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# Environmentalism and 'Best Husbandry': Cutting Down Trees in Augustan Poetry

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## 7. Environmentalism and 'Best Husbandry': Cutting Down Trees in Augustan Poetry

[I]t be almost impossible for us to prescribe at what *Age* it were best *Husbandry* to fell *Copses* (as we at least call *best Husbandry*) that is, for most and greatest Gain; since the *Markets*, and the *Kinds* of *Wood*, and emergent *Uses* do so much govern.

(John Evelyn, *Silva* 177 [Bk. 3, Ch. 1])

O man! tyrannic lord! how long, how long  
Shall prostrate nature groan beneath your rage,  
Awaiting renovation?  
(James Thomson, *The Seasons*, 'Autumn' 1189-91)

### I Introduction: Beyond Utilitarianism

Critical works on ideas of nature, such as Keith Thomas's influential *Man and the Natural World*, tend to focus on two attitudes: utilitarianism and aesthetic appreciation, which Thomas calls a 'non-utilitarian attitude to the natural world.' However, such criticism does not address the potential uses to which aesthetic judgements and theories might be put. Cutting trees, according to Thomas, was a normal part of life, privileged and important but never questioned: 'It was not on Tower Hill that the axe made its most important contribution to English history'; 'In England, as in the Book of Psalms, a man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.'<sup>1</sup> On the question of human relations with trees, Thomas proposes that the period's authoritative expression is utilitarian, though tinged with (but overwhelming) aesthetics; a different Augustan ecological sensibility is for Thomas unthinkable.

What does it mean for twentieth-century criticism of eighteenth-century poems about the cutting of trees when an economic reading of nature, such as Thomas's, dominates the cultural landscape? In this essay I will argue that Augustan poetry reveals a far more equivocal attitude toward trees, and toward the environment, than the one summarized

above. The well-known 'Romantic sensibility' was not invented *ex nihilo*, as writers like Karl Kroeber and Jonathan Bate have implied,<sup>2</sup> but derived from ideas current in the early eighteenth century that traditional criticism of the Augustan period has ignored as background cultural noise. Pope's *Windsor-Forest* is often considered to exemplify an economic attitude toward nature, but I argue that this poem in fact demonstrates a far more sensitive relation with the environment. The period also offers poems of explicit protest, three of which I discuss here: Anne Finch's 'Upon My Lord Winchelsea,' Elizabeth Carter's 'To Dr. Walwyn,' and Mary Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall.' These four works participate in what would now be called environmentalism but for which there was no term in the eighteenth century. These and other writers invented the language demanded by their subject, and it is only contemporary environmentalism's Romantic heritage that makes such poems seem unfamiliar.

## II Environmental Protest in Augustan Poetry

An eighteenth-century scholar asked to name an Augustan poem which describes the cutting of trees would in all likelihood first cite Alexander Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, a poem which integrates the cutting of trees into British colonial aspirations. Readers sometimes interpret nature in the poem as an economic agent, though a beautiful one, but beauty is beside the point since nature goes toward utilitarian ends. Alternatively, readers may see utilitarianism as beside the point, since Pope celebrates the beauty of England foremost here, though as an emblem of economic power. The opening couplet of the poem, however, casts in doubt this critically constructed opposition; the forests are 'At once the Monarch's and the Muse's seats.'<sup>3</sup> Ownership of the forest environment ('Thy Forests, *Windsor!*' [1]) is a reciprocal arrangement, involving far more than just an economic or an aesthetic understanding of the land.

The genre of *Windsor-Forest* is still contested. It has been considered a locodescriptive poem with an overabundance of political elements; a georgic with too little specific instruction (but still enough to merit a place in Chalker's *The English Georgic*<sup>4</sup>); and, in Robert Cummings's opinion, a *silva*, 'essentially a poem of discontinuous arguments, one whose parts do not relate to each other' (66).<sup>5</sup> Cummings goes so far as to hold that *Windsor-Forest* cannot be a descriptive poem because of 'its obvious enough discrepancies as one,' and that because 'georgic poetry is nothing if not didactic and prescriptive ... [n]o one wants to assert that of *Windsor-Forest*.'<sup>6</sup> The *silva*, as Cummings defines it with the authority of Statius, Politian, and Scaliger, operates through participating in multiple generic and cultural discourses, like the georgic. The difference is

that the georgic bends the discourses (political, economic, agricultural, and so on) to a single didactic aim, while the *silva* has no such dominant purpose.

The problem of definition does not simply affect the ongoing academic turf war of genre theory, which has more vigour in eighteenth-century studies than in criticism of most other periods, but I do not intend to settle the question of this poem's genre. The frequency with which the poem has been ascribed to the georgic tradition, at the time of its publication and many times since, makes it *de facto* an important influence on that tradition; whether or not it might best be considered a classical georgic may be irrelevant insofar as subsequent versions of the georgic considered *Windsor-Forest* as a model and forebear. The early and important place this poem occupies in Augustan landscape description means that assigning this one poem to a different genre would lead critics to a different understanding of subsequent landscape description and attitudes toward the environment, but doing so would also falsify the relationship later writers saw between their own writing and the literary tradition.

The poem is Pope's application to join the quasi-aristocratic fellowship of British poets, particularly of those other dwellers in the Thames Valley, Denham and Cowley (*Windsor-Forest* 259-82). It thus makes some sense that Pope would georgically place the products of the muses in the same category as he would place products of England's national economy. Profits both cultural and economic can accrue to an acknowledged poetic talent, as well as to the ruler of a wealthy nation. Commercial activity of a specifically nationalist kind is crucial to *Windsor-Forest*, but wealth is less important than the ongoing process of international capitalism, supported in England's case by the military:

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. (29-32)

Components of an exotic natural scene are the specific objects of wealth, but as Pope recognizes, British wealth is generated through colonialism by domestic oaks, converted into ships both commercial and military. India is figured as a place of beauty ('which those Trees adorn'), but its beauty is less valuable than the material wealth represented by that beauty. Wealth is in turn judged to be less valuable than the ability granted by British oaks to dominate colonial trade in the material objects of beauty.

When Pope comes to address the Thames, though, his strictly national focus leads him to complicate his emphasis on material value:

Thou too, great Father of the *British* Floods!  
 With joyful Pride survey'st our lofty Woods,  
 Where tow'ring Oaks their growing Honours rear,  
 And future Navies on thy Shores appear. (219-22)

Pope emphasizes the military value of the trees, in their 'growing Honours' and their role as 'future Navies,' but he also admits the possibility of seeing 'With joyful Pride ... our lofty Woods,' not necessarily an economic mode of perception. If the country's worth appears in more than just its economic success, as Pope argues it does, then stating the value of a country's environment may not be to insist on its economic potential. The nationalist comparisons which follow 'No Seas so rich, so gay no Banks appear, / No Lake so gentle, and no Spring so clear' (225-26) again encourage the possibility of looking at nature proprietorially without looking commercially.

Ralph Cohen has argued persuasively that the Augustan period's achievement in the couplet form, following Denham's ground-breaking example in 'Cooper's-Hill,' derived from, led to the further development of, and increased the profile of dualist thinking.<sup>7</sup> The couplet form promotes such rhetorical techniques as zeugma and chiasmus, and readers of Pope quite correctly identify as a characteristic of his works a balance in contrast founded on the Augustan heroic couplet's dualist tendencies. Such famous phrases from *The Rape of the Lock* as the description of Queen Anne as a woman who does 'sometimes Counsel take — and sometimes *Tea*,' or the reference to women's equal sadness 'When Husbands or when Lap-dogs breathe their last,' rely on exactly the dualist writing emphasized for good reason by readers like Cohen.<sup>8</sup>

In *Windsor-Forest*, though, in spite of the poet's broad reliance on Denham's example, Pope's heroic couplets do not conform to their usual dualist model. As Robert Cummings recognizes, 'Pope's invoking Denham, far from pointing to a congruity of their intentions, more likely marks a contrast and that more aggressively than any merely generic properties might have demanded.'<sup>9</sup> The poem's apparently dualistic second verse paragraph in particular, describing the landscape at Windsor, departs unexpectedly from the pattern of binaries in balance and contrast:

Not *Chaos*-like together crush'd and bruis'd,  
 But as the World, harmoniously confus'd:

Where Order in Variety we see,  
And where, tho' all things differ, all agree. (13-16)

Pope relies on the usual dualist constructions ('*Chaos*' and 'the World,' 'differ' and 'agree'), but the effect is far less binary than the lines quoted above from *The Rape of the Lock*. While this is often cited as an example of *concordia discors*, order found in disorder, Robert Cummings perceives that 'what he [Pope] claims to discover in Windsor Forest is not that "because all things differ, all agree," but that "tho' all things differ, all agree".'<sup>10</sup> Opposition does not enable agreement here; agreement occurs in spite of opposition. Pope's 'harmoniously confus'd' natural scene appears in phrases harmoniously confusing the comfortable oppositions of the heroic couplet, changing the way that his readers experience the Windsor landscape as well as the way they experience poetry.

As Cohen describes it, the quintessential feature of the Augustan couplet is its pairing of terms. It is not an entirely unfair caricature that sees Pope making a point every twenty syllables, and it is this that makes his representation of landscape in *Windsor-Forest* so interesting:

Here waving Groves a checquer'd Scene display,  
And part admit and part exclude the Day;  
As some coy Nymph her Lover's warm Address  
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress. (17-20)

Pope's focus here on a kind of a hiatus in action, on the intermingling and interaction of elements to comprise a larger entity ('a checquer'd Scene'), contrasts with the dualist tendencies of the heroic couplet. The direct equation of the 'waving Groves' and the 'coy Nymph,' as well as the two lines each with doubled verb constructions, all indicate Pope's technical prowess in the binaristic mode of perception that allows readers to interpret as oppositional his earlier ascription of nature to 'the Monarch' or 'the Muse' (2). However, the idea of a nature 'harmoniously confus'd,' like that of the joint ownership implied in 'At once the Monarch's and the Muse's seats,' jars with Augustan poetry's reputation as the seat of utilitarian principles, as well as Pope's reputation as a proponent of economic development that derives in part from his use of the heroic couplet.

This is not to say, of course, that the economic value of nature is unimportant to Pope. Commercial and military uses of oaks determine landscape description in *Windsor-Forest*. Margaret Doody claims that later in his poetic career, 'Pope took a much more critical and angry look at Whig beliefs and at the politics of mercantilism,'<sup>11</sup> but this 'more critical and angry look' did not significantly alter his attitude toward the

treed English landscape. As late as the 1731 'Epistle to Burlington,' a nobleman's virtue derives from his being a landowner

Whose rising Forests, not for pride or show,  
But future Buildings, future Navies grow:  
Let his plantations stretch from down to down,  
First shade a Country, and then raise a Town. (187-90)

Fifteen years after *Windsor-Forest*, economics still pre-empt and determine aesthetic appreciation. Pope's is a controlled, managed landscape, though he holds a slightly different idea about gardening: 'In all, let Nature never be forgot.'<sup>12</sup> The word 'nature,' as Raymond Williams demonstrated in *Keywords*, is one of the most complex in the English language, in part because England's landscape has been managed continuously for agricultural and silvicultural purposes for roughly six thousand years.<sup>13</sup> In *Windsor-Forest* Pope expresses this complexity as the meeting of disparate impulses, of many different ideas of environment, and of many different ideas of land use. The poem's conclusion proposes no resolution to these disparate elements, no way to accommodate them to a single way of thinking, but the poem's digressive mode (either georgic or silvan) and its distinctive variation on the heroic couplet demonstrate at least that it is possible to bring them together.

Pope's *Windsor-Forest* celebrates the path of English history and landscape use, but the period also features examples of explicit protest poetry. One such poem is Anne Finch's 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea's Converting the Mount in his Garden into a Terras, and other Alterations, and Improvements, in his House, Park, and Gardens' (hereafter 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea').<sup>14</sup> Finch's poem was predated by Margaret Cavendish's 1653 'A Dialogue between an Oake, and a Man Cutting Him Downe,' but I know of no earlier poem in this ecofeminist genre.<sup>15</sup> At some point before becoming Lady Winchilsea, Finch wrote about her husband's family's estate and found herself caught in an ideological gap. In 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea,' Finch praises her husband's nephew Charles for perfecting the landscape left to him by the two previous Earls of Winchilsea. Finch finds herself caught in a paradox of allegiance: she wishes to praise the present Earl's intervention in the landscape but recognizes that by authorizing his intervention she authorizes those of his predecessors. Her realization of the paradox prompts Finch to a complex redefinition of her attitudes, dramatizing the intellectual activism needed to articulate an idea before there is either the movement or the ideology to provide a vocabulary.

In her other poems in which the fate of trees has a role, Finch prefers a narrative of anthropocentric utility in which trees willingly participate.

It is this perspective that critics have alluded to in uncomplimentary references to Augustan attitudes toward nature. In 'The Tree,'<sup>16</sup> for example, Finch asks that Fate allow the great tree to live 'Untouch'd by the rash Workman's hand' (20), neatly putting at arm's length the fact that labour on her husband's family's estate would be instigated by the family, not by the labourers. Eventually, she tells the tree, a strong wind will come, and 'some bright Hearth be made thy Urn' (32); the tree is preserved from one use only for another, but its use-value as fuel is obscured by Finch's extending the ritual of cremation to its burning. In 'A Pindarick Poem, Upon the Great Hurricane' of 1703,<sup>17</sup> Finch mourns the death not of one but of many mature trees, for specifically anthropocentric reasons sanctioned in her poem by the trees themselves. A large oak, for example, was of such an age that it

made him, fearless of Decay,  
Wait but the accomplish'd Time  
Of his long-wish'd and useful Prime,  
To be remov'd, with Honor, to the Sea.  
The strait and ornamental *Pine*  
Did in the like Ambition joyn,  
And thought his Fame shou'd ever last,  
When in some Royal Ship he stood the planted Mast. (19-26)

Both trees fell in the hurricane. The violence of their deaths made them useless to the Royal Navy, their trunks probably split. The deaths of trees are mourned on at least two levels: anthropocentrically for their uselessness to humans, and moralistically as examples of a life interrupted. Economics, however, dictates the ecology of both 'The Tree' and 'Upon the Great Hurricane.' In 'Upon my Lord Winchilsea,' the suppression of alternative discourses is not nearly so seamless.

The poem opens with a question: If we praise those who raise monuments to the deeds of their honoured ancestors, 'With what more Admiration, shall we write, / On Him, who takes their Errours from our sight?' (5-6). The two previous Earls, though they did much to improve the garden, had left a small mound in it. Charles, the third Earl of Winchilsea, corrects this fault. Finch's argument is, however, more symbolic than this explanation implies:

as old Rome refin'd what ere was rude,  
And Civiliz'd, as fast as she subdu'd,  
So lies this Hill, hewn from itts rugged height,  
Now levell'd to a Scene of smooth delight. (15-18)



As Finch implies in her metaphor, landscaping is about control, not just appearance. Just as Rome's civilizing influence cannot be read separately from Rome's violent subjugation of those whom it 'Civiliz'd,' so the present appearance of the terrace should not be observed without recognizing the material effort required to erase a hill from the garden. Finch does not exactly regard the connection as negative, since there is valour in Rome's military success and dedication in Charles' landscaping, but she draws the connection nonetheless. Still, the poem is relatively uncomplicated ecologically at this point. The third Earl is simply doing what the family had 'threatned oft in vain' (9), and doing it well enough that John Evelyn saw fit to praise the estate as exemplary in his *Silva*.<sup>18</sup> The tension is only the usual georgic one between natural beauty and the potential for improvement.

As William Mason does with a marshy field in book three of *The English Garden*,<sup>19</sup> Finch can describe changing the topography of a place without causing herself significant ecological doubt. The shape of earth has no prominent place in the great chain of being, on the one hand, and on the other people find it easier to extend concern to that which is similar to them than to that which is different. The hill was an error; the garden and the family are better off without it. The conflict arises not from the terrace, but from the view it gives across the estate. From the new terrace, the viewer can 'see a sheltring grove the Prospect bound' (23). This grove grows in place of 'the Glory of the Seat' (25), a massive and ancient oak cut on the order of a previous Earl.

Finch is compelled by the interconnective method of her description to recount the story of the oak's death. In this retelling, no one but the Earl wanted the tree cut. Until he himself seized an axe from one of the labourers and attacked the trunk, disturbing narratives of class and labour even more than that of ecology, the men assigned to cut the oak refused to do so. Again, when faced with specific environmental change Finch describes that change in classical allusion:

So fell Persepolis, bewail'd of all  
But Him, whose rash Resolve procur'd her Fall.  
No longer now, we such Destructions fear,  
No longer the resounding Axe we hear. (45-48)

The fall of Persepolis and the felling of the great oak merge nicely in the phrase 'such Destructions.' The oak's cultural significance grows through equivalence with the ancient city's significance. Finch reveals her uncertainty about the justice of cutting the tree in the specificity of the image; the fall of Persepolis is much clearer in its application to ecology than Rome's civilizing those whom it subdued, just as the killing

of a tree is a more blatant intrusion into nature than converting a hill into a terrace.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, the poem's reader might expect to hear about the subsequent planting of the grove visible from the terrace, the view of which has prompted Finch's retelling of how the oak was cut in the first place. However, the grove never recurs in the poem. Finch instead makes explicit that her ecology is guided by utility:

No longer now, we such Destructions fear,  
 No longer the resounding Axe we hear,  
 But in Exchange, behold the Fabrick stand,  
 Built, and Adorn'd by a supporting Hand;  
 Compleat, in all itts late unequall Frame,  
 No Loame, and Lath, does now the Building shame,  
 But gracefull simetry, without is seen,  
 And Use, with Beauty are improv'd within. (47-54)

The economic profit from logging the oaks at Eastwell allowed the Earls to build the beautiful home (the 'Fabrick') that Finch celebrates. She mourns the oak's death sincerely; she admires the ends to which the family has put the money gained from the oak's death. By so openly describing the economic reality of Eastwell, Finch offers an ecological sense of the estate barely implied even in the flexible mode of country-house poetry, Finch's closest model. The estate is flamboyantly self-productive in Jonson's 'To Penshurst,' what with fish running into nets and partridges aiming themselves at arrows; it is perfectly suited to the wishes of Margaret Clifford in Aemilia Lanyer's 'Description of Cookeham,' the ground rising to meet her footsteps and the trees existing solely to shade her rest; but it is first in Finch's 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea,' written close to a century later than these two genre-founding works, that nature takes up an economic rather than a socially symbolic role.<sup>21</sup> In these lines, Finch actually names the commercial value of a tree to a landowner, an equation rarely made in polite discourse.

However, except for this one reference to building the house, Finch suppresses mention of the land's economic productivity. She refuses, in the end, to restore the absent referent of the family's wealth. The current Earl makes great improvements to the house, financed partly by demanding more from the land, but Finch praises Charles in specifically anti-economic terms: 'Flourish her Trees, and may the Verdant Grasse / Again prevail, where late the plough did passe' (76-77). After recognizing the economic benefits of logging, and combining that recognition with an appreciation of trees, Finch goes on to prefer the aesthetics of 'Verdant Grasse' to the wealth conferred by crops. To do this, Finch must

suppress the connection between her leisure to enjoy the prospect and the money generated by the prospect to which she objects. Perhaps recognizing the difficulty of suppressing that connection once it has been made, Finch closes the poem somewhat precipitately. She abandons the land altogether, and proposes that a better poem would be written by someone more able to ignore the estate 'and dare describe her Lord' (88).

Anne Irwin experienced the same difficulty in concluding her georgic *Castle-Howard*. Although her poem is more than twice the length of 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea,' Irwin ends with the same protestation of inability. After relating a fable explaining the name Ray Wood (after the female of the roe deer, which the local nymphs loved to hunt) and the presence of the wood on the estate (the nymphs, Daphne-like, were converted to trees to preserve them from a fate identical to 'the *Sabe'an Rape*'), she ends by stating her lack of skill and requesting another person to write:

All I desire is that some gen'rous Bard  
Wou'd show the World how much the Theme deserv'd:  
Do Justice to the Beauties of this Seat,  
And like *Appelles* — draw a Piece complete.<sup>22</sup>

Irwin makes no clear allusion to either Finch or any of Finch's poems. It seems simply that both Finch and Irwin felt a risk in addressing the relations between nature and society's powerful (the Earls of Winchilsea, Finch's husband's family, and the Earls of Carlisle, the current Earl being Irwin's father). Though Irwin does not criticize her father or his estate, and in fact celebrates them both as beyond her capacity to praise them sufficiently, at poem's end she claims an inability to render accurately the relationship between the family and its estate.

The difficulty Finch would have faced in articulating her uneasy response to the landscape at Eastwell cannot be overstated. If Irwin felt it difficult to praise the relationship between her father and his new-built Castle Howard, Finch thirty years earlier would have found it even harder to criticize the relationship between the Earls of Winchilsea and their estate at Eastwell. The established vocabulary that characterizes environmental protest in the late twentieth century was not available to her; she had literally to invent a perspective and a language that might express her ideas. The long-ago cutting of the great oak is the poem's pivot, the force of the oak's narrative absence interrupting and forbidding panegyric topography. Finch cannot avoid the economics of trees that her ecological perspective leads her to see, but that perspective does not allow her the freedom unilaterally to celebrate the financial advantages (and concomitant aesthetic advantages) or unilaterally to condemn

the activity that provides them. Unable to sustain what she understands as a contradiction, she ends her poem by abandoning ideas of ecology entirely.

Finch's heroic act of discourse, however, continues in other poems written later in the Augustan period. Fifty years later, Elizabeth Carter addresses the same issue, but by then discussion of cutting trees had been to some extent disciplined into polite irrelevance. In 'To Dr. Walwyn, 1745, On his Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk' (hereafter 'To Dr. Walwyn'),<sup>23</sup> Carter chastises a prebendary of Canterbury for his decision to cut down a grove. She objects, however, by questioning the reasons for his actions, not his right to act. In attempting not to disrupt the social organization empowering the actions she objects to, Carter implicates herself in the actions themselves.<sup>24</sup> She accepts the terms of debate and so legitimizes them in spite of herself.

This does not mean that Carter in any way supports the cutting of the trees. It simply means that her terms of defense are, unlike Finch's, reactionary rather than revolutionary. Carter values the grove as a transcendent and atemporal location, not as a place and not for any intrinsic value apart from its potential use:

Beneath the platane's spreading Branch,  
Immortal Plato taught:  
And fair Lyceum form'd the Depth  
Of Aristotle's Thought. (13-16)

Carter's reference to the importance of trees in ancient Greece is unlikely to threaten the hold that a nationalist English landscape theory would have on a patriotic Englishman like Dr. Walwyn. The ancient Greek preference for outdoor classrooms has little to do with the social symbolism of an English garden. The appeal to classic literature is not, even in the neoclassical eighteenth century, infallible. Carter's allusion in the next stanza to Virgil is even less likely to generate authority for her position, because Virgil's *Georgics* were a model throughout this period for writings about productive manipulation of the land. If a tree was obstructing his gainful use of the land, Virgil would heartily have recommended cutting it. However Carter might have understood him, Virgil's reliance on agricultural theory makes him an especially ineffective ally against Walwyn's being guided by landscape theory in his practice, especially since he was seeking to improve the ripening of his fruit.<sup>25</sup>

Carter attempts to intensify her argument by giving voice to the trees themselves. This has become something of a cliché in environmental protest writings, especially in local protests where people feel closely

enough identified with the land under consideration that they feel able to speak for it, or for the trees, or the river. Carter at this point in history does not have that option ready-made for her, and she does not take the revolutionary step of speaking directly for the trees. While aware of the potential of assuming the voice of nature, she resurrects instead the reactionary mythological model of minor sylvan deities. The trees whose lives are threatened do not speak; their hamadryads do. And while the idea that the landscape is full of living beings has the potential to challenge the mentality which chooses to cut trees, limiting those beings to outmoded personifications transplanted from ancient Greece is far from challenging. A hamadryad in the eighteenth century is not even an idea; it is a literary convention of an idea. In a period when scientific prose works on land use were so popular, so conventional an allusion was unlikely to strengthen an argument like Carter's.

The public idea of a hamadryad, however, may not have been the basis for its appearance in this poem. As her letters to Catherine Talbot indicate, the figure of the hamadryad had private significance to Elizabeth Carter. Early in their friendship, on May 24, 1741, Carter wrote humorously defending herself from her family's complaints that they could no longer keep up on her energetic and far-ranging daily walks: 'I protest I do not know of any harm I have done, except pulling up a few trees by the roots, carrying off the sails of a windmill, and over-setting half a dozen straggling cottages that stood in my way' (159). Talbot responds on June 27 that such a prodigious walker should have no difficulty walking from Deal (in Kent) to Cuddesden (in Oxfordshire), and that she would welcome a visit from Carter on the condition that her visitor 'promise not to root up any of my beloved elms' (63). On July 20, Carter resolves the issue by assuring her correspondent that there is nothing to fear: 'As I am as perfect a Hamadryad as you can possibly be, I shall pay the utmost deference to your trees' (66).<sup>26</sup> She makes reference to hamadryads twice more in this volume,<sup>27</sup> but this mention is the most interesting in relation to 'To Dr. Walwyn' because it suggests that she identifies herself as a modern analogue to the classical hamadryad. In the series of letters between Carter and Talbot, especially in the 1740s, Carter strongly supports walking for health reasons (both mental and physical), but she also extols its benefits as a way of developing a relation to the land. By identifying herself as a hamadryad Carter inserts herself metaphysically as well as physically into the landscape.

But both women feel powerless about changes inflicted upon the land. Writing from Canterbury, where she spent some weeks in the summer of 1745, Carter explains the genesis of this poem:

Dr. Walwyn, to whom this house belongs, talks of cutting down a set of trees that form a very pretty romantic gloom, because they prevent the ripening of the fruit, which has been a source of great affliction to Miss Hall and me; and to please her what I have enclosed was wrote.<sup>28</sup>

She concludes her letter by noting this intention to be singularly disturbing: 'in every other respect, saving the article of cutting down trees, the Doctor is as worthy a man as I know.' The situation is now clearer. Visiting with friends at a house that is not even theirs, Carter is at least two removes from having any influence over the fate of the trees. She writes to soothe and 'to please' her friend, who though closer to influence remains powerless.

In her response, Catherine Talbot summarizes the difficulty faced by the two of them in reacting to landscape change. Both women see great beauty in the world around them, and both are very familiar with landscape painting. In 1747, two years later, Talbot wrote that she now had charge over the family's flower gardens, when she could convince the gardener to follow her directions.<sup>29</sup> But she understands too well that only the landowner has any real power to affect the land:

I have no great idea of the charm there is in the word property, except when I am trembling for some shady elms that are the property of a neighbouring squire ... But when the sacrilegious axes come abroad, I wish I could call the whole country mine.<sup>30</sup>

Neither Elizabeth Carter nor Catherine Talbot can claim 'the whole country' as her own, not even a part of it. Both find considerable beauty in the landscapes in which they find themselves, so they both want to resist change so inelegantly introduced and of so inelegant a nature as cutting down trees. However, they also recognize how little scope for action they have, and they do not speak of this topic again. The last word on the subject is Talbot's unfulfilled wish: 'to call the whole country mine.'

The deck is clearly stacked against Carter's finding success through her poetic objection. Only one stanza of this poem effectively challenges Dr. Walwyn's scheme, and that one stanza is effective because it interrupts both the poem's narrative logic and its series of classical references. The sequence of allusions might have gone on indefinitely from Plato, Aristotle and Virgil, but Carter has her narrating hamadryad interrupt herself:

Reflect, before the fatal axe  
 My threatened doom has wrought:  
 Nor sacrifice to sensual taste  
 The nobler growth of thought. (25-28)

This is as directly as Carter can challenge the social structures represented by and benefiting a gentleman landowner. By suggesting that an interest in improvement is the product of 'sensual taste,' Carter delegitimizes Dr. Walwyn's opposition to her conservationism. What had been a dispute about aesthetics (whether present standards of beauty ought to supplant embodied history) becomes a question of morality. In redefining the prebendary as a follower of the senses and a devotee of taste, Carter redefines herself (and the hamadryad, interestingly) as a moral intellectual. Rationalism, she claims, is on her side.

Carter's biographer records, however, that the grove of trees 'was not spared.'<sup>31</sup> Carter may or may not have been able to influence the situation, but regardless, in the very next stanza Carter provided her opponent with ample opportunity to defend himself:

Not all the glowing fruits, that blush  
 On India's sunny coast,  
 Can recompense thee for the worth  
 Of one idea lost. (29-32)

Although she appreciates the material beauties brought by colonial trade, Carter rejects colonial materialism as an inadequate replacement for the transcendence of intellect. She also rejects Dr. Walwyn's favouring a more materially productive form of nature over a less productive form; in her letter to Catherine Talbot she explained he was destroying 'a very pretty romantic gloom' to allow 'the ripening of the fruit.' The physical, she argues, should not outweigh the metaphysical. Nothing, she says, is more important than an 'idea' — and Dr. Walwyn might win the argument simply by agreeing with her. He wishes to improve his fruit yield, but he undoubtedly pursues his plan to cut the grove and enlarge the prospect in accordance with some 'idea' of what a mid-century English landscape ought to contain. The title under which the poem first appeared was after all 'To a Gentleman, On his intending to cut down a Grove to enlarge his Prospect.' The distinction Carter relies on between taste and thought is neither clear nor, ultimately, persuasive; taste is only thought with a bad reputation and a popular following.

By de-emphasizing the materiality of the grove, and so contributing to its ongoing material absence in the discourse about landscape, Carter translates the grove into just another idea, competing with other more

popular and more fully theorized ideas. The death of the trees, which so haunts Anne Finch in 'Upon My Lord Winchelsea,' is finally suppressed as thoroughly by Elizabeth Carter as by the prebendary whose actions she opposes.<sup>32</sup> The poem appears finally as a consolation for someone who will inevitably lose the conservationist battle, not a call to arms. It explains the reasons why Miss Hall and Carter were unable to save these trees, but does not offer vigorous opposition to Dr. Walwyn's project.

Mary Leapor, writing at about the same time as Carter, took a different path toward defending the rural landscape, a path more akin to Finch's than to Carter's. While admitting that humans need to use the land, and seeing few reasons other than supernatural to reject such activities as cutting trees, Leapor combines a georgic ecology with appeals to fate and to social responsibility. 'Crumble-Hall' represents an altogether new kind of environmental writing.<sup>33</sup> As Caryn Chaden comments, Leapor saw the role of a poet as being to write with 'an emphasis on social commentary and the critical perspective of an outside observer,'<sup>34</sup> which Chaden considers Leapor to have learned in large part from Pope but which in 'Crumble-Hall' at least exceeds Pope's influence. Leapor refuses to operate within established discourse, and in her urgent attempt to redirect the social processes behind environmental degradation she invents for herself the diverse and locally based environmentalism that writers of the late twentieth century would like to claim as their own.

A characteristic of this sort of literature is its heavy focus on context, on the social background to the particular view of nature that sanctions a particular use of nature. Richard Greene, the author of the first book-length study of Leapor, fails to understand the significance of Leapor's poetics when she comes to address her subject in this poem: 'Oddly, her boldest statement on landscape comes in 'Crumble-Hall,' a poem arising from domestic service rather than agriculture.'<sup>35</sup> The dichotomy between agriculture and domestic service behind Greene's surprise holds only in a crudely schematic way; servants on a rural estate have different tasks, but they do not live markedly dissimilar lives. At Crumble Hall, for example, Ursula the cook is married to a man named Roger who appears to be an outdoor labourer.<sup>36</sup> Mira, the poem's narrator, is like Leapor herself an indoor domestic servant. She knows all the other workers on the estate, both indoor and outdoor. The common labour of servants gives them better knowledge of the land, and this knowledge provides Mira/Leapor with an opportunity to advocate social change to alter the estate-holder's use of the land.<sup>37</sup>

At the poem's beginning, Mira leads her reader on a tour of the house, pointing out significant details along the way. Then, some ninety lines into the poem, Mira begins openly to satirize the family of Crumble Hall, particularly the lord's son. Biron commits what would be to an aspiring



poet like Mira/Leapor a terrible crime: he ignores the books provided him and refuses the education guaranteed him by hereditary and gendered right. As the description continues, Mira leads her reader to a small door that looks across the hot leads of the roof to the landscape beyond:

Here a gay Prospect meets the ravish'd Eye:  
Meads, Fields, and Groves, in beauteous Order lie.  
From here the Muse precipitant is hurl'd,  
And drags down *Mira* to the nether World. (105-08)

Leapor uses the chance of a prospect, a conventional descriptive approach that encodes the land as landscape, to re-emphasize her own prospects as a servant; the same view offered to her cannot inspire the poetry it might from the lord, because it is not peculiarly *her* view. The crucial point of ownership, of dominion enough over the land to read it as landscape, disqualifies her from rehearsing the prospect before her; it disqualifies her from poetry itself. Unlettered Biron stands to have an easier time expressing the view conventionally, because it is a code tied more closely to ownership than to education. Mira confronts her exclusion directly. She mentions the prospect in order to mark her difference from those who are born to see it, and in order to specify her different relation to the land as a way of preparing her reader for her ecological proposals.

This interpretation is, however, far from definitive. Donna Landry, perhaps the most insightful critic of 'Crumble-Hall,' argues instead that

The danger in this text is that Mira might get above herself, put on airs, show too much familiarity with the beauty of leisured prospects and the freedom of the countryside: write like a traditional country-house poet, in short.<sup>38</sup>

Landry theorizes that Leapor hurls Mira and the muse downstairs in order to avoid 'that treacherous attraction to the aestheticizing language of pastoral.'<sup>39</sup> Leapor, in Landry's view, goes into detail about the servants' work and lives in order to escape legitimation as an Augustan poet. I propose precisely the opposite, that Mira/Leapor enters the world more appropriate to her position specifically in order to legitimate her poetry about the land within Augustan social and poetic codes.

If Mira/Leapor does not manage decisively to separate herself from the serving class to which she belongs, she can have no authority that could underwrite her thorough criticisms of Crumble Hall as a representative estate. Paradoxically, Mira/Leapor can only do so by demonstrating her intense knowledge of the servant life. The next forty-seven lines therefore describe other servants of Crumble Hall with all the

humour, bathos, and (apparent) accuracy required of a real Augustan poet. Once Mira's represented attitude toward the serving classes confirms her status as a poet, she gives herself permission to resume the interrupted prospect: 'Now to those Meads let frolick Fancy rove, / Where o'er yon Waters nods a pendant Grove' (156-57). The interruption to poetic discourse caused by Mira's social status has posed no significant threat; no lasting rupture has occurred, since the content of the interrupting passage between the two prospects seems to promise an unproblematically panegyric topography. Leapor goes to some lengths to qualify herself as a socially acceptable poet, anatomizing servants' lives for her readers, but it is important to recognize that Mira does so ironically to take advantage of the revolutionary potential of merely apparent convention. Mira does not connect herself with the upper classes by denying her life as a servant, but by intensifying her life as a servant; she represents herself as so deeply and so self-knowing a servant that her readers will allow her to transcend class boundaries and enter poetry.

Very early in her description of the treed estate, Leapor seems to add a touch of pastoral to the scene, mentioning that the song of nightingales in the grove 'Has oft to Slumber lull'd the hapless Swain' (170). That adjective 'hapless,' however, makes what could have been a pastoral cliché into a moment of social pathos. The grove may be the only place where the estate's 'hapless' labourers can find peace. In her position as servant and poet, Mira/Leapor is therefore the rightful defender of the estate's groves in both the real and the symbolic realms. Accordingly, just nine lines into its portrait, the represented prospect is violently interrupted by traces of the master's power over the physical scene:

But, hark! what Scream the wond'ring Ear invades!  
 The *Dryads* howling for their threaten'd Shades:  
 Round the dear Grove each Nymph distracted flies  
 (Tho' not discover'd but with Poet's Eyes). (165-68)

What could have been a smooth visual landscape description is interrupted by an intrusion from a different sensory register, a 'Scream.' The noises of timber cutting collapse into a protest by the dryads, combining to disrupt the conventional landscape. The visual is colonized by the intrusion, the poetic prospect diverted into its own practical defense. Poetry becomes ecology, in spite of its conventions, and Mira/Leapor makes no secret about her political allegiance. The parenthetical remark that the screaming dryads are 'not discover'd but with Poet's Eyes' emphasizes that Leapor's ecological vision is coextensive with her poetic perception.

Mira believes that the oaks are being cut down 'To clear the Way for Slopes, and modern Whims' (176). The master wants the oaks cut down in order to create a bare prospect and in order to finance, through their sale for lumber, the building of a new parlour. Mira objects strongly enough that her screaming nymphs leave the realm of casual spirituality and actively haunt the estate:

Yet (or the Muse for Vengeance calls in vain)  
 The injur'd Nymphs shall haunt the ravag'd Plain:  
 Strange Sounds and Forms shall tease the gloomy Green;  
 And Fairy-Elves by *Urs'la* shall be seen:  
 Their new-built Parlour shall with Echoes ring:  
 And in their Hall shall doleful Crickets sing. (179-84)

Fields in eighteenth-century garden poetry tend to be happy places; Richard Jago characterizes them in *Edge-Hill* as 'sunny lawns, and open acres cheer.'<sup>40</sup> For Leapor, though, because it will take the place of a grove, the soon-to-be-created lawn will be both a 'ravag'd Plain' and a 'gloomy Green.' The superstitious relation with the forest emphasized by later writers, including Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World*, bleeds into the being of the new parlour; the nymphs, no longer just customary literary convention, will haunt that part of the house paid for by the deaths of their host trees. Eventually, the supernatural haunting will become a physical possession by 'doleful Crickets.' Nature will reassert itself, and will redeem any ecological losses inflicted by the landowner.

The sweeping curse of haunting and desolation becomes, in the end, a threat. In this uniquely ecological poem, the prospect description leads directly to an unspecified but unequivocal challenge from servant to master: 'Then cease, *Diracto*, stay thy desp'rate Hand; / And let the Grove, if not the Parlour, stand' (185-86). Caryn Chaden notes that '[n]owhere does [Leapor] offer an economically and aesthetically harmonious example of a country house.'<sup>41</sup> The master remains in control, but because in Leapor's view the master has a less secure and less knowledgeable relation with the trees and the land than an indoor domestic servant, the master is therefore less qualified than a servant to determine the fate of the land. Leapor, like Finch, clarifies the economic relation between logging and building, but unlike Finch she faces directly the implications of such an equation. The being of the oaks, which includes their aesthetic appeal and their significance to the estate's labourers, far outweighs their economic value: 'she calls on the tradition represented by Pope to live up to its own ideals and apply its values universally.'<sup>42</sup> Leapor's ecology directs her toward social insurrection.

However, the conclusion to 'Crumble-Hall' has been read differently by some of Leapor's recent critics. Donna Landry sees the conclusion as 'a long-deferred escape into ... pastoral groves' that fails because 'the country house can no longer serve as a locus of social harmony or of harmony between human interests and a more complex ecology.'<sup>43</sup> In my reading of this poem, what Landry describes as an 'escape' is more a triumph than a failure, because it is in turning to describe the ecology of the grove that Leapor demonstrates the magnitude of her ecological poetic project. Leapor's choice is not as simple as rejecting the idea of the country estate, either; she chooses instead to reinvent the country house outside the country-house poem. There is no possibility of 'harmony between human interests and a more complex ecology,' because ecology — defined as a sustainable relationship between the land and human society — simply must encompass the multiple demands of human interests. The disjunction that Landry emphasizes is not a disjunction at all; Leapor's work is significant insofar as it recognizes the relation between human interests and ecology to be a profound interconnection, not an opposition.

For their part, Valerie Rumbold and Richard Greene read Leapor's conclusion as an admission of powerlessness. Greene comments only that 'The curse is humorous and grim,' while Rumbold argues that the powers on whom Mira calls are confined 'to a traditional language that only the servants will be inclined to take seriously. Mira's closing plea seems to recognize its own futility, meeting Diracto's obstinacy half-way even as she speaks.'<sup>44</sup> Mira does not meet Diracto half-way; she tells him that the grove should not be cut, that it should stand. Rumbold interprets the last line as an admission that the old parlour might after all be destroyed, and presumably replaced with something grander, but the parlour is hardly Leapor's focus. She objects to the new parlour not out of loyalty to the old one but in defense of the trees that might be cut and sold to pay for the new construction.

None of these readers recognizes the revolutionary potential of Leapor's ecology. Mira/Leapor names the relation between economy and ecology in the conclusion to this poem. She specifies the connection between exploitation of the land and exploitation of labourers. She specifies the necessary connection between this dual exploitation and the estate's maintenance or improvement. The country-house poem, which is the model preferred by Greene, Rumbold, and Landry, permits no such connection to be made, because it protects the veil over economic activity on behalf of the economically powerful. Leapor may not rebuke the powerful as thoroughly as postmodern readers might like, but her revolution is ecological, not social. There is no stronger statement in

eighteenth-century poetry of the connections between social and ecological protest.<sup>45</sup>

### III Conclusion: Toward an Augustan ecocriticism

In *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered*, Margaret Doody argues against placing too much emphasis on genre as a closed form when reading eighteenth-century poetry:

Closed forms are highly *formal* forms, depending greatly on generic trust being kept, and on trust in genre. Generic trust had been lost. The Augustans had to work at creating new kinds of poetry that would not depend for support on formal expectations and restrictions.<sup>46</sup>

This essay does not propose, more than two hundred years after the writing of these poems, the existence of a previously unrecognized poetic genre that bridges the transition from Augustan to Romantic thematically but refutes it chronologically. Rather, it suggests that a tradition of protest against environmental manipulation stretches back well beyond the Romantics, where so much political criticism finds its myths of origin.

Canonical attitudes toward nature may not be as straightforward as they have been assumed to be, as I hope the above discussion of *Windsor-Forest* has illustrated. Pope reveals the complexity of his thinking about the environment in the variations he plays on Augustan literary culture, but I have focussed here on poems that explicitly protest certain facets of Augustan ecological culture even as they take advantage of it. Finch, Carter and Leapor all use self-contradiction as a tool for questioning social ideals. The impulse toward self-contradiction results from social marginalization, from a person's being incompletely prepared to maintain (consciously or unconsciously) dominant discourses. A society's relation with the environment is the basis of its sense of being; that relation's continued existence is so important that complex discursive strategies arise to defend it through suppressing alternative discourses about the environment. Their marginal positions forced upon them by class (Leapor), family position (Finch), and gender (all three, but especially Carter) allow these poets the freedom to question fundamentally the discursive strategies which secure their marginal positions. Val Plumwood, a prominent ecofeminist philosopher, sees the great task of environmental thought to be the rewriting of 'the master story of colonisation ... Much inspiration for new, less destructive guiding stories can be drawn from sources other than the master.'<sup>47</sup> Practitioners of aca-

demic literature have heeded such calls for action, but they have seized on the Romantic period as the moment when literature separated ecologically from the 'master story,' leaving itself room to criticize the master.

Jonathan Bate's otherwise remarkable *Romantic Ecology*, for example, argues that an ecological reading of Romantic poetry (especially Wordsworth) is of pressing importance to a world approaching ecological collapse. For Bate, Wordsworth and the Romantics invented the way of seeing associated with environmental protest. Romantic scholars might wish to claim Anne Finch as one of their own, given Wordsworth's appreciation of her poetry, but they would never, I think, try to claim Mary Leapor or Elizabeth Carter. Readers of Augustan literature need to claim all these poets as representative of the eighteenth century in a way not fully considered before, and to assert that the Augustan period offers some of its own radical and exciting sites of cultural resistance. Environmentalism — especially in its most heavily theorized versions, ecofeminism and deep ecology — is a radical critique of social structures and forms; the poetry of such writers as Finch, Leapor, and Carter is not less radical for predating the Romantics, but more so.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane-Penguin, 1983) 240, 193, 197.
- 2 Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994); Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
- 3 Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest* (2), *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale UP, 1968) 195. Subsequent quotations from the poem will appear parenthetically in the text.
- 4 See John Chalker, *The English Georgic: A Study in the Development of a Form* (London: Routledge, 1969).
- 5 Robert Cummings, 'Windsor-Forest as a Silvan Poem,' *ELH* 54 (1987): 66.
- 6 Cummings 66 and 73.
- 7 Ralph Cohen, 'Innovation and Variation: Literary Change and Georgic Poetry,' *Literature and History: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar*, 3 March 1973, by Cohen and Murray Krieger (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1974) 3-42.
- 8 Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (3:8, 158), *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale UP, 1968) 227, 231.

- 9 Cummings (n. 5) 69.
- 10 Cummings (n. 5) 68.
- 11 Margaret Doody, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 15.
- 12 Pope, 'Epistle IV. To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington' (50), *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale UP, 1968) 590.
- 13 Peter Marren, *Britain's Ancient Woodland: Woodland Heritage* (Newton Abbey, England: David & Charles for The Nature Conservancy Council, 1990) 45.
- 14 Anne Finch, 'Upon my Lord Winchilsea's Converting the Mount in his Garden into a Terras, and other Alterations, and Improvements, In His House, Park, and Gardens,' *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. Myra Reynolds (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1903) 33-36. All further references to Finch's poems will cite line numbers in the text and identify in notes the pages on which the poem appears.
- 15 Margaret Cavendish, 'A Dialogue between an Oake, and a Man Cutting Him Downe,' *Poems and Fancies*, facs. ed. (Menston: Scolar, 1972 [1653]).
- 16 Finch, 'The Tree' in *Poems* 266-67.
- 17 Finch, 'A Pindarick Poem, Upon the Great Hurricane, 1703' in *Poems* 252-62.
- 18 John Evelyn, *Silva: Or, A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesty's Dominions*, reproduction of fifth ed., London, 1729 (London: Stobart and Son, 1979) 266.
- 19 William Mason, *The English Garden* (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International, 1971 [1783]) 1-117.
- 20 Old-growth trees, like such creatures as grizzly bears and pandas, have found much more widespread public support than have such things as, say, lichen ecosystems. Support for conservation softened in the mid-1990s with an increasing awareness that endangered species lists were overpopulated by so-called 'glamour species.' Whether the problem of 'glamour species' justifies withdrawing support for conservation is not my point here (although it does not); I mean only to point out that the eighteenth-century hierarchy of species and ecosystems still holds in our supposedly sensible age.
- 21 Ben Jonson, 'To Penshurst,' *The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson*, ed. William B. Hunter, Jr. (New York: New York UP, 1963) 77-81; Aemilia Lanyer, 'A Description of Cooke-ham,' *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, ed. Susanne Woods (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) 130-38.
- 22 Anne Irwin, Lady Ingram, *Castle-Howard* (London: E. Owen, 1732).
- 23 Carter's poem appeared in Dodsley's 1755 *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* as 'To a Gentleman, On his intending to cut down a Grove to enlarge his Prospect' (207-8). Seven years later, in Carter's 1762 *Poems on Several Occasions*, it appeared as 'To ————. On his Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk' (39-41). The shift in meanings from the cutting of 'a Grove' to that of 'a Shady Walk' enforces a rather dramatic change in the reading of the poem, even though the poem itself changed very little between the two publication dates except in such accidentals as italicization and capitalization. I use here 'To Dr. Walwyn, 1745, On his Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk,' as it appears in Carter's 1825 biography and collected works, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, With a New Edition of her Poems; To Which Are Added, Some Miscellaneous Essays in Prose, Together with*

*Her Notes on the Bible and Answers to Objections Concerning the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., fourth ed. (London: James Cawthorn, 1825).

- 24 The science of ecology is much appealed to by environmental groups in the late twentieth century, but it has been faulted for exactly the difficulties experienced by Carter in criticizing this gentleman. Ecology, argues Neil Evernden, is far too ready to accept objectivist terms of debate, too ready 'to address the developer's perpetual question: "What good is it?" Accepting the validity of that question entails denying the validity of the preservationist movement' ('Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy,' *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm [Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1996] 92). Carter, like Evernden's ecologist, remains inside the zero-sum game of the developer; a reason must be found, a use for the trees defended from cutting. In such a formulation, the trees lose their identity in usefulness.
- 25 Elizabeth Carter, *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, From the Year 1741 to 1770*, 4 vols., ed. Montagu Pennington (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1809) 1:108.
- 26 Carter and Catherine Talbot (n. 25), 1:59, 63, 66.
- 27 See Carter (n. 25) 1:172 and 1:253 for other mentions of 'Hamadryad.' The first mention is only a description of walking in the woods as a visit with 'Oreades and Hamadryads,' but the other is more interesting. Carter's poem 'Ode to Wisdom,' which features an owl, had been included by Richardson in *Clarissa* without her knowledge, and had also appeared without her approval in some of the journals. Talbot mentions its finally appearing in an authorized form: 'your incomparable owl is fixed at last under the protection of your Hamadryad in Mr. Dodsley's laurel-grove,' Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands*.
- 28 Carter (n. 25) 1:108.
- 29 See Talbot and Carter (n.25) 1:222 and 1:230-31 on the Talbots' gardener, including Catherine Talbot's complaints that she could not make anyone listen to her whom she was supposed to govern: her dog, her horse, or her gardener.
- 30 Talbot (n. 25) 1:109-10.
- 31 Montagu Pennington, *Notes, Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, With a New Edition of her Poems; To Which Are Added, Some Miscellaneous Essays in Prose, Together with Her Notes on the Bible and Answers to Objections Concerning the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., fourth ed. (London: James Cawthorn, 1825) 2:56, note.
- 32 Carter's support of trees eventually became material, as her nephew, heir and biographer Montagu Pennington recalled in *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*: 'About thirty-five years before she died, Mrs. Carter had planted in a little court before her house, an acorn, which produced a tree now large and flourishing, and of which she used to say with great pleasure, that it was the most eastern oak in her Majesty's dominions ... The author trusts that it is almost needless to add, that no considerations should tempt him to neglect or destroy that tree' (1:138-39, note).
- 33 Mary Leapor, 'Crumble-Hall,' *Poems upon Several Occasions*, 2 vols. (London: J. Roberts, 1751) 2:111-22. All further references will cite line numbers in the text.
- 34 Caryn Chaden, 'Mentored from the Page: Mary Leapor's Relationship with Alexander Pope,' *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, ed. Donald C. Mell (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1996) 32.



- 35 Richard Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 137.
- 36 Roger's profession is not specified, but he has more in common with the 'fierce Crew' who wait in the kitchen for a drink at lunch than with 'surly Gruffo' (129), the butler who grudgingly and disdainfully serves them.
- 37 I mean to imply no essentialist connection here between working on and caring for the land; there can be some practical connection, but that does not imply that any sort of responsible stewardship over time follows necessarily from the connection. In this poem it happens to, or at least that is part of Leapor's argument, but it is not a generalizable statement.
- 38 Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 112.
- 39 Landry (n. 38) 112.
- 40 Richard Jago, *Edge-Hill. Minor English Poets, 1660-1780: A Selection from Alexander Chalmers' The English Poets [1810]*, comp. David P. French (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967) 6 vols., 4:418.
- 41 Chaden (n. 34) 44.
- 42 Chaden (n. 34) 45-46.
- 43 Landry (n. 38) 118.
- 44 Greene (n. 35) 142; Valerie Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider: Mary Leapor in 'Crumble-Hall,' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (1996): 73.
- 45 Richard Greene (n. 35) has argued that Crumble Hall is based on Richard Chauncy's Edgcote House, where Leapor worked in the mid-1740s; the house she knew was torn down and rebuilt between 1747 and 1752 (16). Leapor died in 1748, so she would have seen only the destruction, not the rebuilding. In addition, Richard Chauncy's son, after inheriting the estate and the reconstructed house, 'caused the village of Edgcote with its eighteen families to be removed from his prospect' (Greene 16). Leapor's defense of the grove and the labourers was prescient, but ineffectual.
- 46 Doody (n. 11) 61.
- 47 Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993) 195-96.