide gulf, that pours the sweeping storm,
The furious shark uprears his scaly form,
In awful hunger, rolls his flaming eyes;
The luckless sufferer turns, and shrieks, and dies. (*Genii*, 299–304
and 307–16)

Here, Bannerman offers an historical, albeit fictional, account of a pearl diver's life and death. Initially, natives dived for pearls voluntarily because they could use them to barter for European goods; however, by the sixteenth century, native slaves were forced to dive for pearls.⁴⁰⁹ This passage shows the intense labor a pearl diver was forced to undergo; his most basic bodily function, breathing, was at the will of his master. Although Bannerman attributes the diver's death to the genii, who "doom'd" the "fated victim," it is clear in this passage and from Bannerman's footnote to it, which gives a brief history of the Spanish Empire's pearl diving expeditions in the Bay of Panama, that the Spanish "doom'd" the "poor Negro" to die when they forced him to "sever" the pearl from its

⁴⁰⁹ Aldemaro Romero, Susanna Chilbert, and M. G. Eisenhart, "Cubagua's Pearl-Oyster Beds: The First Depletion of a Natural Resource Caused by Europeans in the American Continent," *Journal of Political Ecology* 6 (1999): 60 and 62. For more information on pearl diving, see Kevin Dawson, "Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1327–55 and Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Freedom and Oppression of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Caribbean," *American Sociological Review*. 59, no. 6 (Dec. 1994): 911–29.

natural habitat in order to gain wealth. Interestingly, pearls are believed to be the first “case of natural resource depletion” by European empires in the Americas.⁴¹⁰

Bannerman does not just implicate the Spanish Empire in her poem; the genii also travel to Africa, where they witness an encounter between a lion and a “wild troop” of men. Encounters between man and beast in Africa were common by the eighteenth century because many European empires, including Spain, relied upon African slaves to support their other colonies.⁴¹¹ The British were “regular participants” in the slave trade by 1650, and just twenty years later, they had become the major shipper of slaves.⁴¹² Furthermore, after the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which ended the Spanish War of Succession and awarded the *Asiento*, or “monopoly right to sell slaves to Spanish America,” to the British, the “slave trade was substantially altered.”⁴¹³ Not only did the British supply “large numbers of slaves direct to Spanish America in the two decades after the signing of the Asiento Treaty with Spain in 1713,” it appears that “in the one-and-a-half centuries before 1807 the British shipped as many slaves to America as all other slave-carrying nations put together.”⁴¹⁴ Despite their role in the African slave trade, the British did not colonize parts of Africa until 1806, a move Bannerman anticipates in her poem:⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Romero, Chilbert, and Eisenhart, “Cubagua’s Pearl Oyster Beds,” 57.

⁴¹¹ In *Environment and Empire*, Beinart and Hughes estimate that “11–12 million Africans were transported to the Americas in a period of over four centuries from 1450” (23).

⁴¹² David Richardson, “The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660–1807,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 2:440.

⁴¹³ Richard B. Sheridan, “The Formation of Caribbean Plantation Society, 1689–1748,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 2:410.

⁴¹⁴ Richardson, “British Empire and Atlantic Slave Trade,” 2:458 and 2:440, respectively.

⁴¹⁵ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 60 and 63.

When a wild troop his lonely den surround,
With shining javelins, pointed to the ground.
Sullen he comes, and, to their gleaming arms,
Shakes his long main, unconscious of alarms;
With frightful roarings, and indignant ire,
While his eyes sparkle, like consuming fire;
On the proud leader of the band he flies,
And, in his mighty grasp, the victim dies. (*Genii*, 213–20)

Eventually, the men enact their revenge, killing the lion “with frantic fury” (*Genii*, 221).

Although African wildlife was not a major colonial export, the “imperial markets rapidly transformed the nature of hunting by indigenous societies.” Africans would hunt in order to secure settlement and “as a way of making money to invest in land and livestock.” For the British and other empires, Africa provided a place for individuals to seek “hunting adventures” because “wildlife were free goods, not owned by anyone.”⁴¹⁶ In this passage, Bannerman portrays the lion as innocent. He is “unconscious of alarms,” perhaps because the men deceptively point their javelins to the ground; however, the lion still behaves as a wild animal and kills the leader of the group. Yet, the lion’s death becomes more tragic as Bannerman describes the troop’s victory celebration: “With shouts victorious bear their glory home, / And wave th’ impurpl’d spear, o’er conquests yet to come” (*Genii*, 227–28). Because Bannerman sets this passage in Gambia, which is on the western coast of Africa, the conquest that is “yet to come” is the slave trade; by the time Bannerman publishes her poem in 1800, the western coast of Africa has already become a major British port for their involvement in the slave trade. Bannerman anticipates the rise of the British empire in Africa through her portrayal of hunters. According to Harriet Ritvo, by the nineteenth century, “the hunter emerged as both the

⁴¹⁶ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 62–64.

ideal and definitive type of the empire builder.”⁴¹⁷ Indeed, Bannerman’s description of the men at the end of this passage proves that their actions toward the lion are only the beginning, and not surprisingly, “lions were often the first to be killed off in any area of settlement because they were an immediate danger to people, horses, and livestock”; in other words, lions needed to be killed, so the work of empire building could begin.⁴¹⁸ The “impurpl’d spear” at the end of this passage serves two purposes: it displays the violence it requires to conquer and the color purple that covers the spear describes the lion’s blood but is also the color of royalty, so the “impurpl’d spear” could represent empire and show that building an empire always comes at a cost.

The Power of the Natural World: “the mountain-waves returning force”

Throughout her poem, Bannerman shows the power of the natural world. Describing the Lima earthquake, Bannerman writes that “such was the dreadful scene, when fell the blow / That laid the glitt’ring pride of Lima low” (*Genii*, 107–8). During the earthquake, the ocean, with its “mountain-wave’s returning force / whelm spires and temples in its sweeping course” (*Genii*, 113–14). According to Bannerman’s poem and historical accounts of the earthquake, the Lima earthquake destroyed almost everyone when “the earth open’d, for a general tomb” (*Genii*, 112). Bannerman’s description of the earthquake suggests that man is no match for the power of the natural world.

The Lima earthquake passage allows Bannerman to address the power of the natural world, but it also gives her an opportunity to show how the genii, who also caused earlier earthquakes, are the reason for the “earth’s decay” (*Genii*, 132). In this section of

⁴¹⁷ Harriet Ritvo, *Animal Estate: The English and other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 254–55.

⁴¹⁸ Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, 71.

the poem, Bannerman cites two sources: *A True and Particular History of Earthquakes* (1748) and Thomas Day's instructional text, *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1787). In the former, the author writes that "an extraordinary Providence alone can be ascrib'd the Preservation of so many Lives."⁴¹⁹ In *The Genii*, Bannerman also acknowledges "the hand benign" as the reason at least one life was saved. Bannerman has made it clear that the genii are to blame for the earthquake and its subsequent devastation, and she makes it equally clear that they are not the ones who have helped to rescue people. Bannerman uses Day's work to critique the genii's disregard for human life. Unlike "the benign hand" that helped to save lives during the Lima earthquake, Bannerman questions whether the genii are capable of such mercy: "Has ever pity view'd your starting tear, / Where faithful friendship wept on Virtue's bier" (*Genii*, 133–34). Day's work provides a parallel to Bannerman's poem. While Tommy, the main character in Day's text, transforms from a spoiled son of a slave owner to a virtuous citizen who learns the value of being kind so that he may contribute to the good of the world, the genii in Bannerman's poem exist "unchanging" while the earth and its people suffer, and their lack of feeling ultimately will lead to their downfall (*Genii*, 131).

In *The Genii*, Bannerman veils her critique of empire by blaming, on the surface, the genii for the destruction of the earth; however, in Seward's Colebrook Dale poems, she places the blame directly on proponents of progress. In her Colebrook Dale poems, Seward exhibits her awareness of the environment, writing poems that criticize, generally, the Lunar Society's ideals, and more specifically, Darwin himself. While Darwin "celebrates the wonders of modern commerce and industry," and his poetry

⁴¹⁹ Philotheus, *A True and Particular History of Earthquakes. Containing a relation of that dreadful earthquake which happen'd at Lima and Callao, in Peru . . .* (London: printed for the author, 1748), 31.

“suggest[s] a progressive, commercial Britain that celebrated its natural wonders as well as manufacturing achievements,” Seward’s poems “celebrate the wonders of” nature and do more than “suggest” the dangers of “manufacturing achievements”; they warn against them.⁴²⁰ In her biography of Seward, Margaret Ashmun writes that “the scenic beauties of her environment stirred her to raptures,” but so too did the progressive, industrial disruptions.⁴²¹ Indeed, the latter is what inspired Seward to write *To Colebrook Dale* and *Colebrook Dale*. For Seward, unlike Bannerman, the real problem with destroying the natural world lies in the fact that it is a source of inspiration for artists. The dale was “muse-devoted” before industrialization (*CD*, 46), but after industrialization takes over, it “disenchants,” even “breaks,” “the poet’s spell,” and “haunts poetic dreams” (*CD*, 113 and *TCD*, 14–16 and 3, respectively). If Britain continues to pursue industrialization in places like Coalbrookdale, Seward warns that soon there will be no inspirational scenes left for poets. Seward argues, instead, that if Britain must industrialize, it should do so in places like Sheffield and Wolverhampton where, because of their “unpoetic scenes,” “no Poet rov’d / To catch bright inspirations” (*CD*, 89 and 103–4).

A Lesson in Conservation: “Time shall be no more”

Both Anna Seward’s and Anne Bannerman’s poems show a world before and after the rise of industry. Once a country decides to pursue an empire of industry, the world is forever changed; however, both poets offer solutions to change the course of history. Their poems suggest a way to conserve what remains. At the beginning of her chapter on Seward, Bowerbank asks “what role the arts—whether music, painting,

⁴²⁰ Brewer, “Queen Muse of Britain,” 594 and 595–96.

⁴²¹ Ashmun, *Singing Swan*, 149.

drama, or poetry—play in serving the well-being of the environment and the life it sustains?” and how can “aesthetic feeling” help to prevent environmental destruction?⁴²²

The solution Seward presents in the Colebrook Dale poems suggests that even if an aesthetic feeling toward nature has not yet stopped the destruction, perhaps in the future it will, thereby allowing Britons to conserve what remains. At the end of her poem, Seward summarizes the impact of industrialization on Coalbrookdale; it was once the “destined rival of Tempean vales,” but now is a “gloomy Erebus” (CD, 115 and 114, respectively). To prevent such a devastating transformation from occurring in the future, Seward suggests we draw from scenes that are not beautiful like “sylvan Colebrook” (CD, 87). By conserving the beauty of places like Coalbrookdale, in the future Britain not only will have landscapes that inspire artists, but also “the song, / Once loud as sweet, of the wild woodland choir” will return (CD, 111–12).

Bannerman’s poem, like Seward’s, also offers a solution to the destructiveness of imperialism. Bannerman’s poem shows an apocalyptic conflict between the genii and God and his angels. While the genii are motivated by vengeance to destroy the world (and themselves), the conclusion of the poem, with its biblical overtones, suggests that the earth will endure after the genii’s last act. In the last stanza, the poem’s speaker questions whether the genii will continue on their ever destructive course. The genii never respond; instead, Bannerman alludes to the fact that they continue to destroy everything, including themselves, to the point that “Time shall be no more” (*Genii*, 406). Throughout the poem, the genii have responded to man’s destruction with their own destruction—they brought an earthquake after regaining the reign from Adam, converted the beauty of the mines in Potosi to a “grave,” “doom’d” a pearl diver, and brought a

⁴²² Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 161.

whirlpool that killed the “mighty monarch of the northern sea” (*Genii*, 94 and 255, respectively).⁴²³ The genii’s actions have always been destructive, but throughout the poem, God and his spirits have helped to counteract some of the genii’s actions. For instance, when the genii fail to feel pity for the earthquake’s victims, the benignant spirits descend, and “let [their] aid the sinking spirits raise / To higher objects, and sublimer days” (*Genii*, 157–58). Additionally, when the genii torment the mariner by stranding him on his ship in dead seas, the spirits of the air “wave [their] dewy wings” as their “power prevails” (*Genii*, 282 and 283, respectively).

The conflict between the genii and God and his spirits culminates near the end of the poem. The speaker reveals that the genii were present when God “bade the wide vengeance of the Deluge pour” (*Genii*, 20). Bannerman cites part of Genesis as the source for this passage; in doing so, the “deluge” refers to the flood God commanded because humans were not following his law. The flood represented both a punishment and an opportunity. God bade a “deluge,” but also a second chance. As a witness, the genii were “not unappal’d,” which suggests they accepted God’s judgment but also emphasizes their lack of feeling. More importantly though, the genii “saw the earth emerge, the hills return, / Like life reviving from the recent urn” (*Genii*, 335–36). Bannerman describes the earth after the flood as an urn, a receptacle for ashes. Not surprisingly at the end of *The Genii*, Bannerman writes that fire will destroy everything that remains.

⁴²³ For information on Britain’s role in the whaling industry, see Glyndwr Williams, “The Pacific: Exploration and Exploitation,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 2:552–75. Williams writes about the Act for “The Encouragement of the Southern Whale Fishery,” which was passed in 1786. This act “marked the beginning of the British fishery in the southern oceans” (567).

Earlier in the poem, however, Bannerman suggests that some destruction does not have to be permanent. After the Lima earthquake, Bannerman writes,

—Say, tho' the boast of human pride is o'er,
And hope extinguish'd, to revive no more,
That life eternal shall repair the woe,
And soothe the memory of the scenes below. (*Genii*, 165–68)

Although these lines specifically convey that the belief in eternal life will ease one's pain, more generally, they suggest that even after everything seems to be destroyed, there is still hope that the damage can be repaired. In the last lines of *The Genii*, Bannerman describes how the genii's actions have caused all the world's "glories" to "decay," yet Bannerman's last lines reveal that the genii's destruction is an opportunity (*Genii*, 402):

—But, when the skies shall glow, in living fire,
Your powers, your terrors, and your spells expire;
Your reign is finish'd, when from shore to shore,
The seraph's trump reveals, that Time shall be no more. (*Genii*, 403–6)

Bannerman's use of the conjunction "but" emphasizes that once the genii's destruction is complete, so too is their reign. The genii are no longer a threat "from shore to shore," an image that reminds the readers of the power they sought across the globe. Additionally, the poem's last line reveals that God and his creation will eventually succeed since the "seraph's trump reveals, that Time shall be no more." At first glance, this last line seems to indicate the end of the world, but really it serves to reinforce the end of the genii's reign on earth. With the genii, who represented the desire to "rule supreme" over the environment and its people, "the boast of human pride is o'er," and the earth will have the opportunity to "spread" its beauty once again (*Genii*, 54, 165, and 20).

Anna Seward's Colebrook Dale poems and Anne Bannerman's *The Genii* urge Britain to begin to conserve what they still have. Seward focuses on a local environment

in order to suggest that Britain's work begins at home. Bannerman focuses on the global environment not only to show the range of Britain's empire, but also to emphasize how much of the world there is to save. In the next chapter, I will continue to examine how modern civilization has plundered landscapes in Anna Seward's *The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape* and Charlotte Smith's *Beachy Head*.

Chapter Four

“Time can ne’er restore”: Improvement Questioned in Anna Seward’s *The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape* (1790) and Charlotte Smith’s *Beachy Head* (1807)

Up until this point, with the exception of Seward’s Colebrook Dale poems, I have examined how women poets use their poetry to critique the effect Britain’s empire has on distant lands. In this chapter, I will turn my attention to the effects Britain’s imperial pursuits have on Britain’s landscapes. As Britain expanded its empire, it also expanded what was possible for the British people. Because of their commercial enterprises, during the eighteenth century, the average annual income of Britain’s citizens increased.⁴²⁴ The increase in Britain’s wealth not only meant that there were more luxuries available, but also that more people had access to these luxuries. In this way, by the final decades of the eighteenth century, Britain’s imperial world was finally integrated into “the fabric of British national culture.”⁴²⁵ Britons’ access to these luxuries helped to transform the way they lived, but most important for this chapter is the way in which these luxuries changed the way Britons interacted with the land.

As more and more British citizens became wealthy, they used their money to transform their landscapes. In “Culture, Nature, Nation,” John Brewer cites urbanization

⁴²⁴ See Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape*, 17.

⁴²⁵ Tillman W. Nechtman, “A Jewel in the Crown? Indian Wealth in Domestic Britain in the Late Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 71–72. For more information on the debate surrounding luxury in the eighteenth century, see Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires, and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*; Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*.

and advances in agriculture among other factors as the effects of this increased wealth that “irrevocably transformed the relationship among the British, nature and their landscape.”⁴²⁶ In *The Task*, published in 1785, William Cowper addresses the role urbanization played in changing the countryside:

The town has ting’d the country; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal’s robe,
The worse for what it soils.⁴²⁷

Here, Cowper’s language initially suggests that the town has only slightly affected the country because it has only “ting’d” the countryside; however, the “stain” the town leaves behind reveals that it will have a lasting effect on this place. For Cowper and others, the “stain” is a result of the so-called improvements occurring throughout the century, improvements that not only transformed rural society but also the landscape.⁴²⁸

Enclosure, one such improvement, definitely transformed rural society because it forced some people from their homes in the rural countryside to the city; as enclosure laws reclaimed the commons and put them under the control of one owner, individuals who used to rely on the common fields to survive could no longer make a living. William Cronon has written that the farm was “the first and most important battlefield in the long war against wild nature,” and in some ways, his statement is true in the eighteenth century.⁴²⁹ The developments in agriculture, including enclosure and new agricultural techniques, helped to ensure that individuals would interact differently with the land in the future.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Brewer, “Culture, Nature and Nation,” 621.

⁴²⁷ Cowper, “Winter Evening,” quotation p. 165.

⁴²⁸ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 432.

⁴²⁹ Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” 83.

⁴³⁰ For more information on enclosure, see Brewer, “Culture, Nature and Nation,” 615–61; Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*; Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England*; Thirsk, “Common Fields,” 3–25; Turner, *Enclosures in Britain* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1984).

Parliamentary enclosure laws reinforced the value of contained spaces, and their impact can be seen in other improvements—all of which proved that “it was a moral imperative for humans to improve, cultivate and use nature”—throughout the century.⁴³¹ Landscape design, influenced by enclosure, became one way humans could exert control over their landscapes.⁴³² According to Brewer, “the country house, the landscaped park and home farm were the visible embodiment and celebration of ‘improvement,’ further instances of the landed proprietor’s reworking and transformation of nature, of his power to command the landscape.” Oftentimes, the money individuals used to remodel houses and land came from fortunes they made through their participation in commerce and war. In this way, “the spoils of battle,” which transformed land abroad, also helped to transform land at home in Britain.⁴³³

Just as women criticized Britain’s destruction of the environment abroad and called for conservation at home, women writers tried through their writing to “free landscapes from the male obsession with manipulating nature for the sake of the prospect.”⁴³⁴ In this chapter I will examine Anna Seward’s *The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape* (1790) and Charlotte Smith’s *Beachy Head* (1807). Although Seward constantly criticized Smith’s poetry by calling it unoriginal and accused Smith of

⁴³¹ Donna Coffey, “Protecting the Botanic Garden: Seward, Darwin, and Coalbrookdale,” *Women’s Studies* 31, no. 2 (2002): 146.

⁴³² See Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*. Crawford discusses that writers of architectural pattern books emphasized containment in their designs of homes and the surrounding lands (53).

⁴³³ Brewer, “Culture, Nature, Nation,” 627. Also see Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). In this book, Casid explores the ways in which the new landscaping techniques of the eighteenth century were products of imperialism and, as such, were ways to possess land abroad and in Britain.

⁴³⁴ Judith W. Page, “Reforming Honeysuckles: Hannah More’s *Cæleb in Search of a Wife* and the Politics of Women’s Gardens,” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 55 (2006): 113.

plagiarism, their poems share common themes regarding the use of the natural world.⁴³⁵ In *The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape and Beachy Head*, Seward and Smith decry the damage done to nature by modern civilization and condemn improvement as a destructive force. In *The Lake* Seward focuses on a landscape that has been destroyed in order to keep up with the taste for improvement, while in *Beachy Head*, Smith focuses on a physical place, Beachy Head, which has survived throughout history, but the people who once lived there have a changed relationship with the land. Both poems show that improvement has destroyed the natural world and humans' relationship to it. In *The Lake*, Seward focuses her critique on the physical damage improvement causes while in *Beachy Head*, Smith focuses on how the introduction of luxuries—the improvements in people's lives—destroys individuals' relationship with the land. Read together, *The Lake* and *Beachy Head* reveal the end of an era; by the end of the eighteenth century, humans' relationships with the natural world have been permanently changed. The title of Smith's poem is telling because the word "beachy," as many scholars have pointed out, means the end of a journey. For Smith, *Beachy Head* literally was the end of her journey since she died prior to its publication, but her poem as well as Seward's marks the end of something else, too; in their poetry, Seward and Smith make clear that the relationship Britons once had with their land has also ended.

Anna Seward's poetry often expresses her love of place, but her relationships with Erasmus Darwin and Humphrey Repton reinforced that a place, when improved, often

⁴³⁵ Anna Seward to Miss Weston, Lichfield, 20 July 1786, in *Letters*, 2:163. For more information on Seward's criticism of Smith, see John M. Anderson, "Beachy Head: The Romantic Fragment Poem as Mosaic," in *Forging Connections: Women's Poetry from Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor, Felicity Nussbaum, and John F. S. Post (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2002): 119–46; Stuart Curran, "Introduction," in *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, xix–xxix; and Judith Phillips Stanton, *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

loses its sentimental value and simply becomes a piece of property.⁴³⁶ In *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin* (1804), Seward reveals the difference she sees between place and property when she writes about Darwin's various estates. Seward describes an estate Darwin purchased near Lichfield in 1777:

[It was] a little, wild, umbrageous valley, a mile from Lichfield, amongst the only rocks which neighbor that city so nearly. It was irriguous from various springs, and swampy from their plentitude. A mossy fountain, of the purest and coldest water imaginable, had, near a century back, induced the inhabitants of Lichfield to build a cold bath in the bosom of the vale. *That*, till the doctor took it into his possession, was the only mark of human industry which could be found in the tangled and sequestered scene.⁴³⁷

Seward's description of Darwin's estate focuses on its "wild" qualities; these qualities are precisely why Seward likes it. Not only is it physically set apart from society, but also, excepting the bath, it is free of "human industry." The "tangled and sequestered scene" still elicits Seward's praise even after "the doctor took it into his possession" and "cultivated this spot." Darwin altered the estate by widening "the brook into small lakes, that mirrored the valley," and by lining the brook and lakes with "trees of various growths" and "various classes of plants."⁴³⁸ For Seward, these changes did not remove the scene's wild qualities; it was still a place to which she could retreat. Indeed, she writes that Darwin's changes allowed "Paradise [to be] open'd in the wild."⁴³⁹

An estate Darwin purchased in 1758, however, revealed how humans could transform a place so that it became a piece of property. When Darwin purchased this

⁴³⁶ See Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*. Bowerbank discusses Seward's position as an environmental critic (178–80). Also, see the section titled "Humans and Nature: 'Those good green people'" in Chapter One; here, I discuss how Major John André's environmental views reflected Seward's.

⁴³⁷ Anna Seward, *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin, chiefly during his residence in Lichfield: with anecdotes of his friends and criticisms on his writing* (Philadelphia: Classic Press for the proprietors W. Poyntell, 1804), 125–26.

⁴³⁸ Seward, *Memoirs*, 126–27.

⁴³⁹ Seward, *Memoirs*, 126.

estate, it was near Beacon Street, but as Seward writes, it “had no street annoyance, being separated from it by a narrow, deep, dingle” that was “overgrown with briars and knot grass.”⁴⁴⁰ Just as he would his later estate, Darwin altered this estate by “clearing the bottom land, making a lawn and a terrace on the bank, and planting a screen of lilacs and rose bushes to block the intrusion of the summer sun and the glances of passersby.” In *Memoirs*, Seward approves of Darwin’s changes; however, when a new owner takes control of Darwin’s estate, Seward realizes that Darwin’s “investment in good taste could not be sustained over time in a society that treats place as mere property.”⁴⁴¹ Seward defines place differently from property; for Seward, a place has memories attached to it and because of this, one should attempt to protect it from irreversible changes. When a place is treated as property, those memories are ignored, and it is no longer protected from permanent change; instead, one encourages and promotes improvements, which is exactly what the new owner of Darwin’s estate did. According to Seward, the new owner “was bringing down the neighborhood by making a circular coach road, thus sacrificing beauty to convenience.” In *Memoirs*, Seward writes that the new owner “has destroyed the verdure and plantations of that dell,” which proves that “alteration and improvement are not always synonymous [*sic*] terms.”⁴⁴²

Anna Seward’s poetry and letters to Humphrey Repton further express her sentiment that alteration is not always the same as improvement. By the end of the eighteenth century, Humphrey Repton was considered the “leading landscape designer of

⁴⁴⁰ Seward, *Memoirs*, 14.

⁴⁴¹ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 175.

⁴⁴² Seward, *Memoirs*, 15–16. For other instances where Seward expresses her disapproval of improvement, see Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 178–79.

his generation in England.”⁴⁴³ He began to work as a landscape designer in 1788, five years after the death of Lancelot “Capability” Brown, who was England’s first well-known designer. Unlike Brown, however, who felt the best way to spotlight a house was to clear the plants surrounding it, Repton preferred to have a more smooth transition between a house and its grounds, so he often planted various flowers and shrubs around it that would lead to an open park.⁴⁴⁴ As his signature, Repton would draw the alterations prior to executing them. It was his skill as an artist that Seward praises in *To Humphrey Repton, Esq.* In this poem, Seward writes that his art work “brings back, thro’ every season, as it veers, / Some striking image of the vanish’d years.”⁴⁴⁵ In this passage, Seward praises Repton because he is able to see the landscape as a place and not property. Indeed, Repton did not approve of changes to the land where “money supersedes every other consideration.”⁴⁴⁶ Repton’s disapproval of improvement that considered only money is similar to Seward’s view. In a letter to Repton, Seward praises her friend Mrs. Mompessan’s estate:

Mrs. Mompessan, whose guest I am now, has sylvan taste and industry. In early youth, she became mistress of this, the estate of her ancestors, who certainly dreamt of nothing less than scenic beauty. She found massy stone walls dividing trim gardens;—a straight brook and crowded orchards [. . .] In the place of those ponderous and gloomy walls, she has winding shrubbery; and where flowers were ranged, in ‘curious knots,’ and box borders, we rove amid thickets of roses, lilachs, and woodbines.

Seward continues to describe Mrs. Mompessan’s estate as one where the landscape is a part of the house rather than separate from it. Nature surrounds the estate, and while

⁴⁴³ Richard Quaintance, “Humphry Repton, ‘any Mr. Repton,’ and the ‘Improvement’ Metonym in Mansfield Park,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 27 (1998): 365.

⁴⁴⁴ For more on Humphrey Repton’s views of landscape design, see Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 82.

⁴⁴⁵ Anna Seward, “To Humphrey Repton, Esq.,” in *Poetical Works*, 3:64–66, quotation p. 64.

⁴⁴⁶ Quaintance, “Humphry Repton,” 370.

visiting, Seward can “rove amid thickets of roses, lilachs, and woodbines” as well as see “green” from the window where she writes her letter to Repton.⁴⁴⁷ For both Seward and Repton, one displays taste through landscape design by working with the natural world, not surmounting it. Both Seward and Repton disapprove of “opportunistic improvement” that clears the landscape of trees and flowers.⁴⁴⁸

In *The Lake*, Seward composes a poem centered on a grand estate and its impending destruction. Instead of offering a sustained look at the estate, Seward focuses on the owner and his desire to “improve” his estate. After a brief glimpse at the estate, Seward turns to a detailed description of Fashion, who will be responsible for transforming it. The rest of Seward’s poem focuses on the destruction Fashion causes by offering a picture of the estate’s grounds before and after the owner’s improvements. The poem ends when the Genius of the place wakes up and finds that the place he once loved has been obliterated; since the place he resided over is now gone, the genius flees the scene forever.

In the same way Seward’s relationship with certain people and places inform her poetry, so to do Charlotte Smith’s. Born on May 4, 1749, Charlotte Turner Smith grew up a privileged child, residing between her father’s London townhouse and his estates in Sussex. She received a good education, which included being instructed in art by George Smith, a noted landscape painter, and was encouraged to write from an early age. Her marriage to Benjamin Smith, however, just prior to her sixteenth birthday, would drastically change her life. While she was previously accustomed to a life of privilege,

⁴⁴⁷ Anna Seward to Humphrey Repton, Mansfield Woodhouse, 1 June 1791, in *Letters*, 3:62. In *Speaking for Nature*, Sylvia Bowerbank discusses Seward’s second visit to Mrs. Mompessan’s estate; this time, she disapproved of some of the changes for health reasons (183–84).

⁴⁴⁸ Quaintance, “Humphry Repton,” 370.

Smith was now married to a man who could not support himself or his family, despite the fact that he was the heir to a successful commercial enterprise since his father was a director of the East India Company. Because her husband lacked a keen business sense and was increasingly fiscally irresponsible, Smith began to assist her father-in-law with the business in order to support her growing family. Eventually, Smith's father-in-law relieved his son of all business ties, and Smith and her family moved to Lys Farm, where they lived for nine years. During this time, Smith's father-in-law established a will, which he hoped would ensure that his inheritance would go to his grandchildren; however, his will was so complicated that it wasn't until 1813, thirty-seven years after his death, that his estate was finally allotted to his grandchildren. Shortly after her father-in-law's death in 1776, Smith's husband was taken to debtor's prison; Smith continued to support her family but began to do so through writing. Writing not only helped her family survive, but it also helped Smith secure her children's social standing until they could receive their inheritance. While in prison with her husband, Smith published *Elegaic Sonnets* (1784) at her own expense; her risk paid off because by 1800, *Elegaic Sonnets* was in its ninth edition. Shortly after her husband's release from prison in 1784, Smith moved to France with her family to avoid creditors. By 1787, the family was again living in England, where Smith separated from her husband; however, because she did not obtain the proper papers to keep her earnings from her husband, Smith took up novel writing, a much more lucrative profession, to support her family. By the time of her death in 1806, Smith had published ten novels and numerous works of poetry.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁹ For biographical information on Charlotte Smith, see Sarah M. Zimmerman, "Smith, Charlotte," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Curran, "Introduction"; Lorraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998); Carrol L. Fry, *Charlotte Smith* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

Although Smith published more novels than books of poetry, she viewed herself as a poet first, and she used her poetry to express her feelings and knowledge about the natural world and to comment upon society.⁴⁵⁰ William Wordsworth once wrote that Smith's work expressed "true feelings for rural nature at a time when nature was not much regarded by English poets." Smith considered herself an "early worshipper at Nature's shrine," and oftentimes, her political sentiments were tied to her relationship with nature. In her biography of Smith, Sarah Zimmerman writes that Smith's poetry presents her as a "woman who suffered a fall into difficult circumstances not of her own making and found solace in her natural surroundings and in sympathizing with other sufferers."⁴⁵¹ In her later poetry, she uses her knowledge of natural history to teach lessons about the world.⁴⁵² For example, in *Rural Walks* (1795), the main character, Mrs. Woodfield, walks with her niece, who was raised in the city, and, amidst discussions of the natural world, teaches her about "humility, charity, fortitude, the abuse of riches, and the absurdity of fashion."⁴⁵³ These themes are also present in *Beachy Head*, which is perhaps the best example of Smith's use of the natural world to express her ideas about society. In *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, Ann B. Shteir writes that sections of *Beachy Head* "read like the verse notes of a naturalist," and Stuart Curran notes that this poem contains "so powerful an impulse to resolve the self into nature that no other poem

⁴⁵⁰ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 324.

⁴⁵¹ Zimmerman, "Smith, Charlotte," n.p.

⁴⁵² Smith had five of her poems, which was more than any other poet, represented in *Descriptive Poetry: Being a Selection from the Best Modern Authors: Principally Having Reference to Subjects in Natural History*. See Judith Pascoe, "Female Botanists and the Poetry of Charlotte Smith," in *Re-visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776–1837*, ed. Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 194.

⁴⁵³ Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 69.

of the period comes close to achieving this seemingly modern ecological approach to poetry.⁴⁵⁴

In *Beachy Head*, Smith explores the human and ecological history of the title's subject. Smith wrote the first part of *Beachy Head* in 1792, but it was published posthumously in 1807, one year after her death.⁴⁵⁵ Written in blank verse, *Beachy Head* begins with an apostrophe to the geological structure that bears the same name as the poem's title and refers to the place that Smith lived near most of her life.⁴⁵⁶ Throughout the poem's 731 lines, Smith explores how Beachy Head's inhabitants live on land and on sea. Although the poem relates the beauty of this particular area of South Downs, one of the major themes in the poem is that modern civilization, primarily the need for luxury, not only destroys nature but also individuals' relationships with the natural world. In this poem, Smith moves from describing a summer's day to looking at the specific history of Beachy Head. She charts the many invasions that have occurred or have been feared to occur on its landscape.⁴⁵⁷ Although Smith begins the poem with a macro history of Beachy Head, she eventually turns her focus to a micro history of the region, and for the

⁴⁵⁴ Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 70 and Curran, "Introduction," xxvii. For more information on Smith's knowledge of science, see Pascoe, "Female Botanists," 193–209. Pascoe cites the *Annual Register*, which wrote, upon Smith's death, that she was "well versed in the captivating science of Botany" (193).

⁴⁵⁵ For publication information on *Beachy Head*, see Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry*, 361; Theresa M. Kelley, "Romantic Histories: Charlotte Smith and *Beachy Head*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 59, no. 3 (December 2004): 281–314; Fry, *Charlotte Smith*, 30–31. Fry notes that Smith wanted *Beachy Head* to be the third volume in the tenth edition of *Elegaic Sonnets*. The publisher's advertisement for the poem suggests that *Beachy Head* is incomplete. See "Advertisement," in Curran, 215. In her biography of Smith, Lorraine Fletcher also discusses whether *Beachy Head* is complete (Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith*, 335).

⁴⁵⁶ Kelley, "Romantic Histories," 291. Also see Christopher Bode, "The Subject of Beachy Head," in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (Brookfield, VT: Pickering and Chatto, 2008): 57–69. In this article, Bode writes that Smith became "familiar with the landscape of South Downs and that of Beachy Head" as early as ten years old when her family moved to Bignor Park (62).

⁴⁵⁷ In the late eighteenth century, Britain feared an invasion by France, and Beachy Head became "a topography that by the 1790s invited unease and watchfulness" because it was where Britons thought the French would invade (Kelley, "Romantic Histories," 291–92).

rest of the poem she explores the “simple scenes of peace and industry” and the people who occupy them.⁴⁵⁸ *Beachy Head* ends with Smith focusing on two different wanderers, one who has lost his love and the other, a hermit, who has lived in a cave below Beachy Head for most of his life. Often in her poetry, Smith uses the wanderer to comment upon society. In *Beachy Head*, the hermit, who “was feelingly alive to all that breath’d,” embodies the message of Smith’s poem. He was “disgusted with the world,” so he turned away from the society that destroyed an earlier way of life, and at the end of the poem, while saving a sailor, he dies and, similar to the Genius in Seward’s poem, “to some better region [flees] forever” (*Beachy Head*, 731).

Nature’s History: “mock[ing] the ravages of relentless time”

In *The Lake* and *Beachy Head*, the main subject of each poem and the nature surrounding it have a history. As Brewer writes, “for poets like Seward places embodied history as well as nature,” and this sentiment applies to *The Lake*.⁴⁵⁹ In this poem, Seward describes an ancient estate: “Long have its turrets braved the varying clime, / And mock’d the ravage of relentless time.”⁴⁶⁰ Here, Seward acknowledges that this home has survived despite the pressures of climate and time. By using the word “braved,” Seward honors this home and its history. Now, however, the owner “deplores” it and longs to improve it with Fashion’s help (*Lake*, 5). The owner hopes to replace the “grand, ancient, gothic” estate, which he views as an “uncongenial home,” with a “gay villa” (*Lake*, 1, 2, and 9). Composed in 1790, Seward’s description of the home

⁴⁵⁸ Charlotte Smith, *Beachy Head*, in *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, quotation p. 224, line 169. Hereafter, text references will refer to title and line numbers.

⁴⁵⁹ Brewer, ““Queen Muse of Britain,”” 582. Brewer writes that “the hermit’s cave, ruined abbey or derelict castle were as much a part of the British landscape” as they were also “work[s] of nature.”

⁴⁶⁰ Anna Seward, “The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape,” in *Poetical Works*, 3:34–38, quotation p. 34, lines 3–4. Hereafter, text references will refer to an abbreviated title and line numbers.

acknowledges developments in landscape architecture. Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century and extending to the early nineteenth century, a “comfort” movement occurred. In “From Luxury to Comfort and Back Again: Landscape Architecture and the Cottage in Britain and America,” John Crowley writes about how the word “comfort” in the eighteenth century was used “with increasing frequency to express [Britons] satisfaction and enjoyment with immediate physical circumstances.” Crowley further explains that the use of the word comfort “indicated a disposition to criticize traditional material culture and to improve it.”⁴⁶¹ When Seward writes that the house is “uncongenial,” she acknowledges the eighteenth century desire to be comfortable and, therefore, the desire to improve. To satisfy his desire, the estate’s owner in *The Lake* wishes that a “gay villa may supply its place, / Rise in Italian or in Gallic grace” (*Lake*, 9–10). At the time Seward writes her poem, villas had begun to be associated with cottages, which were seen as the solution for comfortable houses, because “their supposed lack of pretention implied their comfort.”⁴⁶²

Seward not only invests the home in *The Lake* with history, but, more importantly, she conveys the history of the landscape. Just as the house has survived, so too has the nature that surrounds the home. Prior to the owner’s improvements, the estate did not reflect modern landscape design. The property was surrounded by nature: oak trees, shrubs, “tangled grass,” and “a little vagrant brook” (*Lake*, 29 and 30). Seward’s description of the estate’s landscape as “tangled” implied that it did not offer a clear view of the property. The prospect view, as it was called, at times required the removal of

⁴⁶¹ John Crowley, “From Luxury to Comfort and Back Again: Landscape Architecture and the Cottage in Britain and America,” in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, 135.

⁴⁶² Crowley, “Luxury to Comfort,” 136 and 144. Before 1780, cottages were associated with poverty; however, after 1780, architectural publications began to associate cottages with comfort.

trees from properties.⁴⁶³ In *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700–1830*, Rachel Crawford discusses the conflicting opinions regarding prospects. By the late eighteenth century, the unimpeded landscape that had once symbolized imperial prospects now began to be viewed as “a symbol of tyranny and the vulgar taste of acquired wealth.”⁴⁶⁴ In her poem, Seward focuses on the latter opinion regarding the prospect view in her description of Fashion’s actions against the oak trees. In *The Lake*, Seward emphasizes the oak trees’ presence; they not only bring beauty to the property, but they also have a history that has “seen whole centuries roll away” (*Lake*, 70). Since the sixteenth century, oak trees had been a “symbol of strength.” In the seventeenth century, shortly after the Battle of Worcester, Charles II hid first in an oak tree in order to escape Parliamentary forces because he thought, if caught, they would behead him as they did his father Charles I. Charles II’s tactic to survive helped to make the oak tree a symbol of British royalty after the monarchy was restored. By the eighteenth century, when oak trees were used to help build ships for Britain’s Royal Navy, they had become an “emblem of the British people.”⁴⁶⁵ While Seward’s description of the oak trees as defenders of the estate links them to their role in Britain’s navy, it also reminds the reader that, overall, they were symbols of “steadiness and tradition.” When Fashion ruthlessly cuts them down, she also cuts down “England’s natural heritage.”⁴⁶⁶

In *Beachy Head*, Charlotte Smith also emphasizes the history of the poem’s main subject, Beachy Head. At the beginning of the poem, Smith imagines the creation of the

⁴⁶³ Although Humphry Repton supported the removal of trees, his style, at times, was dependent upon them, and he often favored retaining tree avenues. See Page, “Reforming Honeysuckles,” 126; Quaintance, “Humphry Repton,” 372; Thomas, *Man and Natural World*.

⁴⁶⁴ Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and Vernacular Landscape*, 72.

⁴⁶⁵ Thomas, *Man and Natural World*, 220.

⁴⁶⁶ Page, “Reforming Honeysuckles,” 130. In her article, Page looks at the closing stanza, when Seward writes that “no green field blossoms, and no hedge-rows wave,” to further support this argument.

rocky cliff that one sees when crossing the Channel from France and provides two possible explanations for its existence: either God created it or it was a wonder of nature. Either one of these explanations implies that Beachy Head has existed forever. The first explanation, that the natural world was designed by God, relies upon an earlier belief of the time period. Smith writes,

That o'er the channel rear'd, half way at sea
The mariner at early morning hails,
I would recline; while Fancy should go forth,
And represent the strange and awful hour
Of vast concussion; when the Omnipotent
Stretch'd forth his arm, and rent the solid hills,
Bidding the impetuous main flood rush between
The rifted shores, and from the continent
Eternally divided this green isle. (*Beachy Head*, 2–10)

When Smith attributes Beachy Head's existence to some "Omnipotent" power, she acknowledges the influence of Isaac Newton's ideas regarding the natural world, specifically that its seemingly perfect order could only be the result of God's hand.⁴⁶⁷ In a footnote, however, Smith acknowledges a second, separate reason for Beachy Head's existence when she writes that England was "torn [from Europe] by some convulsion of nature."⁴⁶⁸ Smith's poem was published the same year the London Geological Society was founded, and some have argued that Smith's footnoted explanation is revolutionary because it relies upon geology, which was considered a revolutionary science.⁴⁶⁹ In

⁴⁶⁷ See P. M. Harman, *The Culture of Nature in Britain, 1680–1860* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 2009), 3–4.

⁴⁶⁸ See Smith, *Beachy Head*, p. 217

⁴⁶⁹ Bode, "Subject of *Beachy Head*," 69. For scholars who have argued that Smith's opening is revolutionary because she relies upon geology to explain Beachy Head's existence, see Fry, *Charlotte Smith* and Kandi Tyebi, "Undermining the Eighteenth-Century Pastoral: Re-writing the Poet's Relationship to Nature in Charlotte Smith's Poetry," *European Romantic Review* 15, no. 1 (March 2004): 131–50. For more information of geology as a revolutionary science, see Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in Experimental Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 245–57. At the time Smith's poem was published, however, convulsions of the earth had become

particular, her use of the word “convulsion” reflects the growing interest in geology that began in England in 1770 and has ties to John Whitehurst and Erasmus Darwin.⁴⁷⁰ Most of Darwin’s knowledge regarding geology came from John Whitehurst, who was a fellow member of the Lunar Society and whose geological theories rested on the idea of “volcanic ‘convulsions of nature,’” which he wrote about in *Inquiry into the Original State and Formation of the Earth* (1778).⁴⁷¹

Although Smith’s poem connects these two interpretations of Beachy Head’s creation, they still remain two distinct interpretations; the first can be linked to religion while the second can be linked to science. In the same way that Smith describes Beachy Head’s existence as the result of God or science, she also speculates on the fossils she has encountered on the cliff:

Does Nature then
Mimic, in wanton mood, fantastic shapes
Of bivalves, and inwreathed volutes, that cling
To the dark sea-rock of the wat’ry world?
Or did this range of chalky mountains, once
Form a vast bason, where the Ocean waves
Swell’d fathomless? (*Beachy Head*, 378–84)

In “*Beachy Head: The Romantic Fragment Poem as Mosaic*,” John M. Anderson cites this passage to argue that Smith “is much more approving both of the scientific method and of the spirit of free speculation.”⁴⁷² Just as Smith imagines two possible “creation

fashionable. See Alessa Johns, *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁴⁷⁰ Smith was familiar with Darwin’s works, especially *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), which was one of her favorite poems. For more information on Smith’s relationship with and admiration of Darwin, see Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith*.

⁴⁷¹ See Noah Heringman, *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 2. For more information on John Whitehurst, see Denys Vaughn, “Whitehurst, John (1713–1788),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; for more information on the interest in geology, see Heringman, *Romantic Rocks*.

⁴⁷² Anderson, “Romantic Fragment Poem,” 127. In *Charlotte Smith*, Fry similarly argues that Smith’s discussion of fossils reflects the various thoughts of her day (35).

stories” for Beachy Head, she also imagines two different possibilities regarding the occurrence of fossils on its landscape. She wonders whether Nature “mimics” the “shapes of bivalves” or if something else—“a vast bason”—used to exist that helped to create these fossils. The presence of fossils, an artifact of history, once again points to the long history of Beachy Head, especially if they are evidence that a “range of chalky mountains, once form[ed] a vast bason” there.

Yet, Smith makes it clear that the history of Beachy Head extends beyond its setting to the cultural events that have taken place there; at times the cultural events even become the setting. When Smith first started writing *Beachy Head* in the early 1790s, it was a time of “unease and watchfulness” because Britain constantly feared an attack from France.⁴⁷³ In her poem, Smith highlights Beachy Head’s military history to emphasize the vulnerability of its location. Smith details the various battles that have taken place at or near Beachy Head; it is the place where its “naval fame was tarnish’d,” but also where its reputation was “well-redeem’d” (*Beachy Head* 157 and 160, respectively). Beachy Head marks the place where Britain first met “a world in arms” (*Beachy Head* 153). Indeed, the military battles that have occurred at Beachy Head become embedded in its landscape. After the Normans landed in Britain and defeated the Saxon heptarchy, William the Conqueror constructed Battle Abbey on “the field of conquest” in order to “appease heaven’s wrath for so much blood.”

⁴⁷³ Kelley, “Romantic Histories,” 291–92.

War on the Land: “the oppressed earth”

In *The Lake* and *Beachy Head*, Anna Seward and Charlotte Smith reflect upon the land’s history, and in doing so, also reflect upon humans’ relationship with the land. In both poems, the introduction of luxuries to British society helps to shape the way individuals interact with the land. These luxuries are tied to war in that they are a result of Britain’s imperial pursuits; in both poems, Seward and Smith use the language of war to show luxury’s relationship to it.

Smith draws attention to the connection between wars and the land they are fought on when she moves from Beachy Head’s military history to “simple scenes of peace and industry” (*Beachy Head*, 169). In a footnote, Smith writes that “in this country there are several of the fortresses or castles built by Stephen of Blois [King of England, 1135–54], in his contention for the kingdom, with the daughter of Henry the First, the empress Matilda. Some of these are now converted to farm houses.”⁴⁷⁴ Here, Smith links the present history of Beachy Head to its past history by connecting wars to farms—fortresses have literally become farm houses. The land where wars were once fought is now the site of agricultural labor:

Hither, Ambition come!
Come and behold the nothingness of all
For which you carry thro’ the oppressed Earth.
War, and its train of horrors—see where tread
The innumerable hoofs of flocks above the works
By which the warrior sought to register
His glory, and immortalize his name— (*Beachy Head*, 419–25)

In this passage, Smith juxtaposes the labor of soldiers to that of farmers; she criticizes the latter because it does not produce anything. Ambition, which drives men to war, creates nothing except for a “train of horrors.” The warrior’s quest to “register his glory, and

⁴⁷⁴ See Smith, *Beachy Head*, p. 238.

immortalize his name” ends in failure. Indeed, Smith describes those who have died in battle and writes that they “sleep unremember’d” and are “soon forgotten” (*Beachy Head*, 428 and 438).

Even as Smith’s poem attempts to rise above the land’s military history by describing how battlefields have been transformed into homes, she ultimately connects luxury to war; in doing this, Smith’s poem shows how, even when there is no actual battle, war remains a part of the landscape. Smith’s description of a farmer who has established his life where military endeavors used to “tear with civil feuds the desolate land” suggests that agricultural labor can cultivate a new history to replace the land’s military one (*Beachy Head*, 499):

But now a tiller of the soil dwells there,
And of the turret’s loop’d and rafter’d halls
Has made an humbler homestead—Where he sees,
Instead of armed foemen, herds that graze
Along his yellow meadows; or his flocks
At evening from the upland driv’n to fold— (*Beachy Head*, 500–
505)

The farmer in this passage has transformed the fortress’s features—its turrets and rafters—into a “humbler homestead.” The land is no longer a battlefield where soldiers are ready for war; instead, the farmer uses it as pasture for his flocks.

Earlier in the poem, Smith describes another farmer, who is similar to the one mentioned above. Both have “humble home[s]”; however, the first farmer chose to replace his agricultural pursuits with the pursuit of “clandestine traffic” (*Beachy Head*, 183). Smith describes the farmer’s new profession in language that is similar to that of soldiers going to battle:

[T]hen from some ridged point
That overlooks the sea, his eager eye
Watches the bark that for his signal waits
To land its merchandize:—Quitting for this
Clandestine traffic his more honest toil,
The crook abandoning, he braves himself
The heaviest snow-storm of December's night,
When with conflicting winds the ocean raves,
And on the tossing boat, unfearing mounts
To meet the partners of the perilous trade,
And share their hazard. (*Beachy Head*, 179–89)

The language Smith uses in this passage brings to mind images of war and the soldiers who fight them. In the same way that a soldier waits for his captain's command, so too does the farmer in this passage wait for the signal that tells him his merchandise has arrived. Additionally, by describing the farmer as “brave” and “unfearing” for taking part in the “perilous trade,” Smith draws upon a common idea regarding soldiers: they are brave for taking part in war. Like war, the farmer is engaged in a “perilous” activity and faces “hazard[s],” but he is not alone (just as soldiers on a battlefield are not alone); he, too, has partners who will face the “conflict” alongside him. This farmer has chosen the “commerce of destruction” (*Beachy Head*, 190) over the agricultural life of “peace and industry” (*Beachy Head*, 169).

Although Smith clearly criticizes the farmer who has become a smuggler, she does not idealize the farmer's life. Throughout her poem, Smith shows the difficulties a farmer faces, yet she also shows how the difficulties are worth it because the farmer, unlike the smuggler, experiences freedom and contentment:

Well it were for him,
 If no such commerce of destruction known,
 He were content with what the earth affords
 To human labour; even where she seems
 Reluctant most. More happy is the hind,
 Who, with his own hands rears on some black moor,
 Or turbary, his independent hut
 Cover'd with heather, whence the slow white smoke
 Of smouldering peat arises—a few sheep,
 His best possession, with his children share
 The rugged shed when wintry tempests blow. (*Beachy Head*, 189–
 99)

In this passage, Smith reveals that a farmer's life is not easy. At times, the earth is "reluctant," especially when the fields are "As [if] angry Heaven had rain'd sterility, / Stony and cold, and hostile to the plough" (*Beachy Head*, 230–31). Although the farmer's life is nothing like that of the farmers written about in pastoral poetry—Smith writes that he dwells in "scenes all unlike the poet's fabling dreams / Describing Arcady"—the farmer still manages to be content with "what the earth affords / To human labor" (*Beachy Head*, 209–10).

Smith juxtaposes the simple life of a farmer to the life of a commercial smuggler, and in doing so she acknowledges the "uncertainties of the present, as colonial and smuggling profits threaten English pastoral/georgic existence on the South Downs" and shows "two narratives of English identity."⁴⁷⁵ In "Romantic Histories: Charlotte Smith and Beachy Head," Theresa M. Kelley writes that Smith reveals England's pastoral identity at the same time that she reexamines "the story of English naval supremacy," which, ultimately, "gets reread on its dark side—canny mariners and their compatriots on Beachy Head smuggling illegal goods."⁴⁷⁶ The person who depends on the earth is able to create "with his own hands" an "independent hut" that he shares with his family.

⁴⁷⁵ Kelley, "Romantic Histories," 295 and 311.

⁴⁷⁶ Kelley, "Romantic Histories," 311.

Smith writes that “he is free” from the “dread that follows on illegal acts” (*Beachy Head*, 210 and 211). Additionally, despite their hard labor, the farmer and his family are “well content” and “slumber undisturb’d / beneath the smoky roof they call their own” (*Beachy Head*, 236 and 237–38). Smith emphasizes the farmer’s independence, which contrasts to the smuggler, who, because he experiences danger constantly, is neither free nor content:

He knows not
How frequently the child of Luxury
Enjoying nothing, flies from place to place
In chase of pleasure that eludes his grasp;
And that content is e’en less found by him,
Than by the labourer, whose pick-axe smooths
The road before his chariot; and who doffs
What *was* an hat; and as the train pass on,
Thinks how one day’s expenditure, like this,
Would cheer him for long months, when to his toil
The frozen earth closes her marble breast. (*Beachy Head*, 244–54)

Although the farmer may look upon the wealthy smuggler as someone who is privileged, Smith assures us that the smuggler’s life is not to be envied. The smuggler depends upon his “partners of the perilous trade” and “enjoys nothing”; furthermore, both pleasure and contentment “elude his grasp.”⁴⁷⁷

While these passages may appear to deal with improvement at its periphery, the majority of Smith’s poem focuses on a landscape that is very much connected to improvement: the farm. Smith equates farming with being in touch with nature whereas she equates commerce with destruction when she refers to it as “commerce of destruction.” In *Beachy Head*, Smith prefers the “unimproved” farm and acknowledges

⁴⁷⁷ Common items smuggled included wool and brandy. For more information, see John Newball, *A scheme to prevent the running of wool abroad, and to encourage the manufactures at home* (Stamford: printed by F. Howgrave, 1744).

how improvement has disrupted the life of once “simple,” peaceful, and industrious farmers. Describing a farmer who has not been corrupted by luxury, Smith writes,

The guardian of the flock, with watchful care,
Repels by voice and dog the encroaching sheep—
While his boy visits every wired trap
That scars the turf; and from the pit-falls takes
The timid migrants, who from distant wilds,
Warrens, and stone quarries, are destined thus
To lose their short existence. But unsought
By Luxury yet, the Shepherd still protects
The Social bird, who from his native haunts
Of willowy current, or the rushy pool,
Follows the fleecy croud, and flirts and skims,
In fellowship among them. (*Beachy Head*, 459–69)

In this passage, the farmer’s son saves Wheatears, small birds, from the traps that “scar the turf.” During the eighteenth century, Thomas Pennant, one of the period’s leading naturalists and author of *The British Zoology* (1766), wrote to Gilbert White, another well-known naturalist and author of *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne* (1789), that the trade in Wheatears was “enormous” and that “every year one thousand eight hundred and forty dozen” were caught.⁴⁷⁸ The shepherd in this passage is unaware of their value and only knows that they live “in fellowship” among his flock. Smith argues in this passage that the shepherd’s actions are due to the fact that he remains “unsought by Luxury,” which is why he still seeks to protect nature. Indeed, throughout *Beachy Head*, Smith highlights the farmers who still work and live off the land. Whether it is the matron who “gather[s] the long green rush,” which will provide light to “her poor cottage” or “the upland shepherd who rears his modest home” and relies upon his “cottage garden; most for use design’d, / Yet not of beauty destitute,” Smith praises both

⁴⁷⁸ Philip Gosse, *Traveller’s Rest* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1937), 85. For information on Thomas Pennant, see Charles W. J. Withers, “Pennant, Thomas,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and for information on Gilbert White, see Paul Foster, “White, Gilbert,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

of these individuals because they have a relationship with the land; their lives, though hard, have not been corrupted by luxury, and they still live by their own rules, rules that guide them to save birds from traps (*Beachy Head*, 216–18, 322, and 327–28).

It is when individuals succumb to luxury—or to war, which will lead to luxury—that they lose their freedom. Smith describes a rural family with a focus on the brother and sister to show what is lost when luxury enters their lives:

Ah! who *is* happy? Happiness! a word
That like false fire, from marsh effluvia born,
Misleads the wandered, destin'd to contend
In world's wilderness, with want or woe—
Yet *they* are happy, who have never ask'd
What good or evil means. (*Beachy Head*, 255–60)

Here, Smith questions what makes some people happy and realizes that those individuals who are oblivious to the outside world, who maintain their lives despite what occurs around them, are happy. She goes on to describe the village girl and her little brother. Initially, both are happy; the latter is happy because he plays “gaily” “on the river’s margins” with no fear of death, and the former is happy because she “sets forth / To distant fair, gay in her Sunday suit” (*Beachy Head*, 261–62 and 270–71). Yet, eventually their happiness vanishes; the girl no longer believes in her “rural lovers’ oaths,” and her little brother eventually “finds the sound he lov’d,” a beating drum, “has led him on, till he has given up / His freedom, and his happiness together” (*Beachy Head*, 275 and 279–81). Although Smith does not directly state that the boy has chosen to go to war, the drum is a symbol for war; when the boy chooses war—chooses luxury—he will now know Death and no longer know happiness.

In *Beachy Head*, Charlotte Smith connects luxury to war and suggests that the two are inseparable; similarly, in *The Lake* Anna Seward reveals the connection between

improvement and war by using the rhetoric of war to describe the improvement of the landscape. The oak trees “defend,” though unsuccessfully, the land. Furthermore, the introduction of Fashion appears like a captain leading his troops to battle; she enters the scene followed by “her servile train” and issues a battle cry:

Yon broad, brown wood, now darkening to the sky,
Shall prostrate soon with perish'd branches lie;
Yield golden treasures for our great design,
Till all the scene one glassy surface shine. (*Lake*, 25–29)

Fashion threatens nature in this passage; the woods will be forced to surrender to the “ready axe” (*Lake*, 69). As the trees fall, the clear land will be Fashion’s spoil as it will “yield golden treasures” that make the lake a reality.

Destroying to Improve: “The foe of beauty, and the bane of sense”

In both *The Lake* and *Beachy Head*, Anna Seward and Charlotte Smith argue against improvement, primarily because it fails to improve but rather destroys what once existed; in both poems, the poets suggest that improvement goes against reason. Seward organizes her poem by first revealing what the estate looked like prior to improvement and then showing what it looks like after improvement. Before the owner decides to improve the estate, both color and life were present. A “winding brook, green wood, and mead and dell” as well as “grassy lanes, and moss-encircled well” adorn the estate, but after improvement, all that is “destined to a watery grave” (*Lake*, 76–77 and 75, respectively). Seward’s description of the estate emphasizes its living components—the “green wood,” “grassy lanes,” and “guardian oaks” (*Lake*, 78). After improvement, however, Seward describes the estate as lifeless:

See, the forced flood th' o'erwhelmed valley laves,
O'er fields, lanes, thickets, spread the silent waves!—
No lively hue of spring they know to wear,
No gorgeous glow of the consummate year;
No tinge that gold-empurpled autumn spreads
O'er rich woodland, sloping from the meads,
But stagnant, mute, unvarying, cold, and pale,
They meet the winter-wind, and summer gale. (*Lake*, 52–59)

The owner's improvements have changed the scene forever; what once was a vibrant estate has now become a "stagnant, mute, unvarying, cold, and pale" one. In this passage, Seward juxtaposes the unimproved with the improved in order to show the damage improvement causes. The unimproved landscape is alive with an "echoing soil, a "lively hue," and a "gorgeous glow"; it is beautiful throughout the year. The improved landscape, though, is both "silent" and "pale." The colors that used to consume it now are replaced by the "forc'd flood," which has a "leaden hue" (*Lake*, 48).

Although Seward's poem does not give us the owner's history, the fact that he is able to remodel his existing estates suggests that he has already participated in "improvement." John Brewer writes that "improvement also provided the money, in the form of rents, that enabled landowners to build new country houses or remodel their existing dwellings, to create parks or retain a landscape gardener to transform their grounds." Brewer continues to write that "like agricultural improvement, the creation of a pleasing landscape also often meant the reshaping of the surrounding topography and rearranging of rural life."⁴⁷⁹ Seward's poem, though, shows how the reshaping of the land does not lead to a pleasing landscape; in this way, she criticizes improvement.

While the owner desires a villa, a building where "elegant simplicity had to reign," Seward's description of the landscape architect is anything but elegant; by

⁴⁷⁹ Brewer, "Culture, Nature, Nation," 626–27.

portraying Fashion as lacking taste, Seward reveals improvement's illogical quality.⁴⁸⁰

Describing Fashion, Seward writes,

She comes!—the gaudy despot stands confest,
Known by her mein assur'd, and motley vest;
The vest, mistaken by her servile train
For beauty's robe of sky-enwoven grain,
Deck'd with each varying form, each living hue,
That Nature hallow'd, and her REPTON drew.

Scorning their power, and reckless of expense,
The foe of beauty, and the bane of sense;
Close by my lord, and with strange projects warm,
Stalks o'er the scenes her edicts shall deform. (*Lake*, 15–24)

Seward's description of Fashion emphasizes her lack of beauty and sense. Although she appears confident and beautiful, she is not; instead, she is gaudy—the “foe of beauty”—and wasteful because she is “reckless of expense” and “the bane of sense.” Seward's acknowledgement of Humphrey Repton in this passage is not a criticism of him; rather, she praises him by linking him and his work to Nature whereas Fashion only appears to be linked to the natural world. Her “motely vest” is “mistaken by her servile train.” For Seward, if Fashion followed Repton's designs, the estate would be better off because it would be closer to the beauty “that Nature hallow'd.”⁴⁸¹

In *Beachy Head*, Charlotte Smith also criticizes improvement, albeit more discretely than does Seward. Early in the poem, Smith describes two types of vessels, fishing and commercial. Of both she writes,

⁴⁸⁰ Crowley, “Luxury to Comfort,” 144.

⁴⁸¹ See Page, “Reforming Honeysuckles.” In this article, Page discusses how Seward links Humphrey Repton to nature and shows how Fashion has abused his work.

Afar off,
And just emerging from the arch immense
Where seem to part the elements, a fleet
Of fishing vessels stretch their lesser sails;
While more remote, and like a dubious spot
Just hanging in the horizon, laden deep,
The ship of commerce richly freighted, makes
Her slower progress, on her distant voyage. (*Beachy Head*, 37–43)

Kelley argues that Smith takes an anti-commerce stance in this passage.⁴⁸² For Smith, the fishing vessels represent honest labor and local products because they drag their nets; however, the “ship of commerce” represents exploitative practices and global products because they are on a “distant voyage” and headed to “orient climes” to retrieve spices, silk, and slaves.⁴⁸³ Smith’s description of these two vessels focuses on the commercial vessel; describing it as “dubious” and “hanging,” she is uncertain about the vessel and its progress. The ship may be “richly freighted,” but as Kelley argues, “the ensuing account of that ship’s future progress to collect gems gathered in Asia at the expense of those enslaved to dive for pearls suggests that the work of this ‘dubious spot’ is satanic.”⁴⁸⁴

Just as Seward viewed Fashion’s actions as “the bane of sense,” so too in *Beachy Head* does Smith view those who take from nature (and enslave other people) as people who act without reason. She writes that pearls are “the toys of Nature; and her sport / Of little estimate in Reason’s eye” (*Beachy Head*, 55–56). The “sport” Smith refers to is diving for pearls, and when Smith writes that it is “of little estimate in Reason’s eye,” she acknowledges that the result of pearl diving—getting the pearls—is not worth the risk, a point also made by Anne Bannerman in *The Genii*. What matters to Smith—and it seems

⁴⁸² Kelley, “Romantic Histories,” 303. Kelley offers a close reading of this passage that focuses on Smith’s allusion to John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. According to Kelley, Smith compares the “ship of commerce” to Satan.

⁴⁸³ For more information on Britain’s trade with Asia, see P. J. Marshall, “The British in Asia: Trade to Dominion, 1700–1765,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 2:487–507.

⁴⁸⁴ Kelley, “Romantic Histories,” 303.

to Nature—is that “Man, for such gaudes and baubles, violate / The sacred freedom of his fellow man” (*Beachy Head*, 58–59). Smith’s argument rests upon the idea that Nature’s beauty—undisturbed by man—is worth more than the products humans can extract from it:

As Heaven’s pure air,
Fresh as it blows on this aerial height,
Or sound of seas upon the stony strand,
Or inland, the gay harmony of birds,
And winds that wander in the leafy woods;
Are to the unadulterated taste more worth
Than the elaborate harmony, brought out
From fretted stop, or modulated airs
Of vocal science. (*Beachy Head*, 60–67).

In this passage, Smith compares the music that occurs in the natural world—“the sounds of the seas upon the stony strand” and “the gay harmony of birds” to that made by stringed instruments—“the elaborate harmony, brought out / From fretted stop”—and she argues that the former is better. Although she does not refer specifically to improvement in this passage, she does, both before and after it, mention pearl diving and mining for gems. She continues her critique by comparing gems to the sun; she writes that the beauty of the former is “poor and paltry” next to the sun (*Beachy Head*, 71).

Smith reveals that real wealth resides in nature when she describes the sunset:

For now the sun is verging to the sea,
And as he westward sinks, the floating cloud
Suspended, move upon the evening gale,
And gathering round his orb, as if to shade
The insufferable brightness, they resign
Their gauzy whiteness; and more warm’d, assume
All hues of purple. There, transparent gold
Mingles with ruby tints, and sapphire gleams,
And colours, such as Nature through her works
Shews only in the ethereal canopy. (*Beachy Head*, 75–84)

For Smith, man's work cannot compare to the "work" and beauty of Nature. Previously Smith alluded to mining when she described the slaves' actions when diving for pearls; they "tear off" the pearl from the "rough sea-rock." Because of her earlier allusion to mining, when Smith describes the sunset in this passage, her descriptions of the colors in terms of precious metals and gems—gold, ruby, sapphire—reveal that Nature's beauty is just as valuable, if not more so, than the products man can acquire from it. Furthermore, the fact that Nature "only" reveals this beauty in the ethereal canopy makes it more valuable because it is more rare than gold, rubies, and sapphires. Just as Seward viewed the estate prior to improvement as beautiful, for Smith, too, nature, undisturbed, is more beautiful than the products—pearls and diamonds—that man can extract from it.

The speaker's description of the country also reveals Smith's view that wealth (and strength) exist in nature and not in urban environments. In *Beachy Head*, Smith prefers the country over the city. In part, she feels this way because as a child she lived in the country and "was happy"; her happiness came from her ability to experience "upland solitudes" (*Beachy Head*, 282 and 283). While living in the country, she had no understanding of the evil that existed in the world. When she was an adult, she writes that she was "condemned" to the city; the only way she could re-experience the country was through her art:

Early it came,
And childhood scarcely passed, I was condemned,
A guiltless exile, silently to sigh,
While Memory, with faithful pencil, drew
The contrast; and regretting, I compar'd
With the polluted smoky atmosphere
And dark and stifling streets, the southern hills
That to the setting Sun, their graceful heads
Rearing, o'erlook the frith [*sic*], where Vecta breaks
With her white rocks, the strong impetuous tide,
When western winds the vast Atlantic urge
To thunder on the coast[.] (*Beachy Head*, 286–97)

This passage reflects Smith's "layering of memories," a phrase Sylvia Bowerbank uses to describe Seward's poems about places, as it describes both of her childhood homes near Surrey and Sussex and her time in the South Downs.⁴⁸⁵ Just as Seward's description of places bathes them in sentiment, so too does Smith in this passage when she recalls the homes of her youth. The "southern hills" refer to her home at Stoke Place near Surrey, and the "white rocks" are reminiscent of the chalky cliffs that make up Beachy Head. In addition to reflecting upon her youth, Smith also describes the differences between the city and the country. The city is "polluted," "dark," and "stifling." The country of her youth, however, is brightened by the "setting Sun" and the "white rocks." Furthermore, the country, as opposed to the city, has a beautiful strength; the hills are described as having "graceful heads" that overlook the "strong impetuous tide." The country provides a refuge to animals and humans alike; Smith writes that the "vagrant lamb" seeks shelter and the shepherd stops working in order to "ease his panting team" (*Beachy Head*, 302 and 306–9).

⁴⁸⁵ Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 173.

The End of a Way of Life: “To some better region fled forever”

At the end of both poems, Seward and Smith write about individuals leaving the land they once occupied to show that the time when people had a close relationship to it is gone. In *The Lake*, the Genius remains asleep while Fashion enacts her changes to the landscape, while in *Beachy Head*, the two individuals—the wanderer of the hills and the hermit—are awake but disconnected.⁴⁸⁶ Smith even describes the hermit as one who “appear’d to suffer life / Rather than live” (*Beachy Head*, 675–76). Although all of these characters are disconnected from the changes in the world around them, they are not disconnected from the natural world.

In *The Lake*, the Genius immediately realizes the damage he, in some ways, has allowed to occur. Upon waking, he

Sees the weak saplings, dotted on the lawn,
With dark and clumsy fence around them drawn,
Warp in the noon-tide ray, with shrivell’d rind,
And shrink, and tremble in the rising wind. (*Lake*, 80–83)

The nature that remains on the estate will not survive for very long. Whereas the trees on the estate used to serve a purpose, now they are too “weak” to even grow, let alone to provide a “winter screen” or “sultry summer’s shade” (*Lake*, 79). The saplings will soon “warp,” “shrivel,” “shrink,” and die. Seward’s description of them “trembl[ing] in the wind” is reminiscent of a funeral scene; just as Major André in *Monody* seems to return to the earth—flowers grow from his grave—the saplings return to earth as their remains are lifted by the wind.

⁴⁸⁶ Smith relies upon the image of the wanderer/hermit throughout *Elegaic Sonnets and Other Poems*. For example, the peasant in *The Peasant of the Alps* closely resembles the hermit in *Beachy Head*; his home is “within some hollow.” Smith also uses him to express her message regarding the power of the natural world. See Smith, “The Peasant of the Alps, in *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, 90–91, quotation line 4.

Similarly, in *Beachy Head* the wanderer of the hills and the hermit are ultimately unable to survive in a world that no longer respects nature. Smith writes that the wanderers' home was "in the forest; and wild fruits / and bread sustain'd him." The wanderer lives in and off of nature, and the poetry he leaves behind reveals his close relationship with the natural world. His poems call for individuals to "repair" to the "woodland wilds" and to "listen to woodland melodies" (*Beachy Head*, 577 and 612). The hermit, like the wanderer, is also closely tied to nature. Smith's description of the hermit mirrors her description of the peasants. Like the peasants, the hermit can read nature. The peasant does not follow Science; instead, "with no care / But that the kindly change of sun and shower, / Fit for his toil the earth he cultivates" (*Beachy Head*, 397–98). Here, the peasant does not worry about science and its predictions; rather, he follows the weather patterns. Similarly, the hermit knows when a new season has arrived because of the changes in nature:

And nothing mark'd to him the season's change,
 Save that more gently rose the placid sea,
 And that the birds which winter on the coast
 Gave place to other migrants; save that the fog,
 Hovering no more above the beetling cliffs
 Betray'd not then the little careless sheep
 On the brink grazing, while their headlong fall
 Near the lone Hermit's flint-surrounded home,
 Claim'd unavailing pity. (*Beachy Head*, 679–87)

The hermit not only lives in nature, in his "flint-surrounded home," but he also closely observes the natural world—the ocean's tide, the different species of birds, and the lack of fog—to know when a new season has arrived. His ability to read nature also allows him to express his "unavailing pity." Smith writes that

He learn'd to augur from the clouds of heaven,
And from changing colours of the sea,
And sullen murmurs of the hollow cliffs,
Or the dark porpoises, that near the shore
Gambol'd and sported on the level brine
When tempest were approaching. (*Beachy Head*, 692–97)

Because of his ability to read the natural world, he can predict a storm and, therefore, knows when he may need to rescue a mariner who is caught in it. Although he fled the world to live in a cave below Beachy Head, he was “still feelingly alive to all that breath'd” and “still acutely felt for human misery”; his close relationship with the natural world allows him to help others (*Beachy Head*, 688 and 690–91).

The hope that the Genius and hermit represent, however, is gone by the end of *The Lake* and *Beachy Head*. In their poem's final stanzas, Seward and Smith reveal how improvement erases any trace of nature as well as man's relationship to the natural world. In the final stanza of *The Lake*, Seward describes the Genius's retreat, which, in many ways, mirrors the new landscape:

His reign usurp'd, since Time can ne'er restore,
Indignant rising to return no more,
His eyes concealing with one lifted hand,
Shadowing the waters, as his wings expand,
The injured Genius seeks the distant coast,
Like Abdiel, flying from the rebel host. (*Lake*, 92–97)

Similar to her Colebrook Dale poems, the Genius's reign in this passage has also been usurp'd, but this time, the culprit is not industrialization; rather, it is Fashion (a by-product of industrialization). In this passage, Seward connects the estate's owner to the devil and the Genius to Abdiel. Just as Abdiel renounced Satan, the Genius in this passage indignantly turns away from the estate and its owner because he is helpless to restore the landscape to its original state. Like the saplings that are too weak to become

oak trees, the Genius is too weak to reverse Fashion's improvements. The Genius, like the estate he once resided over, is "injured." The estate has not survived its battle with Fashion; Fashion's improvements have irreversibly altered the land, and since "time can ne'er restore" it, the Genius has no other choice but to leave. Tragically, the Genius "seeks the distant coast" in the poem's final lines.

Beachy Head ends tragically as well; like Seward's poem, Smith's poem ends with the hermit fleeing "to some better region . . . forever" (*Beachy Head*, 731).

Although Smith attempts to make the ending less tragic by writing that the hermit died "in the cause of charity," his absence at the end of the poem marks more than his death; it also marks the end of man's relationship with the natural world (*Beachy Head*, 729).

Like the Genius, the hermit leaves the place he once called home. The structure Beachy Head may remain at the end of the poem, and the hermit's memorial may be "chisel'd within the rock," but the individuals who were the protectors of nature, who were "feelingly alive to all that breath'd," are no more. In *The Lake* and *Beachy Head*, Seward and Smith show that after improvement, nothing remains. These poems, and the ones that precede it, show the oftentimes irreversible effects British imperialism and war have on British landscapes.

Epilogue

“Shrink from the future, and regret the past”: Charlotte Smith’s *The Emigrants* (1793)
and Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812)

I introduced my dissertation by closely reading Mary Leapor’s poem, *The Beauties of Spring*. In this poem, Leapor describes spring as a season of renewal but recognizes that nature provides only a temporary refuge from the devastations of war. In *The Emigrants* (1793), published nearly fifty years after Leapor’s poem, Charlotte Smith uses some of the same themes as Leapor to describe how Britain’s history of violence has disrupted the environment. In Book II of *The Emigrants*, which is set in early April at the beginning of spring, Smith describes the season as hopeful:

Courting, once more, the influence of Hope
(For ‘Hope’ still waits upon the flowery prime)
As here I mark Spring’s humid hand unfold.⁴⁸⁷

Although Smith begins the second book with an epigraph from Virgil’s *Georgics*, which acknowledges that war has transformed the earth, Smith still finds promise in the rituals of spring. Just as the bees in Leapor’s poem renew their labors and the flowers begin to show their colors, the thrush in Smith’s poem “resumes his task” and the flowers “give, half reluctantly, their warmer hues” (*Emigrants*, II.31 and 26, respectively). Quickly, however, the poem’s speaker realizes that spring cannot revive her spirit, that it cannot renew what war has taken away. In the same way Leapor acknowledges that nature only

⁴⁸⁷ Charlotte Smith, *The Emigrants*, in *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, I.21–23. Hereafter, text references will refer to title, book, and line numbers.

offers a temporary refuge from the realities of the world, so too does the speaker in Smith's poem acknowledge that there is no "promise of the infant year" when war, for too long, has "spread o'er the affrighted world" (*Emigrants*, II.43 and 45–46).

Throughout my dissertation, I have examined poems by eighteenth-century women writers who recognized the role that nature played in the development of their nation and the world. Their poetry offers insight into civilian responses to war and testifies to the fact that women did write about public and political affairs. It is not a coincidence that oftentimes their poems use the environment to discuss the impact of war because they understood that military glory inevitably leads to both human *and* non-human destruction. Their poetry reveals an eighteenth-century environmental consciousness when it shows how wars transform lives *and* landscapes, how they undo industries and ecosystems. Whether arguing for a new imperial model, one that does not reject commercial pursuits altogether but instead calls for interconnectedness between people and the natural world, as Anna Seward and Helen Maria Williams do in *Monody on Major André* and *Peru*, or by challenging the eighteenth century's reliance on science as a strategy for building empire by showing how it is just as destructive—to the environment and to lives—as the "real" weapons of war, as Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook* and Anne Bannerman's *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* do, the poets and poems in this dissertation express a hope for Britain's future, a hope that their nation will see the danger of their imperial pursuits and change its course. Even when the poets write explicitly about the damage Britain's pursuit for power causes, as is the case in Seward's Colebrook Dale poems and *The Lake; or, Modern Improvement in Landscape*,

Bannerman's *The Genii* and Smith's *Beachy Head*, their poems still suggest that Britain can begin to conserve the environment that remains.

I would like to conclude my dissertation by looking at two poems written at the end of the century, Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants* and Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812). Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*, her "most sustained public poem" and, according to Stuart Curran, "the finest piece of extended blank verse in English history," and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Eighteenth Hundred and Eleven*, an epic poem written in heroic couplets that foreshadows Britain's decline, emphasize the human and non-human effects of Britain's imperialist mission.⁴⁸⁸ Both of these poems were published in the midst of war. Smith's poem is set during the French Revolution, with the first book taking place shortly after the September Massacres and the second book opening shortly after war was declared between England and France, and Barbauld's poem also takes place while Britain is still engaged in war with France, but this time the war involved all of Europe and its colonies. These two poems express themes present in poems written between 1780 and 1800 by Anna Seward, Helen Maria Williams, and Anne Bannerman; thus, I demonstrate a continuum of poetry that demonstrates women poets' environmental awareness of the impact of war on natural and domestic spaces.

Throughout my dissertation, storms and oceans have often symbolized the presence of war across the globe, and women poets often show how the ocean carries the tragedies of war in its currents. In the opening stanzas of *The Emigrants* and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Smith and Barbauld use storm imagery and oceans to reflect the political climate. Smith writes,

⁴⁸⁸ Curran, "Introduction," xxiv.

Slow in the Wintry morn, the struggling light
Throws a faint gleam upon the troubled waves;
Their foaming tops, as they approach the shore
And the broad surf that never ceasing breaks
On the innumerable pebbles, catch the beams
Of the pale Sun, that with reluctance gives
To this cold northern Isle, its shorten'd day. (*Emigrants*, I.1–7)

In this passage, the ocean and its “troubled waves” refer to the revolutionary activities in France, and their “approach [to] the shore” acknowledges that by 1792, the year Book I opens and France declared itself a republic, France’s revolution posed a threat to Britain and all of Europe. Similarly, in the opening stanza of Seward’s *Monody*, the ocean reflects the American Revolution. Both of these poets use the “vex’d” ocean to express ongoing wars. In *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld writes about “the loud death drum” that “o’er vex’d nations pours the storm of war.”⁴⁸⁹ Although Barbauld does not begin her poem with an actual storm, as Seward and Smith do, she links storms to war. She acknowledges that even though the “death drum thunder[s] from afar,” Britain still hears it.

The ocean reflects the political climate, but it also becomes the site that transmits the human cost of war. Smith does not specifically mention the emigrants in the opening stanza in *The Emigrants*, so it appears as if the ocean simply serves to mirror the revolution in France. Near the end of Book I, however, Smith returns to the ocean’s tumultuous waves and writes that its “troubled surface, brought the groans / Of plunder’d peasants, and the frantic shrieks of mothers for their children” (*Emigrants*, I.221–30). Here, Smith’s poem is like the opening of Seward’s *Monody* where the ocean carries the “shrieks of War” to reveal how war affects humans’ lives. Smith uses the same language

⁴⁸⁹ Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, in *Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, quotation p. 152, lines 1–3. Hereafter, text references will refer to a shortened title and line numbers.

as Seward, and both poems show that oceans are not simply trade lanes, but they also are places of tragedy. At the end of *Elegy on Captain Cook*, Cook's wife, searching for her husband, stands overlooking the ocean, and in Barbauld's poem, women look "o'er the spread map" in search of the place "that wrecked [their] bliss" (*Eighteen Hundred*, 35 and 37). Using the word "wrecked," Barbauld acknowledges shipwrecks and the danger of ocean travel, and in this way, both poems show that the ocean is a site of separation and sorrow.

The repeated use of oceans in these poems reinforces the human cost of war and empire-building. The poets discussed in this dissertation recognize the human side of war because they view humans, and their desire for power, as the reason for war and the cause of the environment's destruction. In *The Genii*, Bannerman offers a view of the world prior to man's reign. Although the genii rule through fear, they bring order to a chaotic world and rule over a "fair region." After God gives Adam dominion over the earth, the poem shifts from depicting an environment where there is respect between the inhabitants and the earth to one where man strives to control the earth and its resources. In both *The Emigrants* and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Smith and Barbauld also blame man for the destruction of the world's beauty. According to Smith, man is "misguided" and "deluded" as he pursues wealth and power at any cost; his pursuit "mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy" (*Emigrants*, I.32, 83, and 33, respectively). Smith blames Vengeance for "seeking blood" and argues that Avarice and Envy "pollute the immortal shrine of Liberty" (*Emigrants*, I.347 and 349). Smith's list of the guilty participants in war reads like the list Seward includes in *Monody*; Seward also blames Vengeance for war, but she also blames Britain's relentless pursuit of trade for André's

death as well as the loss of “countless” lives. Indeed, throughout the poems included in this dissertation, the poets acknowledge that greed leads to the earth’s destruction, and Barbauld argues that it will also lead to Britain’s destruction. She writes,

Yes, thou must droop; thy Midas dream is o’er;
The golden tide of Commerce leaves thy shore,
Leaves thee to prove the alternate ills that haunt
Enfeebling Luxury and Ghastly Want;
Leaves thee, perhaps, to visit distant lands,
And deal the gifts of heaven with equal hands. (*Eighteen Hundred*,
61–66)

In this passage, Barbauld alludes to King Midas; unlike Midas, whose touch could turn anything to gold, Britain’s commercial power, its “golden tide,” has caused “ills that haunt.” Barbauld blames Britain’s commercial pursuits for its current economic troubles. Britain’s “Midas dream is o’er,” and while Barbauld suggests that others will benefit from this, she still expresses doubt regarding the “golden tide of Commerce” when she writes that “perhaps” it will “visit distant lands.” In previous chapters, I have discussed how other women poets blamed Britain’s imperial pursuits for the destruction of the earth and ways of life. In Chapter Two, Britain’s pursuit of knowledge led it to practice ecological imperialism, and in Chapters Three and Four, the pursuit of luxury, which Barbauld and Smith both view as “enfeebling,” not only changed landscapes across the globe, but also destroyed people’s ways of life as the city encroached upon the country.⁴⁹⁰ In *The Emigrants*, Smith writes about the differences between the country and the city and refers to the city as “artificial,” a place where “all taste / For Nature’s genuine beauty” is forgotten (*Emigrants*, I. 261 and I. 264–65). In *Colebrook Dale*, Seward describes the development of Birmingham, which occurred because of industrialization:

⁴⁹⁰ Although Smith does not use this exact word in *Beachy Head* or *The Emigrants*, in both poems, she implies that those who pursue luxury (and succumb to it) are not happy.

As Birmingham becomes the “mart / Of rich inventive commerce,” nature is replaced by roads and city squares.

In all of the poems discussed in this dissertation, the world suffers. In *Peru*, Williams describes the nation as “suff’ring,” and ten years later, Smith writes about “the suffering world” and the “suffering globe” in *The Emigrants* (*Emigrants*, II.79 and 422), which still existed seven years later when Barbauld writes about the famine and disease that came as a result of Britain’s ongoing war with France in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. Both Williams and Smith refer to the world as suffering because Britain has continued to engage in empire building, which has devastated not only its landscapes, as written about in Seward’s Colebrook Dale poems, but has also wreaked havoc on its colonial landscapes. Both Barbauld and Smith acknowledge how war “disturbs the plough” as “the sword, not sickle reaps the harvest now” (*Eighteen Hundred*, 17–18).⁴⁹¹ When the earth suffers, people also suffer.

The poets in my dissertation emphasize the earth’s sufferings by focusing on how war drowns out nature. Williams describes how the “thund’ring Cannons” and “loud Trumpets” drown out the peaceful sounds of the mocking and humming birds, and in Seward’s Colebrook Dale poems, she describes industrialization as an invasion that “spread[s] [a] veil . . . upon the sylvan robe” and “stain[s] thy glassy waters.” War does more than “startle” nature, war overwhelms it.⁴⁹² Smith views the effects of war on the environment as the other poets discussed in this dissertation; she writes that the scenes of

⁴⁹¹ Smith begins Book II with a quotation from Virgil’s *Georgics* that states that “the curved sickle is beaten into the unbending sword” (*Emigrants*, 149).

⁴⁹² Bannerman uses this word in *Verses on an Illumination for a Naval Victory* to describe the effect the sounds of military celebration have on the natural world.

war “make / The sick heart shudder” (*Emigrants*, II.66–67). In words similar to Williams’s and Seward’s, Smith describes these scenes:

There the trumpet’s voice
Drowns the soft warbling of the woodland choir;
And violets, lurking in their turfy beds
Beneath the flow’ring thorn, are stain’d with blood.
There fall, at once, the spoiler and the spoil’d;
While War, wide-ravaging, annihilates
The hope of cultivation; gives to Fiends,
The meager, ghastly Fiends of Want and Woe,
The blasted land. (*Emigrants*, II. 68–76)

In this passage, Smith explicitly states how war “drowns” nature; birds’ songs can no longer be heard and the violets’ colors do not come from their petals, but from the fact that they are “stain’d with blood.” In the Colebrook Dale poems, Seward compared industrialization’s effects to a funeral pall, but in this passage, Smith writes that war annihilates; it is not like a death, it is a death as both land and hope are “blasted.”

Perhaps just as devastating is the tragedy war inflicts upon humans’ lives, especially women’s lives. In every poem discussed previously, the poets explicitly acknowledge the pain women endure while their husbands, sons, and brothers pursue and defend Britain’s imperial ambitions. In Williams’s *Peru*, she shows how women are also affected by war. When the Spanish invade Peru, they slaughter innocent lives, including women. Williams tells the story of one woman in particular, Cora, who is Manco-Capac’s wife. Cora and her infant daughter have been separated from her husband, but near the end of the poem, she is reunited with Manco-Capac right before she dies. Williams’s poem offers hope because although Cora dies, her daughter remains alive and with her father, which means she will not grow up an orphan. A similar passage in *The Emigrants* does not end as hopefully; in this way, *The Emigrants* shows how not only has

Britain's situation remained the same, but it has, in many ways, worsened. In Smith's poem, the woman who flees with her daughter to avoid the revolution's violence does not survive; indeed, both she and her infant die. Immediately after Smith tells this story, she moves to a scene involving a feudal chief who has returned home to find his entire family has been murdered. These tales of lives lost and families destroyed, which appear in all the poems included in my dissertation, reinforce how global war is—its violence does not affect just one individual, but families and nations.

Eighteenth-century women writers understood that war affects everything—every place, every person, every object—and they use this knowledge to persuade Britain to change its course. In *The Emigrants*, Smith writes that Britain “by the rude sea guarded is safe,” and so it seems because war has never been fought on its soil; however, the poem's speaker has heard the emigrants' stories and “the pictures they have drawn / Of desolated countries” (*Emigrants*, II.210 and 216–17). Smith's poem, however, suggests that Britain can still change:

Thus may'st thou, Britain, triumph!—May thy foes,
 By reason's gen'rous potency subdued,
 Learn, that the God thou worshippest, delights
 In acts of pure humanity!—May thine
 Be still such bloodless laurels! nobler far
 Than those acquir'd at Cressy or Poitiers,
 Or of more recent growth, those well bestow'd
 On him who stood on Calpe's blazing height
 Amid the thunder of a warring world,
 Illustrious rather from the crowds he sav'd
 From flood and fire, than from the ranks who fell
 Beneath his valour!—Actions such as these,
 Like incense rising to the Throne of Heaven,
 Far better justify the pride, that swells
 In British bosoms, than the deafening roar
 Of Victory from a thousand brazen throats,
 That tell with what success wide-wasting War
 Has by our brave Compatriots thinned the world. (*Emigrants*,
 I.365–82)

Smith calls for a humane empire in these lines. She compares the battles of Cressy and Poitiers to an event that took place at the rock of Calpe. The former battles took place during the Hundred Years' War and marked the end of classic chivalry because the use of new weaponry led to many dead, among them French nobility. In these battles, "Victory" "thinned the world." Although Smith uses images of war to describe Calpe's height—it is "blazing" as the "warring world" surrounds it—success comes "from the crowds" "sav'd" rather than "from the ranks who fell."⁴⁹³ Smith praises the nonviolent actions that occur on the rock of Calpe and argues that these "bloodless laurels," which "far better justify the pride, that swells / In British bosoms," can be Britain's. She, like the other poets discussed in this dissertation, views war as "wide-wasting," but she also still sees hope for the future. Smith concludes Book I with a call to action; she wants

⁴⁹³ For more information on the use of new weapons at the battles of Cressy and Poitiers, see Gervase Phillips, "Longbow and Hackbutt: Weapons Technology and Technology Transfer in Early Modern England," *Technology and Culture* 40, no. 3 (1999): 576–93 and John Stone, "Technology, Society, and the Infantry Revolution of the Fourteenth Century," *The Journal of Military History* 68, no. 2 (April 2004): 361–80.

Britain to turn from war and become a more humane empire. At the end of Book II, she sees this as the only option if “Reason, Liberty, and Peace” are ever to reign (*Emigrants*, II.444).

While the speaker in Smith’s poem does not directly experience the effects of war, in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld clearly states that Britain cannot escape the consequences of war, even though it has successfully avoided war on its landscapes: “Britain, know, / Thou who has shared the guild must share the woe” (*Eighteen Hundred*, 45–46). Barbauld argues that it is too late for Britain; as she writes, the “worm is in thy core, thy glories pass away” (*Eighteen Hundred*, 314). It is not too late, however, for the rest of the world. At the end of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, the Genius turns away from Europe and toward South America where it “fans the noble strife, / And pours through feeble souls a higher life” (*Eighteen Hundred*, 331–32). It may be too late for Britain, but Barbauld suggests that other countries can learn from Britain’s fate as they struggle for their freedom. The women writers included in this dissertation spoke out against war when it was not always popular to do so, and their poems used the environment in order to persuade Britain to become a different kind of empire, one that was more civil and humane. By the end of the century, their criticism may have become more explicit, but the message remained the same.

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