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Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene: How Inclement Weather Shaped British and Irish Romanticism

Lauren Cooper
Syracuse University

ABSTRACT

Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene examines British and Irish Romantic literature through the lens of climate. The tail end of the Little Ice Age and two volcanic eruptions halfway around the world contributed to severe and unpredictable climate patterns in the British Isles between 1790 and 1820 that exacerbated existing social inequities and economic distresses. In poems and novels that engaged with this extended climate crisis, the project argues, we encounter an emergent discourse of environmental justice that undercuts the celebrations of "nature," the advocacy of human and animal rights, and the defenses of art that scholars so often identify with British Romanticism and that sometimes also surface in these same texts. These nascent conceptions of environmental justice show up most cogently in the writing of women authors, especially those writing within or about imperial or colonial contexts. To develop this argument, I put a variety of archival sources and recent historical and theoretical writings on climate in dialogue with literary texts as various as the poetry of William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Catharine Quigley, the novels of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley, and the nonfiction writings of John Gamble and Dorothy Wordsworth. The period sources include personal correspondence, newspaper articles, weather journals, meteorological records, and political cartoons. The project ultimately makes the case that the intellectual, cultural, and political history of climate it traces remains deeply relevant given the extent to which contemporary discourses of environmental justice often remain problematically entangled with rights-based discourses inherited from the Enlightenment.

CLIMATE JUSTICE BEFORE THE ANTHROPOCENE:
HOW INCLEMENT WEATHER SHAPED BRITISH AND IRISH ROMANTICISM

by

Lauren Cooper

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The process of writing this dissertation has been a bit like training to run a marathon. In the beginning, an easy 5k left me winded and the prospect of even more miles ahead felt so far beyond my abilities as to be hard to imagine, let alone achieve. However, as I began to hit my stride, I started to relish the unique length and complexity of the undertaking (my analogy starts to fall apart there, but writing a dissertation can only be compared to marathon running for so long). I would never have started to enjoy myself or to take pride in this process without the invaluable and unfailingly generous support and advice of my community, academic and otherwise.

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sifting through weather diaries for accounts of similarly inclement weather. A big thanks goes to the Engaged Humanities Network and Brice Norquist and Jacob Gedetsis for letting me think about some of the questions I'm asking in this dissertation in different and rewarding ways and for allowing me every so often to bring a little extra joy into the world. The Girls Inc. girls (and our incredible facilitators) probably deserve their own paragraph for making sure I never forget that writing's more fun when you break the rules and there's no problem that an extra spicy bag of chips won't fix. Preferably when you've successfully managed to talk your way into getting two instead of just one.

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INTRODUCTION: It was a Dark and Stormy Literary Period

It was a dark and stormy literary period. Literally so. Aside from the major political events through which British Romantic literature traditionally has been read (the French Revolution, Waterloo, Peterloo), the British Isles in 1789–1820 saw unusually harsh and unpredictable weather. The inclement climatic conditions resulted from a series of meteorological shifts caused by the end of the Little Ice Age, shifts that were later intensified by volcanic eruptions, including the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, which triggered the so-called "Year Without a Summer" in Europe in 1816. The period's increased precipitation, extreme cold, and wildly unpredictable weather patterns contributed to failed harvests, famines, and epidemics throughout various parts of Europe. In Britain and especially in Ireland, the effects of the climate crisis were deeply exacerbated by preexisting social and political inequities and, after Waterloo, a reeling national economy. Inclement weather was in the news almost daily in Romantic Britain and Ireland; however, it has never been one of the primary contexts through which scholars analyze the era's literature, a remarkable omission given the received idea that this was the time and place in which "nature" was first "discovered" or at least newly appreciated.[1] *Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene* aims to bring the climate history and

[1] While not focused on the weather exactly, there is a body of Romantic criticism that might be classified as "atmospheric." For example, Arden Reed, *Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1984); Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012); Jayne E. Lewis, *Air's Appearance: Literary Atmosphere in British Fiction, 1660–1794* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012); and Thomas H. Ford, *Wordsworth and the Poetics of Air: Atmospheric Romanticism in a Time of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). However, these works often center the aesthetic or conceptual aspects of air or atmosphere, neglecting the actuality of climate and weather. This is an aspect, perhaps, of what Tobias Menely in his *Climate and the Making of Worlds: Toward a Geohistorical Poetics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021) has referred to as the "climatological unconscious," wherein criticism favors historical contexts for literary analysis over geohistorical ones. My project is distinct from all these approaches, including Menely's, in its emphasis on climate justice and the production of environmental precarity as a result of the convergence of historical and geohistorical contexts.

political history of the period in close dialogue with each other, thereby revealing the extent to which Romantic literary texts were climatologically engaged.

Both the Little Ice Age and "The Year Without a Summer" are misleading epithets. Far from being a prolonged period of unremitting cold, the Little Ice Age is better described as a series of climatic shifts which were especially pronounced in the North Atlantic region. Scientists continue to debate the exact dating of the period, but most agree that the Little Ice Age began around 1300 and ended around 1850.[2] During those centuries, while there was an increase in cooler temperatures and shortened growing seasons, the climate in general behaved erratically, characterized by cycles of extreme heat and droughts, intensely cold and lengthy winters, or earlier, rainier springs and milder winters. Few of these climatic shifts lasted longer than twenty-five years, meaning that just as cultures and communities began to adapt their agricultural practices, the climate would suddenly change, leaving people once more vulnerable to the effects of unpredictable weather. Throughout the Little Ice Age, there were more famines and subsistence crises as the climatic instability negatively impacted crop yields. The environmental precarities created by an irregular and variable climate were largely the result of preexisting structural inequities. However, the successive and unpredictable weather shocks that were common during the Little Ice Age exacerbated these precarities by preventing communities from being able to adjust to such rapidly changing climates.[3] During the final decades of the eighteenth century and first few of the nineteenth century, temperatures across England were lower than usual, and rainfall measurements were higher. The Little Ice Age ended in 1850 when

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[2] Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300–1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) offers a helpful overview of the period's climate and its impact on European history.

[3] Alexander De Juan and Tim Wegenast, "Temperatures, Food Riots, and Adaptation: A Long-Term Historical Analysis of England," *Journal of Peace Research* 57, no. 2 (2020): 265-280; and David D. Zhang, et al., "The Causality Analysis of Climate Change and Large-Scale Human Crisis," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences – PNAS* 8, no. 42 (2011): 17296-17301.

a variety of factors, such as increased European imperialism and expansion, the Industrial Revolution, and fossil fuel use, contributed to the continued and steady temperature rise that we now refer to as anthropogenic climate change. Such a prolonged and constant rise in temperature was unprecedented within the climatic record. The project's chapters center on four distinct geographic and climatic contexts. In the case of Chapter 1, the Little Ice Age provides the climatic context for readings of Dorothy Wordsworth's and William Wordsworth's writings as the chapter argues that the complexity of Dorothy's ecological consciousness and nascent awareness of climate injustice has been obscured by critical neglect of climate, an obscuration enabled in part by the climatic retreat of William's poetry.

The 1810s were one of the coldest decades in the Little Ice Age due to what climate historians now recognize were the effects of an unknown volcanic eruption in 1809 and the extraordinarily powerful eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815.[4] The irregular weather produced in the aftermath of these volcanic eruptions provides the climatic context for Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 recontextualizes John Keats's 1817 sonnet "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" and 1819 ode "To Autumn" within the climate-exacerbated political and economic crisis of 1817–1819, arguing that Keats's poems register the climate injustice of these years. Chapter 3 focuses on the extended poem *The Microscope* (1819) by the unknown rural working-class Irish poet Catharine Quigley, whose articulation of the climate injustice produced through the convergence between the longstanding structural injustices of British colonialism in Ireland and the nonanthropogenic

[4] While volcanic ash from the 1809 eruption is present in Artic ice cores giving scientists information on its scale and impact on global climates, the eruption itself was undocumented and its exact location unknown, although believed to be somewhere in the tropics. Jihong Cole-Dai, et al., "Cold Decade (AD 1810-1819) Caused by Tambora (1815) and another (1809) Stratospheric Volcanic Eruption," *Geophysical Research Letters* 36, no. 22, (2009): L22703.

climate crisis triggered by the eruption of Tambora offers an alternative account of those years that complicates Chapter 2's analysis of England's concurrent climate crisis.

Both of these chapters highlight how "The Year Without a Summer," as a sobriquet, does not come close to adequately capturing the severity, scale, or temporal scope of Tambora's climatic aftermath. Far from creating just a season of unpleasant weather, Tambora's 1815 eruption altered global climates for years and triggered a yearslong subsistence crisis in Europe, with countries such as Switzerland, Wales, and Ireland experiencing true famine.[5] These years were bookended by two major political events in English history: the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, which ended a decades-long war, and the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, a violent military attack on an unarmed crowd who had gathered at St. Peter's Fields in Manchester to demand parliamentary reform and protest the Corn Laws. It was nicknamed "Peterloo" in reference to Britain's 1815 military victory, as men who had fought on the same side just years before at Waterloo found themselves pitted against each other at Peterloo.[6] Romanticists have tended to treat the period's terrible weather and its political events as merely coincident, analyzing Tambora's climatic aftermath and the concurrent post-Waterloo economic and political crisis as two disparate events rather than as a series of converging crises generated by

[5] Scholarship on Tambora's impact on global climates, especially work that examines its effect on subsistence and its interaction with the major European political events of the period, includes John D. Post, *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Henry Stommel and Elizabeth Stommel, *Volcano Weather: The Story of the Year Without a Summer 1816* (Newport, RI: Seven Seas Press, 1983); Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300–1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); William K. Klingaman and Nicholas P. Klingaman, *The Year Without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013); Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); and Wolfgang Behringer, *Tambora and the Year Without a Summer: How a Volcano Plunged the World into Crisis*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (Cambridge; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019).

[6] More information on Peterloo can be found in E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963); Jacqueline Riding, *The Story of the Manchester Massacre; Peterloo* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2018); and Robert Poole's comprehensive *Peterloo: The English Uprising* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

environmental and political events compounding each other.[7] This divide is in part a critical legacy of the type of poststructuralist historicist attitude that resulted in Alan Liu's famous proclamation that "there is no nature except as it is constituted by acts of political definition made possible by particular forms of government" (104). Such an attitude put the impetus on the first generation of Romantic ecocritics to prove that there was in fact a nature behind the text that exceeded the bounds of human political history, and the result was a wave of criticism that often overcompensated by producing a version of nature that skewed toward the ahistorical and apolitical.[8] Though more recent generations of Romantic ecocritics have done much necessary work to correct for and nuance this by taking care to resituate Romantic natures within their historical context, they have tended to do so by paying more attention to historical attitudes

[7] This is also an aspect of the tendency to treat "The Year Without a Summer" as anomalous climatic moment that spurred some literary production (e.g., Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) but not much else. For example, no mention of weather or climate appears in James Chandler's extensive *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) although he does note that from "the perspective of the documents dating from 1819, what is perhaps most extraordinary is that in the space of a few weeks the growing agitation all came to so abrupt a halt" (22). The abruptness of this seems less surprising when the political history of those years is placed in dialogue with a climatically exacerbated subsistence crisis that was just beginning to subside as harvest yields returned to normal at the end of 1819. Mary Favret's *War at Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010) focuses on the Napoleonic wars, skillfully tracing changing climatic metaphors for war as metrological science advanced but is more interested in the weather's figurative uses than the actuality of Romantic climates. Jonathan Bate's "Living with the Weather," *Studies in Romanticism* 35, no. 3 (1996): 431–447 was the first to argue for readings of Romantic literature that center the climatic context of Tambora, however, while he critiques an earlier generation of Romantic historicists like Jerome McGann for leaving the bad harvests of 1816–1819 out of their analysis of political events such as the passing of the Corn Laws, in practice his reading steers away from the political in favor of the ecological. More recent works of Romantic ecocriticism, such as the essays within the edited collection *Romantic Climates*, eds. Anne Collett and Olivia Murphy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) offer rich new approaches to Romantic weather, but often privilege formalist or conceptual approaches to Romantic literature that gloss over the concerns of subsistence or environmental justice created through the convergence of climate crisis and political inequities.

[8] In many ways, despite his seminal reading of Tambora, Jonathan Bate is the paradigmatic example of this tendency, going so far as to claim that "ecopoetics may properly be regarded as pre-political" (*Song of the Earth* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 266. Other examples include Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); with John Barrell, *Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) a notable early exception to this approach.

toward and conceptions of nature rather than to historical natures or climates.[9] Within Romantic Studies, ecocriticism engaging with imperial ecologies, natures, and environmental practices has been the most attuned to both the sociohistorical contours of Romantic natures and their ecological histories, since imperial exploration and colonization bring both into sharp focus.[10]

While the project's first three chapters examine instances of climatic instability and climate crisis during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the fourth chapter examines the agricultural affordances of the West Indian climate and its relationship to the climatic concerns of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Moving away from climate crisis or unusual weather, the chapter instead focuses on the climatically dependent networks of Regency-era British imperialism, enslavement, and sugarcane production. The project as a whole argues for the centrality and visibility of climate in the period, from the historical climate to climate's growing prominence in literary and other discourses. The fourth chapter pivots from the stark visibility of dramatic and unprecedented climates such as those produced by the aftermath of Tambora's eruption to the way climatic affordances, or the expected stabilities of geographical climates, underwrote botanical colonial ventures such as the production of muscovado sugar. Though the climate of the West Indies was conducive to the growth of sugarcane, it was also prone to various ecologically destructive weather patterns such as hurricanes and droughts. If

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[9] Scholarship in this strand of Romantic ecocriticism includes Ron Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque: British Art, Poetry, and Instruments, 1750–1830* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2008); Bridget Keegan, *British Labouring-Class Nature Poetry, 1730–1837* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in 19th Century Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012); Siobhan Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination 1750–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); and Lisa Ottum and Seth Reno, *Wordsworth and the Green Romantics: Affect and Ecology in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2016).

[10] Some examples of Romantic ecocriticism interested in imperial contexts are Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760–1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Kevin Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); Theresa Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); and Alan Bewell, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 focus on how cold and inclement weather produced scarcity and injustice historically as it exacerbated various structural inequities in the British Isles, Chapter 4 flips that on its head, looking instead at how, within the system of British imperialism, the climatic warmth of the West Indies was leveraged to create abundance and luxury within the British Isles while producing scarcity and injustice for many others.

Romantic criticism has tended to relegate climate to the background despite its overwhelming significance to the period. Meteorology became a distinct science during this time, and many amateur meteorologists kept daily weather diaries over the span of dozens of years, painstakingly noting the variable weather; this included taking measurements on thermometers and barometers, if such instruments were available.[11] John Constable (1776–1837) was an English Romantic painter whose picturesque landscape paintings continue to garner critical attention. Constable, along with J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851), was one of the period's most prominent painters of cloudscapes, and his cloudscapes are often turned to in discussions of the period's ecological aesthetics and thought.[12] In an 1821 letter, Constable recounts how he has been cautioned against his "skying," writing that while as a landscape painter he has been advised to consider the sky as a "'White Sheet' drawn behind the Objects," he believes that "it

[11] Information on the birth of meteorology as a discipline and growing fascination with and changing conceptions of weather in the period can be found in Theodore S. Feldman, "Late Enlightenment Meteorology," in *The Quantifying Spirit in the 18th Century*, eds. Tore Frängsmyr, J.L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider (Oakland: University of California Press, 1990); Richard Hamblyn, *The Invention of Clouds: How an Amateur Meteorologist Forged the Language of the Skies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); Vladimir Janković, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650–1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[12] For critical approaches to Constable and his cloudscapes see Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1986); John E. Thornes, *John Constable's Skies: A Fusion of Art and Science* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1999); Gillen D'Arcy Wood, "Constable, Clouds, Climate Change," *The Wordsworth Circle* 38, no.1 (2007): 25-33; and Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud*. Brief but illuminating discussions of the impact Tambora's eruption had on Constable and Turner's cloudscapes can be found in Wood*, Tambora*; and Seth T. Reno, *Early Anthropocene Literature in Britain, 1750-1884* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

will be difficult to name a class of Landscape—in which the skeys is not the 'key note'—the standard of 'Scale'—and chief 'Organ of Sentiment'—You may conceive then what a 'White Sheet' would do for me…the 'skey' is the 'source of light' in nature—and governs everything."[13] Ignoring the role weather played in the Romantic period is akin to treating it as "a 'White Sheet' drawn behind the Objects," and thus failing to see how it shapes "the composition."[14] *Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene* corrects for this, showing how the climate of the United Kingdom and Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries impacted and played a part in forming the period's better-known political and literary history.

The significant critical concentration on the 1815 eruption of Tambora and 1816's "Year without a Summer" is an exception to the generalization that Romantic critics have tended to ignore the period's weather.[15] However, literary critical attention to Tambora's climatic aftermath often treats it as a focalized moment of climate-inflected literary production (e.g., Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*), thus contributing to the perception that the "Year without a Summer" was a singular catastrophic event rather than a climactic point within an enduring weather formation, let alone a formation potentially relevant to thinking about the period's broader population of ecologically minded novels and poems. Three recent exceptions to this are Gillen D'Arcy Wood's *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (2014), David Higgins's *British Romanticism, Climate Change, and the Anthropocene* (2017), and the edited

[13] Thornes, 280.
[14] Thornes, 280.
[15] In addition to the examples listed in the body of the introduction, other works of Romantic literary criticism on 1816 and "The Year Without a Summer" include Bate, "Living,"; Jeffery Vail, "'The bright sun was extinguish'd': The Bologna Prophecy and Byron's Darkness," *The Wordsworth Circle* 28, no. 3 (1997): 183–192; Siobhan Carroll, "Crusades Against Frost: *Frankenstein*, Polar Ice, and Climate Change in 1818," *European Romantic Review*, 24, no. 2 (2013): 211–23; Heidi C.M. Scott *Chaos and Cosmos* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2014); and Reno *Early Anthropocene Literature in Britain, 1750-1884*.

collection *Romantic Climates* (2019).[16] Wood's groundbreaking book argues for an understanding of Tambora as a long-lasting global crisis, primarily concerning itself with a historical account of Tambora's effects and engaging with a handful of literary texts. Higgins insightfully contends with the question of how global catastrophe is produced rhetorically, focusing on its relationship to the theoretical concept of the Anthropocene. *Romantic Climates* represents a pioneering approach to the relationship between climate and Romantic literature as it expands its scope to include a wider variety of Romantic texts addressing questions of weather and climate more broadly.

Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene responds to this critical lack, using original archival work on people's experience of climatic harm in the period and drawing from cross-disciplinary work on ecology to recover underread Romantic literature that addresses climatic harm explicitly and to deliver new readings of familiar Romantic texts. In so doing, the project also reveals how a consciousness of environmental justice was emerging in Romantic Britain, or the awareness that ecological harms tend to aggravate preexisting social and national inequities. Such an account complicates received critical understandings of the Romantic period's veneration of "nature", its championing of human and animal rights, and its ideological investments in art. The clearest articulations of this nascent consciousness of environmental justice—a consciousness that I contend diverges from well-known Romantic attempts to think about ecological harm primarily in terms of extending human rights to nonhumans—surface in Romantic women's writing, particularly writing produced within or about imperial and colonial cultural contexts.

[16] Wood, *Tambora*; David M. Higgins, *British Romanticism, Climate Change, and the Anthropocene: Writing Tambora* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Collett and Murphy, eds. *Romantic Climates*.

As just noted, this project also looks past the version of environmental justice most familiar to critics of Romantic literature, a rights-based model of justice—often attached to animal rights—that crops up in many Romantic poems, philosophical treatises, and literary works for children, such as Mary Robinson's "The Linnet's Petition" (1775), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "To a Young Ass" (1794), John Oswald's *The Cry of Nature: or, An Appeal to Mercy and Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (1791), George Nicholson's *On the Conduct of Man to Inferior Animals* (1819), and Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories Designed for the Instruction of Children Respecting the Treatment of Animals* (1786).[17] As I detail more thoroughly in the concluding section of my third chapter, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, political and philosophical thought shifted to explore the question of individual rights and liberties.[18]Animal rights discourse intersected with and even grew out of these debates, as public attitudes toward animals moved toward a more sentimental and sympathetic conception of their intellectual and emotional capabilities, extending toward animals a limited amount of fellow feeling. The speaker of William Blake's "The Fly" (1789) registers this tendency when, after thoughtlessly shooing away a fly, he wonders to himself:

> Am not I
> A fly like thee?
> Or art thou
> A man like me? (5–8)

[17] Discussions of environmental justice within Romantic literature therefore tend to rely upon this rights-based model. While not often explicitly identified as environmental justice, examples of this strand of criticism include Christine Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing* (London: Ashgate, 2002); David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Tobias Menely, *The Animal Claim: Sensibility and the Creaturely Voice* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015). Lance Newman's recent *The Literary Heritage of the Environmental Justice Movement: Landscapes of Revolution in Transatlantic Romanticism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) focuses on the conceptual roots of environmental justice in Romantic depictions of natural landscapes as spaces which enable the articulation of radical thought.

[18] Examples of this include Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790); Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791); and William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793).

Animal cruelty began to be frowned upon socially, and in some cases, prohibited legally.[19] Rhetorically and even conceptually, debates around animal rights in the period intersected with debates around women's and working-class rights and abolition. Serving as a mediating ground for these more politically charged debates, animal rights discourse offered a medium through which people could imaginatively extend personhood and political agency to a different kind of marginalized Other without the risk of being charged with fomenting radicalism. Mary Robinson's "The Linnet's Petition" (1775), for example, contains the refrain:

> Ah! pity my unhappy fate,
> And set a captive free,
> So you may never feel the loss,
> Of peace, or liberty. (9–12)

The poem asks the reader to imagine what they might feel were they the one in the linnet's cage and aims to inspire within them "kindred pity… / And sympathetic joys divine" (66–67). While "The Linnet's Petition" is participating in women's rights' discourses, it does so implicitly, thus making it more appealing to a wider audience than something like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

The verse of Romantic poets, which is rife with sympathetic portraits of animals and insects, played a significant role in these shifting conceptions. The most canonical examples of this are Robert Burns's "To a Mouse" (1785) and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's "The Mouse's

[19] Much children's literature during this period didactically preached the proper treatment of animals, stressing kindness toward animals as a key moral virtue. At the same time, cruelty toward animals began to take on a class dimension, as the working-classes were thought to be lacking the moral character and educated sensibilities that would enable them to engage in sympathetic kinship with animals. Sympathetic identifications with animals were often heavily gendered as well; the caged bird poem is a prominent example of this as many Romantic women poets turned to the caged bird as a figure for their own feelings of social captivity. In 1822 the passing of "An Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle" marked the culmination of debates around animal welfare starting in the 1780s that took place in Parliament and the popular press. In addition to Menely, Kenyon, and Perkins, critical discussion of these aspects of Romantic-era animal rights discourse can be found in Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Moira Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780–1900* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain Since 1800* (London: Grantham, 1998); and Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

Petition to Dr. Priestly" (1771). Both poems position animal rights as natural rights that are denied and violated by human injustices. Burns's speaker refers to the mouse as his "poor, earth-born companion, / An' fellow-mortal" (11–12) as he expresses regret that "Man's dominion / Has broken Nature's social union" (7–8). Barbauld makes the mouse the speaker of her poem; her captive mouse argues that "The well-taught philosophic mind" (25) is capable of extending compassion to all as it "Casts round the world an equal eye, / And feels for all that lives" (27–28) and pleads for its freedom: "Let Nature's commoners enjoy / The common gifts of Heaven" (23–24). The mice in both poems simultaneously stand in for examples of human-on-animal injustice and human-on-human injustice: in the case of Burns, a Scotsman, the injustice of internal colonialism; in the case of Barbauld, an abolitionist, the injustice of enslavement.

The poetry of John Clare provides another example of this model. His "Lament of Swordy-Well" petitions for the inherent rights of an ecosystem, and his enclosure elegies are commonly read as a political critique of the loss of land rights experienced by the rural working classes after enclosure.[20] As a general rule, most readings of Clare's work that make this sort of political argument are predicated on the assumption that life was better for small tenant farmers and wage laborers pre-enclosure. Ignoring or minimizing the types of environmental precarity experienced by these social classes even before enclosure, they argue that a system of land division and privatization designed to benefit landowning farmers took away *by itself* one of the primary ways through which leaseholders were able to maintain themselves and a key support of financial and agricultural independence, while simultaneously severing a rich tradition of sustainable land use and ecological belonging. But the issue is that enclosure exacerbated other

[20] Approaches to Clare's poetry treating enclosure in this manner include Barrell, *Landscape*; McKusick, *Green Writing*; Rachel Crawford's nuanced account of enclosure in *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Keegan, *Labouring-Class*.

political harms which were themselves entwined with climatic violence in the wake of Tambora. The final wave of Parliamentary enclosure ended in 1815, the same year Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo and Tambora erupted. The first post-Tambora bread riots to occur in Europe broke out in Clare's home region of East Anglia; he was twenty-three at the time. Unemployment rates in the region had reached fifty percent, and a population pushed to the brink by starvation broke into storehouses, smashed shop windows, reclaimed grain and supplies from the homes of gentry, and marched through the streets with banners reading "Bread or Blood."[21] Focusing on enclosure without situating it within the climatic backdrop of the end of the Little Ice Age and the climate crisis of 1816–1819 fails to consider enclosure as an instance of environmental injustice within a much longer lasting formation created through the convergence of the period's climate history with its political and economic history. Rights-based discourses tend toward a utopian mode of thought that has trouble accommodating the ethical, temporal, and ecological complexities of something like anthropogenic climate change. Rights-based thinking thus has a limited ability to deal with conflicting rights, especially those that come into view through more ecological models of thinking that emphasize biological populations and that acknowledge conditions of scarcity that, though partially of humanity's own making over generations, cannot be unmade quickly.

The expansive and enduring nature of our current anthropogenic climate crisis requires a more flexible and ethically complex model of thinking that exceeds the conceptual limitations of such rights-based discourses. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Timothy Clark, and Malcolm Sen have all pointed to environmental and social justice paradoxes created by anthropogenic climate

[21] The project's second chapter offers a more complete overview of post-Tambora riots and social disturbances, including those in East Anglia. Additionally, more information on bread riots can be found in Thompson, *Making*; Post *Last*; and Klingaman and Klingaman *Year*.

change.[22] Sen highlights the relationship between ecological conservancy projects and forced evacuations of human populations within the Sundarbans, the only native habitat for the Bengal Tiger in the world. At the same time that inhabitants of the region were subjected to political oppression and evacuation and the well-being of the tigers rose in importance in the public eye, the tigers, whose habitat and food sources had been shrinking for years through the encroachment of human settlement, were exposed to a plentiful source of human flesh due to the political violence in the region. The tigers began hunting the local population, and as inhabitants responded by killing the tigers in self-defense, ecological arguments about the importance of Bengal Tiger preservation fueled political arguments for the villagers' evacuation. Untangling this type of environmental justice issue requires placing it within a broader historical and political scope and shifting to a mode of analysis that can intellectually grapple with the conflicting, and sometimes incompatible, needs and rights of the villagers and tigers.

Clare witnessed the final wave of Parliamentary enclosures from 1790–1815 from Helpston, his hometown in the Midland counties. The slow, cumulative, and globally diffuse nature of anthropogenic climate change means that the before and after has not occurred so starkly or definably in a single individual's lifetime. It has occurred over centuries, across the globe (although with the Global North responsible for much more than the Lion's share), and while currently at a breakneck speed, has, for the most part, unfolded slowly with other cultural, technological, and scientific changes.[23] The question becomes, how do we understand our role in

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[22] Malcom Sen, "Spatial Justice: The Ecological Imperative and Postcolonial Development," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45, no. 4 (2009): 365-37; Timothy Clark, *The Value of Ecocriticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021).

[23]Chakrabarty points to some of the conceptual and ethical complexities of this. As he notes, the period of "so-called great acceleration is also the period of great decolonization in countries that had been dominated by European imperial powers and that made a move toward modernization…[and] toward a certain degree of democratization of consumption as well…The lurch into the Anthropocene has also been globally the story of some long-anticipated social justice, at least in the sphere of consumption" (*Climate* 61–62).

mitigating a crisis which we—the current generation of people living on the planet—both have and have not had a hand in causing, in which our individual actions are simultaneously meaningless and unbelievably important, and from which we will all (to a degree) suffer the consequences while knowing that those consequences will be distributed on a disproportionately unequal scale that tends to reinforce other social inequities. And a more pointed version of that question for those of us in the Global North is: how do we square our environmental privilege and the outsize role our hemisphere has had in creating the conditions for climate crisis while still being as individuals (with rather short lifespans planetarily speaking) only an aspect of the disease, its beneficiaries and enablers but not its originators or primary drivers?

Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene approaches climate justice in Romantic Britain less through a residual Enlightenment lens of rights and more in line with contemporary environmental justice discourses responding to anthropogenic climate change. Christian Parenti's concept of "catastrophic convergence" informs many of the project's arguments, even if it only crops up explicitly in Chapter 3.[24] Parenti urges us to understand the injustices and harms created by climate crisis less as *overlapping* with than as *amplifying* and *expressing* themselves through preexisting historical crises of poverty and violence. Concerning itself with the relationship between the period's climate history and its political history, my project argues that treating these climatic, political, and economic crises as catastrophically converging allows us to trace an emergent discourse of climate justice within Romantic literature. While the critical impulse has been to isolate the political and climatic, the two were profoundly intertwined for people living through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as we shall see.

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[24] Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

Looking back at Romantic literary responses to nonanthropogenic climate crisis and climatically dependent systems of imperial exploitation offers a version of climate justice in the Romantic period which is alive to the politicized nature of climate injustice as well as to the diffuse and unexplainable nature of climate crisis. For the inhabitants of the British Isles during this period, the functional causes of that climatic instability and climate crisis were beyond their ken, conceptually speaking.[25] While that is no longer the case, understanding the science behind anthropogenic climate change does not necessarily make it any more fathomable or easy to live with. This is not to fall into the trap of climate reductionism, which flattens the problems created through climate crisis by assigning all failings and harm to the climate disasters while excusing the prior structural inequities that have made certain people exponentially more vulnerable to that harm than others. The political and economic context of the period contributed greatly to the types of precarity and harm experienced as a result of climatic instability, and, as the chapters demonstrate, that harm broke consistently across class, gender, national, and racial lines.

Much of what I have just said does not hold true for my fourth chapter. The blame for climate injustice suffered within the context of the Antiguan sugar plantation can and should be laid squarely at the door of enslavers and the British imperialist system in which they participated. In its reading of *Mansfield Park*, the project's fourth chapter traces the novel's exploration of climatic networks created through the entanglement of the ecological affordances of the West Indian climate with the production of abundance and luxury within the English manor house. Centering the climatic instability of the Little Ice Age and the climate crisis of

[25] Interestingly enough, Ben Franklin was the first person to accurately predict that volcanic eruptions had a far reaching and lasting effect on climate. His paper on the connection between the 1783 eruption of the Icelandic volcano Laki and the following months of bad weather was presented in 1784 at a meeting of the local Philosophical Society in Manchester. No one in the audience believed a word of it. In what likely would have been a frustrating turn of events had he lived to see it, several decades later as people struggled to understand the post-Tambora weather, one scholar at the Milan Observatory went so far as to blame the unusually cold weather on Franklin's lightning rods (Wood, *Tambora* 1–2).

Tambora within Romantic-era literature is what makes possible such a reading of *Mansfield Park* and Regency-era Antiguan sugar plantations. Paying attention to how the climate shaped and informed British and Irish Romantic-era literary texts allows for a reading of Austen's novel that understands it as deeply engaged with the climatic concerns that structured the economy of the sugar plantation. As terms such as "Plantationocene" make clear, those climatic concerns have, in turn, shaped our contemporary moment of climate crisis.

A few final words about the title. Climate (in)justice is this project's primary analytical lens. While its title, *Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene*, uses the term "climate justice," the chapters themselves more often use the phrase "climate injustice." Climate justice is the more recognizable term, although it implies both a recognition of environmental harm and precarity created by prior structural injustices, and a corresponding impulse and effort to remedy that injustice. The bulk of the texts treated within the project, however, primarily offer a recognition of the injustice, situating it in relation to the larger political and economic contours of the period. While climate justice falls under the broader conceptual umbrella of environmental justice, the project focuses more specifically on instances of environmental injustice engendered by the climatic conditions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The other part of my title— "Before the Anthropocene"—demands further explanation as well. The project calls attention to the Little Ice Age and the climate crisis created by volcanic eruptions as instances of nonanthropogenic climate change and, thus, in that sense, the project focuses on an era *before* "the Anthropocene," a term coined by Paul Crutzen and E. F. Stoermer to mark the geological era in which humanity gained planetary agency and became capable of impacting global climates. However, the geographers Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin have argued that some of the temperature dips during the Little Ice Age can be attributed to European

colonization of the Americas. They point to the rapid speed at which indigenous populations perished after Columbus reached the Americas in 1492, which they refer to as the "great dying," and the corresponding decrease in carbon emissions as the growth of landscapes that were previously managed by indigenous peoples exploded.[26] This is an important scientific distinction; however, crucially for the purposes of my argument, the inhabitants of the British Isles during the Romantic era were writing at a time *before* anyone recognized that humanity might be capable of impacting the weather. The actions of European colonizers in the Americas may have had a role in the frigid weather Dorothy and William Wordsworth experienced at Dove Cottage in 1799–1803, but it was unbeknownst to anyone living in the Lake District at the time.

Plenty of alternatives have been proposed to the Anthropocene, too, as the term to designate the new geological epoch marked by irreversible anthropogenic impact on the planet. Each of the alternatives proposed, which have included "Plantationocene," "Capitalocene," and "Chthulucene," reasonably critiques some of the conceptual baggage that Anthropocene carries (its anthropocentrism, among other things). I chose the term for my title partly for its greater critical currency, and partly as a tongue-in-cheek reminder that climate justice issues of course predate the Anthropocene (however you want to define or date it). In fact, often the same structural inequities responsible for climate injustices in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are the structural inequities that have contributed to our current moment of anthropogenic climate crisis: namely, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, and slavery. What

[26] 100 years after Columbus first showed up in the Americas, the populations of South and Central America had declined by 90 percent. Population decline occurred more slowly in North America, but by 1900 indigenous populations had declined by 95% from their estimated pre-Columbus levels. Factors such as war, disease, and slavery contributed to the "great dying." According to Lewis and Maslin, the new growth of forests was so extensive that Antarctic ice cores show a significant drop in atmospheric carbon dioxide around 1610. They contend that 1610 should thus be used as the beginning date for the Anthropocene, as it marks the moment at which capitalism's effects begin to be visible within the geologic record. Alexander Koch, Chris Brierley, Mark M. Maslin, and Simon L. Lewis, "Earth System Impacts of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas After 1492," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 207, (2019): 13-36.

my project's title aims to foreground is that it traces a history and discourse of climate justice before people had any inkling that they might have a hand in shaping global climates or planetary systems or might be capable of profoundly and permanently altering the earth they were just beginning to appreciate.

The four distinct geographic and climatic contexts that ground the four chapters are: the Lake District at the tail end of the Little Ice Age; England after Tambora; Ireland after Tambora; and the enmeshed worlds of the West Indian plantation and English manor house. In Chapter 1, "The Wordsworths' Little Ice Age: Climatic Instability and Climate Injustice in the Lake District," I propose that, in contrast to her brother William's poetry, the ecological consciousness of Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere journals allows that the inhospitality of certain climates to humanity does not necessarily amount to an adverse judgment on human failing. Dorothy Wordsworth thereby arrives at an awareness of what we would now think of as "climate injustice." The Grasmere journals have long been read as promoting an ethos of living in attentive congruence with the environment, a reading that overlooks their sobering attentiveness to the everyday hardships of living in an environment marked by pervasive illness, food scarcity, and suffering, much of it tied to inclement weather. I contend that recognizing this critical erasure of the complexity of Dorothy's environmental justice consciousness is to recognize the extent to which William's poetry itself plays a key role in that erasure. William's poetry shies away from certain ecological realities, engaging in a climatic retreat. Dorothy's journal entries are driven by an awareness of human precarity in relation to climate that is consistent with modern discourses of climate justice, which stress that the negative effects of climate are suffered unequally as a result of social and economic disadvantages.

Chapter 2, "On Seeing the Price of Keats's Bread: or John Bull Buying the Elgin Marbles in a Time of Climate Crisis, 1816," analyzes Keats's "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" and "To Autumn" within the context of the climate catastrophe and subsistence crisis of 1816–1819. Countering received readings of Keats's canonical 1817 sonnet "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" as a poem about artistic vocation, I argue that it is more about the opportunity cost of expending public funds on ancient art during a climate-exacerbated economic crisis. This reading emerges by placing the poem in dialogue with a contemporaneous political cartoon by George Cruikshank that critiques the British Government's purchase of the Parthenon sculptures in precisely these terms. The chapter contends that both the sonnet and the cartoon stage the purchase of the sculptures in terms of the opportunity cost of public relief and the potential "waste" status of art in the face of a depressed labor market and skyrocketing grain prices. In closing, the chapter turns to Keats's famous 1819 ode "To Autumn," a poem that has previously been read in relation to both Tambora and Peterloo. I argue that in understanding Peterloo as precipitated in part by a desire for environmental justice in response to the subsistence crisis of 1816–1819, we can begin to glimpse an incipient climate justice consciousness in Keats and in "To Autumn." Through its much-celebrated formal balance and overflowing images of abundance, "To Autumn" works to articulate a poetic vision of environmental justice in dialogue with Peterloo and Tambora's climatic aftermath.

Chapter 3, "The Storms Before the Famine: Irish Romanticism and Environmental Justice After Tambora," situates Tambora's aftermath within the colonial context of Ireland, examining how the effects of those climatic events converged with Ireland's colonial history. I turn to the little-known post-Tambora writings of two northern Irish natives, John Gamble and Catharine Quigley, to present an alternative literary record of those years. Quigley's extended poem *The*

Microscope, the chapter's primary focus, proffers a critique of how colonial contexts inflict and exacerbate environmental injustices, a critique derived from Ireland's distinctive experience of Tambora while under the yoke of an imperial power suffering its own climate crisis. This critique, which anticipates the modern environmental justice concept of "catastrophic convergence," notably diverges from other Romantic-era models of environmental justice, models grounded in trying to extend the discourse of rights to nonhuman entities like animals and trees. To register this divergence, the chapter returns to and reinterprets canonical Romantic poems about animal rights by Anna Letitia Barbauld and Robert Burns, among others. Gesturing to the emergence of a different sense of climate injustice which bears similarity to our contemporary sense of environmental justice as inflected by an awareness of human histories of imperialism, colonialism, class, race, and gender, I propose shifting our critical gaze from Romantic-era models of rights to a model like Quigley's which seeks to express the convergence of long-standing human processes of inequity and ecological degradation with the sudden apolitical violence of an altered climate.

In Chapter 4, "Hurricane Season at *Mansfield Park*: Rereading Jane Austen on Slavery through the Lens of Climate," I attend to the heavy emphasis on climate in *Mansfield Park* to recontextualize Sir Thomas's famous absence from the novel as he attends to undisclosed problems on his Antiguan sugar plantation. Austen's novel centered on a British landowning family financially dependent upon a sugar plantation in Antigua has long been a touchstone for postcolonial criticism within Romantic studies. While criticism assumes that the problems on Sir Thomas's plantation are solely political, the chapter reconstructs from the historical record the major toll hurricanes and other ecological events took on West Indian sugar plantations during this time period, bringing to the fore how the real-life political instability of Antiguan plantations

in the 1810s was entwined with their economic precarity, a precarity underwritten by concerns over droughts and hurricanes. Austen's attentiveness throughout to how climate connects to abundance, labor, and scarcity, is particularly suggestive in a novel in which all the types of labor performed at Mansfield Park are made possible through profits produced by the forced labor of enslaved peoples in Antigua. Chapter 4 suggests that by reframing the novel's climatic concerns in relation to questions of climate justice, we can begin to see aspects of its relationship to global climate as unexplored territory that change some of the ways in which we understand the novel as thinking about slavery, and that put it closer in dialogue with modern-day discourses of climate justice and their thinking about the inequities of globalization. In thinking through the affordances of particular climates and the labor needed to actualize them, Austen's novel articulates some of the complexities of the relationship between British abundance and the scarcity produced through the labor it requires.

1. THE WORDSWORTHS' LITTLE ICE AGE:

Climatic Instability and Climate Injustice in the Lake District

One of Dorothy Wordsworth's most famous similes from the Grasmere journals, which she kept from May 1800 to January 1803 while she and William were residing at Dove Cottage, is her description of "The moonshine like herrings in the water."[1] Virginia Woolf read it as proof of her ability to subordinate her subjectivity to her environment: "she could not have said that if she had been thinking about herself."[2] Close to a century later, Lucy Newlyn reads it as indicative of Dorothy's ability to craft seamless similes that amplify the "thingness" of what they describe by coming up with comparisons so apt that the reader barely notices the crossover between moonlight and herrings, a process Newlyn refers to as "re-familiarisation."[3] Mary Ellen Bellanca reads it as evidence that though Dorothy's journals use natural history conventions, they reflect her literary abilities in their aesthetic and creative sensibilities.[4] The journal entry Dorothy's famous simile comes from, however, begins with an aspect of life at Dove Cottage that critics routinely overlook: illness. "Friday [31st]: W&S did not rise till 1 o clock. W very sick & very ill. S & I drank tea at Lloyds & came home immediately after, a very fine moonlight night—The moonshine like herrings in the water" (30). The "S" in Dorothy's entry refers to John Stoddart, who was staying at Dove Cottage for several days. He and William presumably rose late that morning because they had been up talking most of the night before; William and

[1] The Grasmere journals consist of four notebooks, with the first notebook ending in mid-sentence on December 22, 1800 and the second notebook resuming on October 10, 1801. Presumably, another notebook contained the rest of the December 22 entry and continued until October 9 of the next year, but it has not been found. Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30. Subsequent page references for *The Grasmere Journals* will be provided in parentheticals in the main text.
[2] Virginia Woolf, *The Second Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), 165.
[3] Lucy Newlyn, "Dorothy Wordsworth's Experimental Style," *Essays in Criticism* 57, no. 4 (2007): 34.
[4] Mary Ellen Bellanca, *Daybooks of Discovery: Nature Diaries in Britain 1770–1870* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 121.

Coleridge were attempting to teach him to read *Lyrical Ballads* sympathetically. The casualness with which Dorothy records that William afterward rose "*very* sick & *very* ill" points up the routineness of such health events. The week had been cold and rainy, with the weather so bad as to prevent them from walking for several days. Dorothy notes that their neighbors, the Lloyds, were caught in a shower coming to visit, only for her and William to find them "all ill in colds" (30) when they returned the visit several days later. Her Grasmere journals repeatedly note instances of ill health among the inhabitants of Dove Cottage and record her fear—often expressed more anxiously than on this occasion—that William will make himself sick through a combination of overwork on his poems and exposure to the inclement weather outdoors. Cumbria was then and continues to be the rainiest county in England, and the Wordsworths frequently suffered minor afflictions and ailments worsened by the harsh weather and their poetic work.

The Grasmere journals have long been of interest to critics as they provide contextual information on a period of intense productivity for William and enable literary critics and biographers alike to date many of William's and Coleridge's poems, track revisions, and often match the incidents and scenes from William's poems with events Dorothy notes down in her journals. More generally, their appeal, including among lay readers, has been the access they provide to a community that has carried a reputation for centuries of being a foremost example of Romantic living in and writing about nature. In her biography of William and Dorothy, Newlyn contends that Dorothy has come to be regarded over time as a more integral part of this community, noting that "Among the thousands of people who make the pilgrimage to Dove Cottage each year, many stop to buy a copy of Dorothy's *Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* alongside an edition of her brother's poems." Together, the Wordsworths' responses to their time

in the Lake District, she writes, have "proved of outstanding importance, shaping the observations and imaginings of generations of readers, writers, and nature-lovers."[5]

What the Grasmere journals do not have a critical or a popular reputation for—and this, I will eventually be arguing, is a symptom of certain kinds of ongoing ecocritical investments in William's poetry—is their sobering attentiveness to the everyday hardships of living in an environment marked by pervasive illness, food scarcity, and suffering, much of it tied to inclement weather. The whole region was in distress. The years the Wordsworths resided at Grasmere, at the tail end of the Little Ice Age, were plagued by climatic and political instability, and the community around them consisted mainly of people living on subsistence farming and wages with no protection against food scarcity caused by harsh weather, changing agricultural practices, or economic policies influenced by war on the continent. It is not that Dorothy's journals attend to these things while William shies away from them all. William's lyrics from the period repeatedly stage encounters with beggars, disabled veterans, uneducated children, and subsistence farmers. However, whereas William's poetry consistently assigns blame for people's suffering or the disappearance of their way of life to humanity, or "what man has made of man," directly opposing inhumanity to the pleasure to be found in nature, Dorothy's journals highlight the climate as contributing to such precarity, often demonstrating a nascent sense of climate injustice.[6] Her version of environmental history, as we shall see, is not just substantiated by a contemporaneous weather journal kept by a Cockermouth farmer, as well as by rainfall and temperature averages, but also resonates with the anxious and bleak outlook that period documents such as weather journals offer. While her journal certainly chronicles her love of

[5] Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: All in each Other* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii.
[6] William Wordsworth, "Lines Written in Early Spring," in *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802*, ed. Fiona J. Stafford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), line 8.

Grasmere and her appreciation of its natural beauty, it also bears witness to the harsh climate of the Lakes, the climatic instability caused by the end of the Little Ice Age, and the detrimental effects the weather had on her, William, and the community in which they lived.

Because critics and popular readers often read the Grasmere journals alongside and in relation to William's poems, they tend to turn to the journals for their affirmations of the Wordsworths' harmonious and joyful dwelling in nature and not for their many intimations that nature must be endured as much as enjoyed. The underlying presumption in critical readings of Dorothy—a presumption engendered by William's poetry—is that her writing offers a model of harmonious dwelling in nature, although that model might be so different from William's as to be read as a critique of 'Wordsworthian' nature. The earliest editors and readers of Dorothy went to her journals to find more of her brother, to the point of excising sections of the journals that did not comport with his view of nature.[7] By the 1980s and 90s, feminist critics like Susan Levin, Anne K. Mellor, and Margaret Homans were going to her journals to find more Dorothy, while other critics, with various agendas, used her journals to expose the historical situatedness and ideological biases for her brother's understanding and poetic construction of nature.[8] However, whenever any of these critics made a case for the ecological significance of Dorothy's journals,

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[7] In Woof's introduction to her edition of Dorothy's *Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, she draws attention to this, noting earlier editions of the journals omit "most mentions of concern about the bodily conditions of Wordsworth, Dorothy, and Coleridge, from boils to bowel problems, from snoring to sleeplessness; such physical activities as shaving, eating, and white washing; there is no brotherly kiss of greeting in this edition…fewer poor people litter the roads. The poet lived in an elevated world" (xxiii).

[8] Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); and *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Susan M. Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism.* rev. ed. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2009). However, for early feminist critics, finding more Dorothy often required that they position her against her brother, either understanding the two as opposed gendered poles of Romanticism or understanding Dorothy's own description of herself as "more than half a poet" (81) as a result of her identity being subsumed by William's more overbearing and demanding masculinity. While proceeding from an admirable desire to treat Dorothy as a talented writer in her own right, they often ended up reading her against William and thus having to brush aside the aspects of the journals which did not quite gel with a reading of her as a Romantic writer fit to rival her brother.

they tended to state it in terms of her journals' ability to promote an ethos of living in attentive congruence with the environment, an ethos they often compared in turn to the investments of her brother's poetry in humanity dwelling harmoniously in nature.[9] Scott Hess's critique, in *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship*, of Jonathan Bate's *The Song of the Earth* is a kind of paradigmatic example of this tendency.[10] Hess justly takes Bate to task for the gendered condescension of his celebration of how Dorothy dwelled humbly in the environment, characterizing it as "disturbing not only in its appropriation of ecofeminist voices…but in seeming to deny to women those 'higher faculties' which, after all, ["Tintern Abbey"] attributes to the narrator as the means of his transcendence."[11] Yet his own sense of what makes Dorothy's journals ecologically significant is simply a different version of the 'harmonious dwelling' argument. For Hess, Dorothy's journals offer us a mode of "inhabiting" nature which he understands as crucial for us to "redefine ourselves as ecological citizens of place" and "live our

[9] Wordsworth criticism has exposed the ways in which William's understanding and poetic construction of nature is a product of his time and his own set of ideological, cultural, and political values; however, this often results in a turn from William to Dorothy. Thus, while Scott Hess persuasively argues for the necessity of understanding Wordsworthian nature not as an ahistorical universal model of the individual self in nature but instead as "a specifically, male, middle-class, white, professional, university-educated and culturally elite version of both subjectivity and environment—a model that continues to influence environmentalists up to the present day. The Wordsworthian version of 'nature,' in short, turns out to express a very specific model culture" (6); he finds a more ethical version of "inhabiting" nature in Dorothy. However, in order to locate in Dorothy a mode of inhabiting nature which will allow us to "redefine ourselves as ecological citizens of place," the aspects of her journal which represent a more complex—and less harmonious—relationship to nature are dismissed as irrelevant. While not all ecocritical approaches to Dorothy—of which there are fewer than might be expected—necessarily compare her explicitly to Wordsworth, they have a tendency to hold her up as an ecological model for her ability to do precisely the kind of work that earlier feminist critics saw her doing. They praise her ability to subordinate herself to the natural world, to divest herself of hierarchy or separation between human and nonhuman, and to favor the local, the minute, the particular, and the concrete over the hierarchical, the individual, the abstract, and the generalizing. Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth Century Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012). See, for example, Kenneth Cervelli, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2007); Newlyn, "Dorothy"; Judith Page, "Dorothy Wordsworth's 'gratitude to insensate things': Gardening in the Grasmere Journals," *The Wordsworth Circle* 39 (2008): 19-23; Sarah Weiger, "'A Love for Things That Have No Feeling': Dorothy Wordsworth's Significant Others," *European Romantic Review* 23, no. 6 (2012): 651–69; Allison Turner, "Nature and Classification in Dorothy and William Wordsworth's Writings," *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 58, no. 4 (2018): 833–54; and Lisa Vargo "The Rewilding of Dorothy Wordsworth," *The Wordsworth Circle* 52, no. 3 (2021): 358–367.

[10] Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); and Hess, *William*.

[11] Hess, 207.

way into an inhabitant's version of both environment and self."[12] Ashton Nichols's review of Dewey Hall's *Romantic Naturalists, Early Environmentalists* further captures the ease with which critics looking to critique William's ecological sensibility will often do so by celebrating Dorothy's superior sense of congruence with and attentiveness to the natural world in which she lives.[13] Nichols disagrees with the book's argument that William was a naturalist, countering the claim by insisting that it is, in fact, Dorothy and *not* William who comes the closest to being a naturalist in the family. The ease with which he opposes an argument about one Wordsworth sibling by swapping in the other underscores how frequently the two are read against each other in Romantic ecocriticism.

In contrast, I contend that the prominence accorded to William's model of ecology has resulted in the critical erasure of the complexity of the ecological consciousness articulated in Dorothy's journals, one which allows for the inhospitality of certain environments and climates to humankind. Her journals demonstrate her consciousness of the differential effects severe climatological conditions had among the community as climatic vulnerability reinforced preexisting structural social inequities. Not only do William's poems from this period obscure the climatological conditions of the Lake District, but this obscuration is crucial to certain aspects of his poetic practice. Attending to the ways in which Dorothy's journals reflect this climatic instability and the suffering to which it contributed exposes how William's model of ecology requires him to retreat from the climate of the Lake District in order to position nature as a site of harmony and pleasure.

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[12] Hess, *William*, 222.
[13] Ashton Nichols, "Romantic Naturalists, Early Environmentalists: An Ecocritical Study, 1789–1912. Dewey W. Hall," *The Wordsworth Circle* 46, no. 4 (2015): 251-253.

I propose that Dorothy's journals articulate an entirely different ecological consciousness altogether: one which allows for the inhospitality of certain climates to humanity without understanding it as a human failing. Recognizing this critical erasure of the complexity of Dorothy's ecological consciousness—an erasure tied to the prominence given to William's ecological consciousness and the desire to measure her in terms of it—is to recognize the extent to which William's poetry itself plays a key role in that erasure. William's poetry shies away from certain ecological realities. While William is sometimes critiqued by modern critics for running away from the political realities of the period into nature, I contend he is running away from both in his refusal to acknowledge within his poetry the severity and inhospitality of climate which Dorothy marks nearly every day. Reading her through an ecocritical lens that contextualizes the parts of her journal that other critical accounts pass over as irrelevant—her fastidious recording of everyday weather events, illness, and the human suffering around her—by placing them in dialogue with meteorological data and a period weather journal helps distinguish the extent to which her ecological consciousness, though mirroring William's on occasion, is fundamentally distinct from his. This difference is consistent with other contemporaneous accounts from the region and anticipates modern forms of ecocriticism that are less invested in seeking harmony in nature and are driven by an awareness of human precarity in relation to climate. It is also consistent with modern discourses of climate justice which stress that the adverse effects of climate are suffered unequally as a result of preexisting socioeconomic disadvantages and injustices. It exposes William's model of ecology as an ideological foreclosure of the danger posed by the Lakeland climate to his own body and to the masses of humanity in the region and the greater impact of that danger on those who were economically vulnerable. It is not that Dorothy's capacity for harmoniousness with nature rivals or overlaps

with William's, but rather, that in order to create a harmonious and benevolent version of nature, William must turn away from the climate of the Lake District as he experienced it during those years.

"Incessant rain from morning till night": Weather in Lakeland

The climate of the Romantic period was shaped by a series of climatic shifts caused by the end of the Little Ice Age. While scientists disagree on the exact dates of the Little Ice Age, most place the beginning around 1300 and the end around 1850, with the 1810s perhaps the coldest decade of that entire period. Dorothy and William took up residence at Dove Cottage starting in December 1799, a year with nearly the same average temperature as 1816, or the infamous year without a summer. The average annual temperature in Central England for 1799 was 46.22 °F, while the average annual temperature for 1816 was 45.86 °F—a difference of just 0.36ºF—with the more northern Lake District where the Wordsworths lived even colder.[14] Cumbria is also much rainier than the rest of England. According to chemist and natural philosopher John Dalton's (1766–1844) table of rainfall averages across England (the ones from Kendal span 1792–1810), Kendal received 53.944 inches of rain per year on average, which was close to 15 inches more rain annually than anywhere else in England, and over 33 inches more rain annually than London.[15] While such averages are helpful in painting a picture of weather patterns in Cumbria during the years covered in Dorothy's journal, averages can often deceptively flatten or regularize the unpredictability and severity of the lived experience of

[14] These averages come from Gordon Manley, "Central England Temperatures: Monthly Means 1659–1973," *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* 100 (1974): 389–405.
[15] John Dalton, "Observations on the Barometer, Thermometer, and Rain," in *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*. Second Series, vol. 3 (Manchester: S. Russell, 1819), 483–509.

climate.[16] Certainly, such averages fail to capture just how disruptive and traumatic even brief periods of extreme weather might have been for people in rural areas whose livelihoods were utterly dependent on the weather behaving in a relatively consistent and predictable seasonal pattern.

Dorothy's journals consistently reflect the cold and rainy climate of Lakeland. She uses the word "rain" 166 times throughout the journals, which is about 30 percent more frequently than she mentions "sun," but evidence of the region's often inhospitable rain and cold is far more pervasive than this. Her journals contain 16 instances of "hail," 20 of "storm," 56 of "shower," 56 of "frost," 82 of "snow," 118 of "wind," and 121 of "cold." She refers to the weather as "wet" 33 times. Even when she describes the weather as "pleasant" (36 times), close to a third of those are followed or preceded by a modifying conjunction. For example, "a fine pleasant morning but a very rainy afternoon" (30) or "it threatened rain all the evening but was mild & pleasant" (31). I note the number of times these weather-related terms appear in the journals in order to provide a sense of how rife with inclement and harsh weather the journals are, despite how infrequently this aspect of the Wordsworths' time at Dove Cottage is discussed. On Saturday May 17, 1800, there was "Incessant rain from morning till night" (3); on August 20 of that year: "Cold in the evening & rainy. Did not walk" (17); on October 9: "Very rainy—Wm & I walked in the evening—intending to go to Lloyds but it came on so very rainy that we were obliged to shelter at Flemings…we went homewards & were again caught in a shower…a very cold snowlike rain"

[16] In an article on meteorologist Luke Howard's record of London temperature averages, Alexis Harley argues that the unprecedented cold of 1816 disrupted Howard's project to "delimit the variations of the climate of London within fixed periodic cycles, and to make predictable its vacillations" (19). However, Howard was able, within the context of decades worth of statistical averages, to smooth out this disruption. Harley shows how "shifting the temporal scale on which Howard conducts his analysis transforms the meaning of his data, producing the welcome illusion of a permanently equable climate, and allows him to ignore the six contiguous days in February 1816 where even the maximum did not rise above the freezing point" (28). Alexis Harley "Domesticating Climate: Scale and the Meteorology of Luke Howard," in *Romantic Climates: Literature and Science in an Age of Catastrophe*, eds. Anne Collett, and Olivia Murphy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 17–31.

(25); on November 13: "A stormy night. We sate in the house all the morning rainy weather" (32); and two days later, "A terrible rain so Wm prevented from going to Coleridges" (32); in late May 1802, "Hail showers snow & cold attacked me" (100), and in July of that year "Cold & rain & very dark…It came on a terribly wet night" (117); and so forth.

As several of these brief quotes already indicate, Dorothy's journal records many instances where they are unable to walk or complete their plans for the day as a result of the weather, as well as several where they are caught out in rough and unpleasant weather and are forced to struggle home. A more extended example can be found in the entry for May 14, 1802: "A very cold morning—hail & snow showers all day. We went to Brothers wood, intending to get plants & go along the shore of the lake to the foot. We did go a part of the way, but there was no pleasure in stepping along that difficult sauntering Road in this ungenial weather" (99). Such experiences seem a far cry from the pleasurable springtime climate that one encounters in poems such as William's "Lines Written in Early Spring," where the speaker declares his "faith that every flower / Enjoys the air it breathes."[17] With regularity, the journals record occasions when the effects of the weather are not just ungenial but hazardous. An entry from late December 1801 records a particularly bleak and fraught journey through cruel winter weather that Dorothy and Mary Hutchinson made to Grasmere from Keswick: "The road was often very slippery, the wind high, & it was nearly dark before we got into the right Road. I was often obliged to crawl upon all fours, & Mary fell many a time" (55). They lose their way in the rapidly descending twilight several times but, fortunately, eventually find their way to the main road. Just weeks before Dorothy and Mary's treacherous journey, Mary, while out walking with William, had fallen and hurt her wrist as a result of the ice and cold (48). When Dorothy records the repeated instances

[17] Wordsworth, "Lines Written in Early Spring," lines 11–12.

when Mary "fell many a time" on this later "very slippery" day, she betrays more than a little awareness of and nervousness about the potential for weather-related injury. While there are many entries in Dorothy's journals in which the Lake District is celebrated for its power to afford experiences of harmonious dwelling with nature, they also portray the region as ecologically complex in ways that often—and perhaps more often than not—demand endurance.

"It seems our Lott to Suffer by Famine!": Food Scarcity & Climatic Instability

A large body of research suggests a link between social conflict and significant and unpredictable fluctuations in established weather patterns. While the complex interplay between climatic and other factors—such as governmental policies, agricultural practices, socioeconomic patterns, and prior inequalities—make it difficult to consistently predict or explain the link between social and climatic events, research shows that successive and unpredictable weather shocks—such as those common in the Little Ice Age—are more likely to increase community vulnerability as opposed to isolated extreme weather events or gradual climatic shifts. Since communities are unable to predict such weather patterns and adjust their agricultural practices accordingly, they are more impacted by erratic and repeated weather shocks. Climate historians have established that connections between social conflict and unpredictable weather were pronounced in eighteenth-century Britain, and especially in Northwest England, where the Lake District is located, due to the high degree of climatic instability caused by the Little Ice Age.[18] The evidence of journals kept by residents of the Lake District in this period, including Dorothy Wordsworth's, manifests a more intimate and experiential awareness of the exacerbation of

[18] Alexander De Juan and Tim Wegenast. "Temperatures, Food Riots, and Adaptation: A Long-Term Historical Analysis of England," *Journal of Peace Research* 57, no. 2 (2020): 265-280; and David D. Zhang, et al., "The Causality Analysis of Climate Change and Large-Scale Human Crisis," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences – PNAS* 8, no. 42 (2011): 17296-17301.

preexisting structural social vulnerability and economic precarity by severe climatic conditions. The Lake District of the Wordsworths' childhood, as well as their later adult years, was deeply affected by this climatic instability despite its absence from William's poetry and critical accounts of Dorothy's journals.

The weather journal that the Quaker landowning farmer Elihu Robinson kept from 1779 to 1807 in Cockermouth—the birthplace of both William and Dorothy—highlights the region's harsh and inconsistent weather and the impact it had on farming and the community around him. Robinson's journal tracks the yearly progress of the harvest, seed times, the appearance of the first thorn buds and the first cuckoo he hears, the frequency of rain, snow, and frost, as well as the impact that all types of weather have on his crops and those of his neighbors. His journal attempts to make sense of the unpredictable weather patterns, to determine when the best time is to sow wheat, how long it took the year before for the corn to form ears, and how large a potato crop they might reasonably expect to harvest given how—in period terms— "forward" or "back" the season is. He also keeps track of rising and falling food prices, often turning to his Quaker faith to maintain hope despite the suffering around him and the anxiety produced by the effect of the unpredictable weather on the harvest. Robinson is fond of hyperbole in his journal, frequently describing the weather as extreme to a degree unremembered by anybody now living. For instance, on December 10, 1789, he writes, "Continued mostly wet and stormy to the end of the year, in which perhaps we had the most wet weather that hath often been known. By John Dalton of Kendal's Accompt We have had this year 242 Wett [sic] Days and 65 Inches of Rain—Last Year 193 Wett Days and 39 Inches of Water."[19] Despite such exaggerations, however, his

[19] Elihu Robinson, "Journal of Elihu Robinson," in *Two Weather Diaries from Northern England, 1779–1807: The Journals of John Chipchase and Elihu Robinson*, ed. Robert Tittler (The Surtees Society, Martlesham, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2019), 184. Subsequent references for Robinson's journals will be provided in the main text with page numbers specified.

journal does highlight the potentially catastrophic effect weather events could have on the community. His repeated invocation of the regional word "dodged" to describe the effect of crops beaten down by heavy rain, unpredictable hail showers, or strong winds underscores how common severe weather was in the region, as well as the damaging impact it could have on crops.

As the stories of the many dispossessed, itinerant, and impoverished people in Dorothy's journals attest, often all it took to reduce someone to destitution in the period was one late or insufficient harvest, one hailstorm that flattened and damaged the crops, one unexpected or severe frost that made it impossible to plow the ground, or one heavy rain that caused a river to flood and to sweep away someone's cows.[20] Dorothy's journals repeatedly reflect the reality that relatively mundane ecological and agricultural occurrences often resulted in people whose whole lives were spent trying to survive on the land being forced to beg or starve. One entry narrates her encounter with "a half crazy old man" who begged a pin, and then a halfpenny from her and then "began in a kind of indistinct voice in this manner 'Matthew Jobson's lost a cow. Tom Nichols has two good horses strained—Jim Jones's cow's brokken [sic] her horn, &c &c— —'" (3). Dorothy does not tell us the exact cause of the man's impoverishment or the causes behind his litany of animal tragedy. However, his learning by rote the causes of his neighbors' suffering stresses how little it took for the balance to tip from subsistence to starvation. While Dorothy's "&c &c" perhaps marks her self-conscious censorship of the rest of his recital on the grounds that she has deemed him 'half crazy,' it has the effect of emphasizing her familiarity with his catalogue of agricultural woe.

[20] Robinson's journal records all these incidents, each occurring more than once. While Robinson does not often explicitly track the effect such incidents have on those impacted, his journal affectively registers them in its consistently anxious tone and plethora of dire prognostications and prayers for endurance in the face of suffering and famine in the community around him.

The Wordsworths arrived at Dove Cottage in December 1799, the coldest and rainiest month of an exceptionally cold year, and 1800 would prove no easier to weather for the communities within the region. The year experienced a series of weather shocks leading to illness, food scarcity, and general anxiety and unrest. While the beginning of 1800 was milder than expected, it did nothing to alleviate suffering in the region caused by the previous year's weather. As a result of the food scarcity and variable weather patterns that characterized agriculture in the Lake District during this period, inhabitants of the region were still suffering the effects of the weather of 1799. After listing the current cost of staples such as wheat, oats, and barley in January of 1800, Robinson notes that he read in the *Whitehaven Pacquet* that "a Baker in Castle Sowerby had actually Sold a loaf or a Cake of Bread for a Penny which only Weighed a Penny Piece of Copper! I think here is the greatest appearance of the Dearth that has been within Memory!" (223). As he notes down the rapid oscillations in temperature contributing to sickness—and sometimes death—in the community throughout the first few months of the year, he writes: "Such sudden Changes seem very unfavorable to Health! Hath been a Sickly time (I suppose) through the Nation, but not very Mortal. Great Distress for Want of Bread, great danger of an approaching Famine!!! Do We not merit Punishment as well as the surrounding Nations?" (223). A weather journal from the same period kept by David Pennant, a gentleman farmer and the son of a naturalist, in Flintshire, Wales, likewise registers this sense of general concern about the harvest as a result of the unusually harsh climate.[21] In January 1800 he writes: "The country is extremely sickly…perhaps arising from indigestion and the badness of the bread,

[21]Weather diaries kept by David Pennant, 1793–1835, MET/2/1/2/3/194, box 90, "Hollywell, Flintshire 1800–1803," Archive Collection, National Meteorological Archives, Met Office, Exeter, UK (hereafter cited as Pennant, weather diary). Flintshire is along the northernmost part of the western coast of Wales, just below Liverpool and a little over a hundred miles south of Grasmere. Pennant's journal does not offer as local an account of Lake District weather as Robinson's but provides an additional sense of how people throughout the geographical region were responding to the weather and crop yields during those years.

in consequence of the injury received by the ill harvested corn…Corn is at an exorbitant price. Wheat sells at 32° the bushel & upwards, Barley at 18°, & Oats at 10°—." An especially cold and rainy harvest season the year prior meant a reduction in the amount and quality of cereal crops in the beginning of the year, leading to the "badness of the bread" and increased price commented upon by both Pennant and Robinson. A regional Lake District newspaper, *The Cumberland Pacquet and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser* reports that October 1799 "has proved unfavourable for the harvest…the wheat is just begun cutting…with little prospect of an enripened produce. The new wheat are threshed out with much labour, rise very badly, and yield samples of a very inferior quality…The barleys have taken much damage, from lying so long wet… Oats are a thin crop, and likely to become more scarce."[22]

While January and February of 1800 were relatively mild, the first half of March was plagued by hard frosts and heavy snows, making plowing impossible and exacerbating the food shortage. Robinson writes, "I have some times thought It was not very unlikely, that in the Wi[s]dom & Justice of Providence, This Nation might be humbled by punishment as well as the Nations around Us: And as Others have Suffered by the Sword and Pestilence! It seems our Lott [sic] to Suffer by Famine!" (244). Pennant describes a markedly cold April and its negative impact on the price and availability of food, noting that until April 28 the weather "was generally cold, & so wet as to prevent the farmers from sowing their corn in stiff land—The scarcity of corn throughout the kingdom very great & butchers meat advanced to an enormous price."[23] In Cockermouth, May of 1800 "came in Wett [sic]: Not very favourable for Planting Potatoes, which is a Matter of great Concern at this time. They, viz Potatoes being the most likely of any

[22] "Second Monthly Report," *Cumberland Pacquet, and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser* (Cumberland), October 15, 1799, *British Newspaper Archive*.
[23] Pennant, weather diary.

English produce to supply the want of Grain" (224). Robinson is able to harvest a crop of potatoes on May 12, and sends his maid to sell them at Cockermouth, with strict instructions not to ask "above 8d per stone. She was soon surrounded by a Multitude, agitated by different Passions! Some Swearing Some Praying! & Perhaps Some Crying in order to be served" (225). On June 14, potatoes were sold at Cockermouth for 6d a pound, ten times what Robinson sold them for a month prior. Robinson's account of the first year the Wordsworths were in residence at Grasmere highlights how deeply the community was impacted by food scarcity and impoverishment and how enormous a source of anxiety the irregular and harsh Cumbrian climate was to the people utterly dependent on it for survival.

Dorothy and William were insulated from the worst of the famine and concerns about the crops; however, they were far from unaware of it. In February of 1801 Robinson writes: "grain and provisions still High: An Act of Parliament passed Prohibiting under Severe Penalties <u>any Flour</u> to be made finer than taking out a little Bran through a Wide Sieve. Warr [sic] & Famine now almost United. Embargo laid on all Shipping from Russia, Sweeden [sic], and Denmark. Gloomy indeed. <u>Darkness</u> that may be felt!!!" (233). In a letter dated April 29, 1801, to Mary Hutchinson from Dorothy and William, Dorothy notes that "The days are intensely hot and the nights are frosty every body prays for rain which God send soon! it would be a woful [sic] season if we should have another time of scarcity. You will be glad to hear that our good friend, Mr Giffith has sent us a barrel of the best flour from America."[24] The gift of "the best flour from America" is a significant luxury given the Act of Parliament preventing fine ground flour and the embargo on importation. Dorothy's inclusion of it in her news to Mary and its contextual

[24] Dorothy and William Wordsworth to Mary Hutchinson, April 29, 1801, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805*, ed Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd ed. Rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 331.

placement in the letter after her anxiety about the weather and her fears that they might have "another time of scarcity" demonstrates that, like Robinson, she was aware of the "darkness that may be felt" around them. The Wordsworths, however, felt it as an inconvenience and not a horrifying tragedy, as Robinson clearly does. In an 1800 letter sent to the Bishop of Durham, Francis Haggitt, a fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and prebend of Durham Cathedral, describes how he experimented with kneading his flour with bran water instead of clear water in order to "produce a more substantial bread & a greater quantity of it."[25] This is one of many examples of public announcements, recipes, and experiments widely circulated to instruct people on how to make their grain last longer. The Wordsworths' independence from the concerns of Robinson and many in the region is highlighted in a later letter addressed to Coleridge in which William writes:

> Dorothy is packing up a few small loaves of our American flour as to the pepper-cake which I promised, it died of a very common malady, bad advice. The oven must be hot, perfectly hot said Molly the experienced, so into a piping red-hot oven it went, and came out (but I hate antithesis, in colours especially) black as a genuine child of the coal-hole. In plain English, it is not a sendable article. (May 1, 1801)

Wordsworth presents the burning of the pepper-cake (a thick gingerbread cake) and the loss of the flour used to bake it as a humorous anecdote, not a crisis. The distinction is striking, considering the lengths many people around them were going to stretch out their flour.

Dorothy's journals demonstrate that the Wordsworths were conscious of the harsh climate in which they lived and how dangerous it could be to those who lost their homes through the convergence of environmental and socioeconomic precarity and were thus forced to beg or starve. On February 12, 1802, in an entry that begins with "A very fine bright clear hard frost,"

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[25] Quoted in John Chipchase, "The Journal of John Chipchase," in *Two Weather Diaries from Northern England, 1779–1807: The Journals of John Chipchase and Elihu Robinson*, ed. Robert Tittler (The Surtees Society, Martlesham, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2019), 70.

Dorothy writes about an encounter she had with a woman begging as a result of the inclement weather:

> In the afternoon a poor woman came, *she said* to beg some rags for her husbands leg which had been wounded by a slate from the Roof in the great wind—but she has been used to go a-begging, for she has often come here… She is a woman of strong bones with a complexion that has been beautiful, & remained very fresh last year, but now she looks broken, & her little Boy, a pretty little fellow…looks thin & pale. I observed this to her. Aye says she we have all been ill. Our house was unroofed in the storm recently & *so* we lived in it for more than a week. The Child wears a ragged drab coat & a fur cap, poor little fellow, I think he seems scarcely at all grown since the first time I saw him. William was with me—we met him in a lane going to Skelwith Bridge he looked very pretty, he was walking lazily in the deep narrow lane, overshadowed with the hedge-rows, his meal poke hung over his shoulder. He said he was going 'a laiting.' He now wears the same coat he had on at that time. Poor creatures! When the woman was gone, I could not help thinking that we are not half thankful enough that we are placed in that condition of life in which we are. We do not often bless god for this as we wish for this 50 £ that 100 £ &c &c. We have not, however to reproach ourselves with ever breathing a murmur. This woman's was but a *common* case— (66–67)

Robinson's journal corroborates the account of great winds throughout much of January and February of that year, and several violent storms (243). Any of these storms could have resulted in the roof being blown off the woman's house. While Dorothy initially seems to doubt the woman's claim that she was begging because her husband was injured, her attitude changes completely once she realizes the extent of their suffering and its climatic causes. She recognizes the profound negative impact of the severe weather on the family, contrasting her first encounter with the little boy, which is heavily aestheticized and picturesque, with his current unhealthy and malnourished appearance. This results in a nascent consciousness of the unequal suffering caused by the climate on those in the community, leading her to be thankful for her and William's insulation from the worst of its effects. She closes the encounter by remarking that "This woman's was but a *common* case," thus underscoring the regularity of such suffering.

The rest of the journal entry reinforces the commonness of this case as Dorothy narrates another encounter with community suffering:

> The snow still lies upon the ground. Just at the closing in of the Day I heard a cart pass the door, & at the same time the dismal sound of a crying Infant. I went to the window & had light enough to see that a man was driving a cart which seemed not to be very full, & that a woman with an infant in her arms was following close behind & a dog close to her. It was a wild & melancholy sight. (67)

As Dorothy merely observes and does not interact with this family, she cannot narrate the reasons for their poverty ("a cart which seemed not to be very full") or emotional hardship (captured metonymically through the "dismal sound of a crying infant" and the subsequent characterization of the scene as "wild & melancholy"). But what interests me here is that the detail that functions parataxically to yoke these two encounters together is "The snow still lies upon the ground," a sentence that reinforces the extent to which the entry's opening invocation of a "clear hard frost" serves as another kind of "common" frame for both these "cases" of suffering. The entry as a whole creates an impression of a Grasmere where suffering as a result of the climate is both commonplace and deeply affecting, as well as compounded by prior social inequity.

"A cold rainy morning Wm still unwell": Sickness and Ill-health at Dove Cottage

I began this chapter with an example of how frequently critics brush aside the ill-health of the community at Dove Cottage in favor of passages from the journals which emphasize a more harmonious and joyful experience of living in the Lake District. Despite the Grasmere journals bearing witness to the preponderance of quotidian illnesses suffered by the Wordsworth siblings, which were often worsened through their exposure to inclement weather, the notion of William's healthiness is a scholarly commonplace. In *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*, Alan Bewell, after listing many canonical Romantic poets who suffered from poor health, singles out Wordsworth as a notable exception to the otherwise sickly bunch: "Wordsworth was…intrepidly

healthy, a fact not lost on contemporaries as they made him into an English cultural icon and read his health as a confirmation of the healthiness of his poetry."[26] One of those contemporaries, Thomas De Quincey, commenting on William's love of walking, claimed that it was "a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of wine, spirits, and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which he has been indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings."[27]

One might even go so far as to argue that for William's contemporaries and many subsequent critical and popular readers, his health, poetry, and the Lake District have become inextricably linked in a kind of mutually reinforcing feedback loop. Wordsworth is healthy because he grew up in the Lake District; his appreciation of nature stems from and reinforces his poetic abilities; his poetic abilities are a result of his being "Much favoured in [his] birth-place," which first instilled in him a love of nature; his love of nature led him to spend time outdoors as an avid walker, which made him healthy; his healthiness allowed him to be an avid walker, which contributed to his love of nature and poetic abilities; and so on.[28] So powerful is this feedback loop that even when the Lake District's inclement weather does manage to make it into an account of Wordsworth's life, it is often used instead to highlight how extraordinarily hale and healthy he was. For example, in her survey of weather in English literature, *Weatherland*, Alexandra Harris notes the climate as proof of the Wordsworth siblings' hardiness: "Cumbria is now officially the rainiest county in England, dripping with twice as much rain as some other parts of the country. This didn't bother the Wordsworths. They were both phenomenally tough,

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[26] Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 22–23.
[27]Thomas De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1862), 135.
[28] Wordsworth, *The Prelude, 1798-1799*, ed. Stephen M. Parrish (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), line 303. Subsequent references to lines from *The Prelude* will be cited parenthetically in the main text with year, book, and line number specified.

able to walk for hours in steady rain, their woollen coats heavy with the wet, and still consider the experience pleasant."[29]

Contrary to such mythologizing, the Wordsworths of Dorothy's journals are frequently sick, with their having been out of doors in all weathers often a contributing factor, as well as, in William's case, his writing. It is true that the Wordsworths were enthusiastic and determined walkers, and that they certainly loved their home in "the rainiest county in England," but the everyday rhythms of life at Dove Cottage were repeatedly affected by the cold, wet weather and punctuated by periods of ill health. While Dorothy rarely assigns a causal relationship between the weather and the Wordsworths' myriad sicknesses, their constant juxtaposition within her entries creates a metonymic link. Cold and rainy weather does not cause illness in and of itself; however, it boosts the transmission of viruses by creating an ideal environment for their survival and replication while simultaneously weakening the immune system, making one more susceptible to infection. Additionally, as people spend more time indoors sheltering from the weather, the lack of ventilation and exposure to others means the viruses are passed more easily and frequently. As Dorothy's journals demonstrate, when she and others were caught out in inclement weather, they were often obliged to seek nearby shelter, thereby aiding in the transmission of diseases by bringing them in close indoor contact with a wider array of people. Furthermore, changing weather conditions, such as those common to the Lake District and especially pronounced during these years, can heighten these effects as people's immune systems struggle to adjust to the sudden shift.[30] In an entry that underscores the ways inclement weather

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[29] Alexandra Harris, *Weatherland: Writers and Artists Under English Skies* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), 232.

[30]Kees H. Polderman, "Is Therapeutic Hypothermia Immunosuppressive?" *Critical Care (London, England)* 16, no. S2 (2012): A8; and Robert E. Davis, Erin Dougherty, Colin McArthur, Qiu Sue Huang, and Michael G. Baker, "Cold, Dry Air is Associated with Influenza and Pneumonia Mortality in Auckland, New Zealand," *Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses* 10, no. 4 (2016): 310-313.

and illness shaped the everyday patterns of their lives, Dorothy writes: "Tuesday [7th]: Coleridge went off at 11 o clock [after having been delayed in his return to Keswick the day before by rain]—I went as far as Mr Simpson's returned with Mary. She drank tea here. I was very ill in the Evening at the Simpsons—went to bed—supped there. Returned with Miss S & Mrs J heavy showers. Found Wm at home. I was still weak & unwell—went to bed immediately" (24–25). It is not uncommon over the course of an average week in the Grasmere journals for Dorothy to several times describe both herself and William as being "unwell" and having to go to bed in the middle of the day. It is unclear why exactly she was "weak & unwell," but by remarking on the heavy rain as coinciding with a period of illness, Dorothy links inclement weather and ill health.

William frequently overexerted himself outdoors, contributing to bouts of ill-health and physical discomfort. In a November 1800 entry, Dorothy recounts how William walked to the top of Seat Sandal to visit the tarn where "he was obliged to lie down in the tremendous wind—the snow blew from Helvellyn horizontally like smoke"; when he makes it home, he is "sadly tired, threatenings of piles" (30). It seems in addition to being prone to colds and other minor illnesses, William also suffered from hemorrhoids, something Dorothy keeps rather detailed track of, and must certainly have been a constant source of discomfort for him—and perhaps just as certainly a source of embarrassment had he known it would show up in this chapter over two hundred years later. The next day, after his experience at the top of Seat Sandal in the cold and excessively windy weather: "Wm not well…I made tea for William. Piles" (30–31). While the next day, "Wm somewhat better" it seems the "very rainy morning & night…a very rainy afternoon & night" delayed his improvement, as the following day's entry reads: "A cold rainy morning Wm still unwell" (31). The morning seems to have been rainy enough for Dorothy to reiterate later in the entry, "a very rainy morning…Wm still unwell. A rainy night" (31). His

unexpected exposure to strong winds and snow is followed by a period of illness, and the successive days of cold wet weather so common to the Lakeland climate weaken his immune system and impede recovery. In a January entry from over a year later, William makes himself sick by overtaxing himself outdoors undertaking his domestic duties: "A cold dark morning. William chopped wood—I brought it in in a basket—a cold wind—Wm slept better but he thinks he looks ill…he was much tired. We were preparing to walk when a heavy rain came on" (60). The next day: "William had slept very ill, he was tired & had a bad headache…William's head bad after Mr S was gone I petted him on the carpet," and the following day, once again, "Wm slept badly" (60–61). Again, while Dorothy does not explicitly connect William's headache or sleeping poorly with him feeling unwell from his work outdoors in the cold and wet weather, she creates an implicit connection between the two by consistently juxtaposing them.

While the Wordsworths' illnesses are more frequent during the colder, rainier months of the year, they were also affected by the harsh and inconsistent weather of Lakeland during the warmer seasons.

> [23] August 1800: A very fine morning. Wm was composing all the morning—I shelled peas, gathered beans, & worked in the garden till ½ past 12 then walked with William in the wood. The Gleams of sunshine & the stirring trees & gleaming bright cheerful lake, most delightful. After dinner we walked to Ambleside—showery, went to see Mr Partridges house. Came home by Clappersgate. We had intended going by Rydale woods, but it was cold—I was not well, & tired, got tea immediately, & had a fire—did not reach home till 7 o clock (17–18)

The Wordsworths were unable to complete their projected walk for the day because it was too cold—in late August. Dorothy's pleasure in the day and her illness at the end of it sit comfortably next to each other on the page emphasizing how both were inextricable parts of their lives at Dove Cottage. If the William of critical and popular imagination is "intrepidly healthy" and "phenomenally tough," the William of Dorothy's journals is constantly affected by the

climate in which he lived—no haler or heartier than his sister, and only slightly healthier than the perennially sick Coleridge.

It is not just Dorothy's journals that emphasize William's frail health. Her letters, and William's own letters, consistently depict a William who was often ill or feeling poorly and unable to work as a result. Both Dorothy and William frequently locate the cause of his illness in his poetic practice, in addition to the inclement weather. In a letter composed shortly after he and Dorothy had settled at Dove Cottage, William writes: "I have taken a house in the Vale of *Grasmere*, (a very beautiful spot of which almost every body has heard,) and I live with my Sister, meaning, if my health will permit me, to devote my life to literature."[31] Here are some of the central tenets of our understanding of William: his residence at Grasmere, the strength of his relationship with Dorothy, and the devotion of his life to poetry. However, for him, that version of his life is not a foregone conclusion, instead, it is only a possibility if his "health will permit [him]." A typical entry in the journals reads:

> Sunday Morning 5th October [1800]: Coleridge read a 2nd time Christabel—we had increasing pleasure. A delicious morning. Wm & I were employed all the morning in writing an addition to the preface. Wm went to bed very ill after working after dinner—Coleridge and I walked to Ambleside after dark with the letter. Returned to tea at 9 o'clock. Wm still in bed & very ill. Silver How in both lakes. (24)

Dorothy never assigns cause to William's illness. However, the contextual placement of illness next to a description of their poetic work or inclement weather occurs often throughout the journals, implying an association. What is most striking about the entry is how commonplace William's being "*very* ill" is—so commonplace that more affect is assigned to the pleasure they derived from hearing Coleridge read "Christabel" aloud for the second time (they had previously heard it the night before).

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[31] William Wordsworth to Anne Taylor, April 9, 1801, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 327.

On other occasions, Dorothy makes a more direct connection between William's poetic practice and his ill-health. In an 1800 letter she writes, "Williams health is by no means strong…and he writes with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain and internal weakness about his left side and stomach, which now often makes it impossible fo[r] him to [write] when he is in mind."[32] In an 1801 letter to Coleridge, she notes: "Poor William! his stomach is in bad plight. We have put aside all the manuscript poems and it is agreed between us that I am not to give them up to him even if he asks for them."[33] William himself ends an 1802 letter by writing: "I conclude with regret, because I have not said one half of [what I inten]ded to say: but I am sure you will deem my excuse suf[ficient when I] inform you that my head aches violently, and I am, in [other respect]s, unwell."[34]

The William of the Wordsworth siblings' letters and Dorothy's journals is very different poet from the one whom modern critics emphasize "customarily composed while walking."[35] In part, this is a result of how convincingly William depicts himself, his surroundings, and his childhood within his poetry: his poems are their own sort of implicit health testimony, especially given their diectic aspects. By this, I mean Wordsworth's preoccupation with the incidents of everyday life, his tendency to entitle his poems with linguistic markers that tie them to a particular place, date, and moment, his use of endnotes and frame narratives within his poems to affirm the veracity and accuracy of such events as well to trace their origin; and both his own pulling from Dorothy's journals as he later composes poems based on people, places, and things they have seen and encountered, as well as critics' turnings to Dorothy's journals to provide context and evidence for his poetry. Surely, we seem to assume, a poet who is so specific about

[32] Dorothy Wordsworth to Jane Marshall, September 10–12, 1800, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 298.
[33] Dorothy Wordsworth to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, May 22, 1801, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 335.
[34] William Wordsworth to John Wilson, June 7, 1802, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 358.
[35] Bewell, *Romanticism*, 63–64.

how he felt on certain days and in certain contexts (e.g., a few miles above Tintern Abbey, while revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798) might mention if he had a stuffed nose, or a headache? Surely, William wouldn't assert that he finds "blessing in *this* gentle breeze" (*The Prelude* 1850 I. 1) if feeling unwell and suffering from a cough and a chill? As the journals and letters demonstrate, the Wordsworthian version of Wordsworth turns out to be as much a poetic and cultural construct as the Wordsworthian version of nature, and one which is often at pains to elide William's regular ill-health.

William's Climatic Retreat and the Problem with Harmonious Dwelling

Amelia Klein makes a point about the shift from ecocriticism praising William to ecocriticism praising John Clare at William's expense that is similar to the claim I made earlier about critics' tendency in recent years to praise Dorothy's ecological awareness over William's. She argues that "an ecocriticism that depends…upon a pre-given set of assumptions both about nature and the *right* way for humans to be in relation to it, will always lapse into complacency."[36] Thus, critiques of William's poetry based upon preconceived notions about the "right" style of ecological writing are no less ideologically compromised than Bate's belief that Wordsworth can teach us how to live in harmony with the environment. Both approaches begin with certain assumptions about what nature is, and how we ought to be inhabiting it. I wish neither to reproduce that same move in my analysis of William's turn away from the climate, nor to find myself in the ideological trap of searching for a more mimetic poetry, for—to borrow Lawrence Buell's Geertzian phrase— "thick[er] description," or of attempting to uncover

[36] Amelia Klein, "The Poetics of Susceptibility: Wordsworth and Ecological Thought," *Studies in Romanticism* 58, no. 1 (2019), 117.

"authentic" or "real" nature hiding somewhere behind the poem.[37] Instead, I propose that William's poems obscure the climatological conditions in which he and Dorothy lived—an obscuration that I argue is crucial to certain aspects of his poetic practice—and that by understanding why he obscures these climatological conditions, we can become more aware of our own ideological blind spots when we either praise or criticize his poetry's ecological sensibilities. Neither holding him up as an ecological model nor shunting him aside as a self-involved lover of bourgeois nature contends with why the Lakeland climate might be antithetical to his version of "nature", or how by excising the climate from some of the most famous Romantic poems, William has effectively shifted our focus away from the climate as well. By paying attention to the climate of the Romantic period, we can begin to cultivate an alternate understanding of Romantic poetry, one which attends keenly to the things Romantic poems fail to tell us about their climates, not in an attempt to find "better" ecological writing, but in order to understand how the poets who wrote them were responding to and enduring the profound climatic instability in which they lived.

The following sections will be developing the case that the poetry William produced during the period of the Grasmere journals, as well as *The Two-Part Prelude* (1805), actively turns away from the nature and climatic history of the region and its capacity to cause acute suffering in addition to the joy it also brought. William's pastoral poems create a version of nature that is harmonious and benevolent so as to deflect the suffering caused in part by the harsh and unpredictable climate of the Lakes onto the suffering caused by man. To mount this criticism of William's poetry and, in turn, of the tenacious image of the healthiness of his Romantic

[37] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 90.

ecological model, is neither to claim that all human suffering within the Lakes during this period resulted from natural causes, nor to deny that humanity played a part in creating and exacerbating suffering. The excerpts quoted above from both the Grasmere journals and Elihu Robinson illustrate how the two were linked, with climatological events being suffered unequally throughout the community as a result of prior structural inequities. Among the reasons that the people residing in the Lake District during this period were so vulnerable to the unpredictable weather were certain harsh governmental policies and the economic strains created by war on the continent: both contributed to the lack of sufficient social safety nets for a bad harvest, or, as in the case of one of the women from Dorothy's journals, for a false banknote. But to insist, as William's poetry does, on affirming that nature as a realm of pleasure while locating the causes of humanity's suffering elsewhere, is to advance an ecological view at odds with the way other inhabitants of the Lake District, and Dorothy, understood the climate around them. While they similarly could find joy and pleasure within nature, they also understood the weather as profoundly outside of their control and thus as a source of considerable anxiety and apprehension.

Bate's *Romantic Ecology* (1991) is the first text to explicitly claim ecocriticism as an analytic lens for English Romantic literature and it marks its critical intervention as a reaction to the New Historicism of Jerome McGann and Alan Liu.[38] For Bate, while McGann's *The*

[38]*Romantic Ecology* attempts to get back to Romantic poetry's roots as it were, to argue for Romantic poetry as nature poetry, and in so doing, Bate sets up several theoretical paradigms that remain influential for Romantic ecocriticism as a field. The first is the continued desire to read with the grain of Romantic poetry; "to allow Wordsworth to become once more what he imagined himself to be, what Shelley called him, and what he was to the Victorians: 'Poet of Nature'" (9). The second is the belief that Wordsworth still has something to teach us about how to dwell ethically and harmoniously in the world—treating Wordsworth as a "Poet of Nature" will allow us to understand the ways in which he "went before us in some of the steps we are now taking in our thinking about the environment" (5). Thirdly, and closely linked to the belief in Wordsworth as an ecological model, is the idea that it is poetry itself that can reaffirm the connection to the environment that Bate believes we lack: "in Romantic poetics, poetry is to be found not only in language but in nature; it is not only a means of verbal expression, it is also a means of emotional connection between man and the natural world" (17). Finally, Bate places great emphasis on pleasure,

Romantic Ideology (1983) offers a challenge to the earlier "idealizing, imagination-privileging" criticism of Geoffrey Hartman and Harold Bloom by seeking out the displaced presence of social conflicts within Romantic texts, in so doing, it turns Romantic natures into a smokescreen for ideology.[39] Bate contends that while Hartman and Bloom are too eager to prove that the Romantics were more than mere "nature poets," McGann and Liu are too willing to read Romantic nature as an ideological misdirect; neither strand of criticism understands nature *as* nature.

In order to reinstate Wordsworth as a "Poet of Nature," early Romantic ecocritics follow Bate in reading him as a straightforward nature writer—instead of a poet whose poems are often largely about their own formal and medial sophistication. James McKusick provides a useful example of this phenomenon. He traces Wordsworth's poetic development into maturity from what he considers the youthful picturesque poetry of *Descriptive Sketches*, to Wordsworth's "best poems" which "evoke a dynamic world through the vivid sensory imagery of its beholding by an engaged participant. It is a poetry of unmediated experience, not of detached description."[40] The intellectual investment in William's "best poems" as "a poetry of unmediated experience" leads early ecocritics to take his representations of nature, and him as a model of harmonious dwelling, at face value.

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both the pleasure that Wordsworth himself finds in nature and the ways in which we too can find pleasure in both reading Wordsworth and in being open to experiencing nature the way he does (4). Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1983); Alan Liu, *Wordsworth, the Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); and Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[39]Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 6. As I noted in the introduction, Bate and later Romantic ecocritics have made much of Liu's infamous declaration that "there is no nature except as it is constituted by acts of political definition made possible by particular forms of government" (*Wordsworth*, 104) often using the declaration to argue for the importance of treating nature as nature within Romantic texts.

[40]James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 56.

Early Romantic ecocritics often consider William's *Home at Grasmere* to be his great poem of dwelling, arguing that it models a version of ecological wholeness in which the poet harmoniously inhabits his environment. Bate contends that it is within *Home at Grasmere* that Wordsworth "achieves a truly ecological poetry."[41] He elaborates: "Man has come home to nature and the place takes on a wholeness, a unity that is entire. The text stands as a paradigm for what Karl Kroeber calls, in a fine phrase, 'ecological holiness.'"[42] This investment in *Home at Grasmere* as exemplifying harmonious dwelling is mirrored across Bate, Kroeber, Kate Rigby, and McKusick, who all understand it as a monumental achievement of ecological belonging. McKusick argues that the poem "evokes Grasmere as a place of joyful dwelling in harmony with the natural world" and goes on to describe it as "one of most expansive affirmations of an environmental ethic to be found anywhere in Wordsworth's writings."[43] Kroeber claims that *Home at Grasmere* exemplifies "the power language bestows on us to consciously reintegrate our lives into the affluence of natural existence and thereby to exalt man and nature," contending that closer critical attention to the poem proves that "Wordsworth is, perhaps, the one 'nature' poet whose vision is truly ecological."[44] For Rigby, *Home at Grasmere* "exemplifies not only the poetics of attunement but also the project of reinhabitation" and allows for a unity that "might then be understood in terms of the possibility it is seen to afford to dwell in wholeness, in communion, that is, with one's fellow women and men, with a richly varied more-than-human natural world, and with the divine."[45] This desire to discover within Wordsworth a blueprint for a

[41] Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 103.
[42] Bate, 103.
[43] McKusick, *Green Writing*, 70, 73.
[44] Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 141.
[45] Catherine E. Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 85, 86.

particular type of harmonious "dwelling" is often located within his relationship to Grasmere and Dove Cottage.

Such comments point up the selectivity of the poem's – and the critics' – ecological vision when read alongside Dorothy's journals' account of what dwelling in Grasmere and its inclement weather actually entailed: how much endurance the climate required, and how much it contributed to suffering and precarity. Indeed, William's first impression of the siblings' future home was clouded by unpleasant weather. In November 1799, William, who was on a tour of the Lake District with Joseph Cottle and Coleridge, wrote to Dorothy: "the mists hung so low upon the mountains that we could not go directly over to Ambleside…a rainy and raw day…a cold passage…This day was a fine one and we had some grand mountain scenery—the rest of the week has been bad weather. Yesterday we set off with a view of going to Dungeon Ghyll—the day so bad forced to return."[46] In this same letter, he writes: "C. was much struck with Grasmere and its neighborhood…There is a small house at Grasmere empty which perhaps we may take."[47] Their move to Dove Cottage likewise occurred during the coldest and rainiest time of the year—a circumstance which William describes in *Home at Grasmere* but which he leverages as proof of their fitness to inhabit the vale. Their first days residing at Dove Cottage were uncomfortable and marred by sickness. In a letter to Coleridge, four days after they arrived at Dove Cottage in December 1799, William wrote: "D. is now sitting by me racked with the tooth-ache…We have both caught troublesome colds in our new and almost empty house, but we hope to make it a comfortable dwelling…The weather since our arrival has been a keen frost."[48] The critical neglect of climate within Dorothy's journals can be understood as a symptom of what Tobias

[46] William Wordsworth to Dorothy Wordsworth, November 8, 1799, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 271–272.
[47] Wordsworth, 272.
[48] William Wordsworth to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, December 24 and 27, 1799, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 274–275.

Menely terms the "climatological unconscious."[49] However, for Menely, the way wind appears in Wordsworth's poems is indicative of "a different understanding of climate. What is, for the earlier poets, a shaping condition of human activity, a hazard of planetary existence, is, for Wordsworth…a symbol of undetermination."[50] I contend that by actively turning away from climate, William's poems demonstrate his awareness that climate is "a shaping condition of human activity, a hazard of planetary existence" and thus any representation of harmonious or benevolent nature necessitates the obscuration of the climatic instability in which he and Dorothy lived.

In *Home at Grasmere*, William excises both the physical discomfort and the notoriously inclement climate he and Dorothy experienced as they took up residence in Grasmere in order to create a version of Grasmere that welcomes them as ideal inhabitants. In *Home at Grasmere*, severe weather serves as an endurance test for the speaker and Emma (Dorothy) to prove themselves chosen inhabitants of the vale. William describes their journey toward Grasmere in the cruel winter weather, noting "Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak" (218), but then softens his description: "The frosty wind as if to make amends / for its keen breath, was aiding to our course."[51] It is no wonder that Bate and others found *Home at Grasmere* to be such a compelling model of harmonious dwelling; even in this moment of environmental discomfort,

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[49]Menely argues that criticism has a tendency to favor historical contexts for literary analysis while neglecting to foreground geohistorical perspectives, resulting in the "climatological unconscious." An additional symptom of the "climatological unconscious" might be the ease with which Thomas H. Ford argues that the "catalogue of atmospheric effects in Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, for example, might now be understood as a manual of poetic techniques" (40), without also attending to how they might be understood as a catalogue of *climatic* characteristics which played a significant and vital role in shaping both the landscape and culture of the Lakes, as well as the Wordsworths' reactions to it. Thomas H. Ford, *Wordsworth and the Poetics of Air: Atmospheric Romanticism in a Time of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Tobias Menely, *Climate and the Making of Worlds: Toward a Geohistorical Poetics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021).

[50] Menely, 5.

[51] William Wordsworth, "Home at Grasmere," in *William Wordsworth* ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), lines 218, 224–225. Subsequent references to *Home at Grasmere* will be cited parenthetically in the main text with line numbers specified.

the wind apologizes for its rough treatment of them. William goes on to describe the months of harsh weather as a trial to which the vale subjects them before beginning to love them:

> It loves us now, this Vale so beautiful
> Begins to love us! By a sullen storm,
> Two months unwearied of severest storm,
> It put the temper of our minds to proof,
> And found us faithful through the gloom (268–272)

William and Dorothy earn spring and genial weather through their steadfastness. The cyclical turn of the seasons becomes proof of their ecological belonging and the harmoniousness of their dwelling. When ecocritics read this as evidence of a "truly ecological poetry," they preserve and affirm this mode of relating to nature which is necessarily both exclusive and unattainable. Only certain subjects have the correct "temper" of mind; being loved by the vale is earned, not given. Stormy weather here is the trial through which one earns ecological belonging, not an inextricable aspect of that ecosystem.

William's poem similarly refuses to acknowledge the suffering of the community around him, or how the effects of excessively inclement weather are felt differently depending on one's livelihood and economic resources. While Robinson's and Dorothy's journals painstakingly record the scarcity, famine, and poverty people experienced during the exact period referenced by the poem, William claims that in Grasmere, "extreme penury is here unknown, / And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness" for "they who want, are not too great a weight / For those who can relieve" (444–448). This description is at odds with Dorothy's fears that "it would be a woful [sic] season if we should have another time of scarcity" or Robinson's declaration that "I think here is the greatest appearance of the Dearth that has been within Memory!" (223).[52] *Home at Grasmere* presents an idealized representation of the climate of the Lakes. Claiming *Home at*

[52] Dorothy Wordsworth to Mary Hutchinson, April 29, 1801, in *Letters* ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 331.

Grasmere as a model of harmonious dwelling fails to consider that the negative aspects of climate for humanity are not suffered equally, as the dangers of climatic instability were especially pronounced for those residents constantly living on the edge of destitution. To understand it as representative or "truly ecological" obscures the cultural and ideological function that its depictions of climate and rural poverty might serve.

In *Home at Grasmere* William takes pains to cultivate a particular poetic representation of himself and the Lakes, one wherein he claims a special relationship to the region in part through the inclemency of the weather, and then leverages this special relationship in order to assert the authority of his poetic depictions of the region. *Home at Grasmere* is an early version of the mutually reinforcing relationship between William's health, his poetry, and the Lakes. His claims to being poetically rooted in place—and the host of attendant values that come attached to that for ecocritics such as the ecological and ethical benefits of localism, authenticity, and his ability to speak for the working-class inhabitants of the region in his poetry—are themselves affirmed by his health, his physical and mental ability to weather "Two months unwearied of severest storm." His weathering of the storm thus affirms the "healthiness" of his poetry, which itself is morally weighted. His description of the vale finding him and Dorothy "*faithful* through the gloom" and putting "the *temper* of [their] minds to proof" illustrates the extent to which their ability to weather the storm is indicative of their moral fitness. By presenting the climate as unusual—although as the earlier statistical and archival material proves, the two months of storm were not far removed from winter as usual in the Lakes—William turns it into a proving ground for his and Dorothy's love of nature with pronounced moral and religious connotations.

The poem ends with a gesture both backward and forward, backward onto William's childhood, and forward onto his poetic aspirations. He turns back to his childhood in order to

distinguish himself from the others with whom he shares his home and his love of Grasmere, claiming that he has "Something within, which is yet shared by none" (898) and which he wishes with "power and effort" to "impart" (900).[53] This reference to his poetic aspirations is then directly connected to nature as he singles himself out as her chosen son; she has turned the "agitations" (935) within him into a gentler course, has "tamed" (935) him, dealt with him as "Some Nurseling of the Mountains which she leads" (937). His description of himself as "Some Nurseling of the Mountains" underscores how deeply connected those poetic aspirations are to his self-representation as the exemplary inhabitant of the Lakes. Reading *Home at Grasmere* against the evidence of Dorothy's journals and the Wordsworth siblings' letters—their accounts of William's poor health being exacerbated by his poetic practice and by the inclement Cumbrian climate and of his being, in effect, a different kind of nurseling of a flesh-and-blood caring woman—exposes just how much his position as the chosen poet of Lakeland is an ideological performance, and a knowing one at that. The poem has something to prove ecologically and authorially and proving it entails effectively turning away from the climate as he experienced it during those years to create a version of nature that is harmonious and benevolent.

Pastoral Shepherds and Arcadian Climes

Lyrical Ballads leverages a particular type of political critique, one whose efficacy and radicalism have been hotly debated. Such critical debates, however, have insufficiently grappled with the extent to which William is only able to criticize and mourn the social and environmental changes he sees taking place around him by locating suffering wholly within the domain of the human, and pleasure and harmony wholly within the domain of nature. By turning away from a

[53] Namely, his brother John, Dorothy, Coleridge, and the Hutchinson sisters.

harsh and unpredictable climate's power to cause human suffering and focusing solely on humanity's failures, he is able to advance a pastoral model of harmonious, benevolent nature that is so insidious that it typically recedes into the background of discussions of his poems' politics. In other words, William's use of the pastoral involves a historical deflection of climate: when read through Dorothy's journals and their account of climatically exacerbated human suffering, the nature through which William's poetry proposes we can escape the traumas of human history requires escaping itself in order to deflect humanity's traumas back onto humanity.

The pastoral tradition has a long history, in both literature and criticism.[54] Roger Sales argues that the pastoral tradition within English literature (primarily from 1780–1835) consists of five key aspects, what he terms the five Rs: refuge, reflection, rescue, requiem, and reconstruction. For him, at heart, "Pastoralism is nostalgia for the good old days" and can ultimately be understood as "the propaganda of the victors"; it serves to represent the interests of an aristocratic landowning class.[55] He contends that while the pastoral often attempts to "hermetically [seal] off" Arcadia, it is more likely to offer the suggestion, "made through the strategic devices of reflection and rescue, that though times unfortunately change, values do not. Pastoral may attempt to evade and elude mortality in this way, but it is also a celebration of death. This is the pastoral paradox."[56] William understood the Lakes in much the same way, his

[54] Definitions and modes of pastoral as a literary genre change throughout historical periods. In *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), Raymond Williams traces this history as it relates to shifting depictions of rural labor. He notes that while the classical pastoral "maintains its contact with the working year and the real social conditions of country life" (16), these "living tensions" (19) are excised in the Renaissance as the pastoral becomes "a thousand pretty exercises on an untroubled rural delight and peace" (19). If the classical pastoral was made up of the contrast between the "pleasures of rural settlement and the threat of loss and eviction," it is later estranged from the actual concerns of working life becoming instead the observational domain of "the scientist or the tourist, rather than the working countryman" (20). Of concern for this section of the chapter is not the entirety of the pastoral as a genre, but rather the way in which Wordsworth uses or claims the pastoral as a mode, and how his version of the pastoral has since been understood by critics.

[55] Roger Sales, *English Literature in History, 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 15.

[56] Sales, 16.

poems—labeled pastoral or not—consistently present him as returning to a recollected past in order to recuperate something for the present, be it an emotion, affect, way of being, or cultural practice. *Home at Grasmere* performs this move, beginning not with the Grasmere he and Dorothy were currently inhabiting, but instead with Grasmere as he remembers seeing it for the first time. His first encounter with Grasmere is linked with a glimmer of future poetic potentiality. He briefly shifts from being just a schoolboy to being the William writing the poem:

> And, with a sudden influx overcome
> My haste, for hasty had my footsteps been
> As boyish my pursuits; and sighing said,
> 'What happy fortune were it here to live!
> And if I thought of dying, if a thought
> Of mortal separation could come in
> With paradise before me, here to die.' (5–12)

Crucially, although in that first moment he understands Grasmere as paradise and therefore antithetical to death, he simultaneously imagines his death within Grasmere as a "happy fortune," even though Grasmere itself is such a paradise that it nearly precludes any thought of death. While *Home at Grasmere* is not labeled a pastoral poem, and he even explicitly claims later in the poem that he is "Dismissing therefore all Arcadian dreams" (829), it engages with pastoral techniques from its very start that belie his dismissal of "All golden fancies of the golden age" (830).

While the pastoral is commonly described as a retreat from the urban into the rural, or from the city into nature, it is also a retreat from nature in and of itself, in that it moves from the rural or "natural" in actuality, into a "hermetically" sealed Arcadia, an idealized and imagined past. In his overview of the pastoral tradition, Terry Gifford quotes William Hazlitt's 1818 pronouncement: "We have few good pastorals in the language. Our manners are not Arcadian; our climate is not an eternal spring; our age is not the age of gold" arguing that "what Hazlitt

misunderstood was that the pastoral is a retreat from 'our manners', 'our climate', 'our age', into a literary construct."[57] Tellingly, for Hazlitt, the climate is one of the impediments to good English pastorals: the English are shut out from Arcadia as a result of the weather. In order to write an English pastoral, one must "retreat" from the climate. William repeatedly does just that. When inclement weather shows up at all in his poetry, it serves as a test of moral aptitude to the person exposed, as in *Home at Grasmere*. David Fairer similarly understands the dangers posed by the Cumbrian climate as incompatible with the pastoral, arguing that one of the major distinctions between the pastoral and georgic is that while the pastoral "finds its home ground in poise and potential harmony" the georgic "responds to local conditions, shifts in the weather, and difficulties and predations of various kinds."[58] He contends that William knew from experience "that the life of the local hill farmer was no Arcadian idyll: sheep became ill, walls needed repairs, and poverty and harsh weather took their toll. But he never would attempt a georgic poem about the real working life of his locality. Instead, as soon as he settled with Dorothy in Dove Cottage he turned his mind to pastoral."[59]

"Michael, a Pastoral Poem," which William began writing after taking up residence at Dove Cottage, is one of his best-known pastorals and illustrates some of the ways in which he shifts attention from hardships exacerbated by climatic conditions onto suffering caused solely by humanity in order to mourn a way of life which was becoming extinct. Fiona Strafford argues that this is what the poem achieves: "His great contribution to the pastoral is to demonstrate in plain language the continuing power of an ideal of plain living, even though it no longer existed in modern, urban Britain…[Wordsworth is] recreating an image of an ideal that can speak to

[57] Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 45
[58] David Fairer, "The Pastoral-Georgic Tradition," in *William Wordsworth in Context*, ed. Andrew Bennet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 111.
[59] Fairer, 112.

everyone, irrespective of their own circumstances…Whatever the fate of Lakeland sheep farming, the truths embodied in 'Michael' were ancient and unchanging."[60] Except, this "ideal of plain living," these truths which are "ancient and unchanging," are only possible if the tragedy of "Michael" is located firmly within the realm of the social and the historical. It is only effective if the tragedy of "Michael" and his unfinished sheepfold is a result of "modern, urban Britain" epitomized by his son's departure to the city and consequent dissolution, and not a result of the economic and environmental precarity of Lakeland sheep farmers due, in part, to the region's bad weather.

Inclement weather within "Michael" is presented as a testament to Michael's "unusual strength" and connection to his environment.[61] Not only is Michael an industrious shepherd and exemplary member of the community, but he is able to read the weather.

> Hence had he learn'd the meaning of all winds,
> Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
> When others heeded not…
> …
> … he to himself would say,
> 'The winds are now devising work for me!'
> And truly, at all times the storm, that drives
> The Traveller to a shelter, summon'd him
> Up to the mountains: he had been alone
> Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
> That came to him and left him on the heights.
> So liv'd he till his eightieth year was pass'd. (48–61)

It is not merely that Michael is steadfast in the face of a storm. He seems energized by the storms, and he continues in this capacity into his old age. Crucially, while in the poem blame is placed upon the city for his son Luke's dissolution and fall from grace, the cause of his nephew's

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[60] Fiona Stafford, "Plain Living and Ungarnish'd Stories: Wordsworth and the Survival of Pastoral," *The Review of English Studies* 59, no. 238 (2008): 125.

[61] Wordsworth, "Michael, A Pastoral Poem" in *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802*, ed. Fiona J. Stafford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), line 44. Subsequent references to "Michael" will be provided parenthetically in the main text with line numbers specified.

misfortunes that required the forfeiture's payment are left unstated. Instead, the emphasis is on the exemplary character of his nephew ("a man / Of an industrious life" [221–222]), and the suddenness of the blow to Michael's hopes for his son to inherit unmortgaged land. By leaving the "unforeseen misfortunes" (223) unspecified, William is able to have it both ways—the Lakeland shepherds are preserved as a "perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturalists," and the city remains the site and source of misery and suffering.[62] While the rapidity with which Michael's future hopes for his son crumble underscores the extent to which the Lakeland shepherds' ability to maintain a living was unbelievably precarious—regardless of how unusually strong or in tune with the winds they were—the poem's refusal to understand this precarity in environmental terms in addition to social ones exposes how dependent William's pastoral is on a kind of climatic retreat from the very region it attempts to preserve.

In "Wordsworth in the Tropics of Cumbria," Elias Greig draws attention to the climatic precarity of the Lakes and the presence of inclement weather in William's poetry. He begins with a sobering selection of accidental deaths from the 2012 report of the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association meant to underscore the hazardous nature of the Lakes, noting: "Lakeland has been killing, maiming, or otherwise exposing its residents and visitors in remarkably similar ways for centuries."[63] However, the bulk of his argument concerns exposure in Wordsworth poems where human cruelty is responsible for making people into itinerant beggars and vagrants. Greig contends that "Wordsworth turns to nature not as a mode of sublimation or avoidance of history, but rather as its most reliable and exacting register."[64] In the

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[62] Wordsworth, "A Guide Through the District of the Lakes," in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. 2, eds. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 74.
[63] Elias Greig, "Wordsworth in the Tropics of Cumbria," in *Romantic Climates: Literature and Science in an Age of Catastrophe*, eds. Anne Collett, and Olivia Murphy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 34.
[64] Greig, 41.

poems Greig analyzes, inhospitable nature serves to reinforce Wordsworth's critique of governmental policies and the lack of adequate financial support or financial safety nets for the rural poor, as well as the scarcity caused by the French Revolution and following Napoleonic wars. Instead of the Lake District itself being an inherently hard place to live, the poems emphasize how human greed and cruelty "unhouse" people so that they are unable to survive in harmony with nature.[65] The underlying presumption is that living in harmony with nature would otherwise be possible. In order to leverage their political critique, William's poems necessitate a version of the Lakeland climate which is only punishing in combination with human greed and cruelty.

However, the same unbuilt sheepfold "Michael" references is, in Dorothy's account, associated with the dangers posed to the sheep by the landscape and climate of the Lakes. She records in her journals how after dinner on October 11, 1800, she and William walked up "Greenhead Gill in search of a Sheepfold" where they encountered "Sheep bleating & in lines & chains & patterns scattered over the mountains" (26). She notes that the sheep "come down & feed on the little green islands in the beds of the torrents & so may be swept away" (26). The inconsistent snowmelt and rainfall patterns of the Lake District during this period, in combination with the high levels of precipitation, resulted in incredibly swift and violent torrents that varied greatly from year to year, and month to month, making them unpredictable and perilous. The danger that the landscape and climate of Lakeland posed to the very sheep the sheepfold was meant to guard is never mentioned within William's poem. "Michael" may, like "Lines Written in Early Spring," blame "what man has made of man" (8) for the dissolution of humanity's harmony with nature, but, like *Home at Grasmere*, it skates over the extent to which

[65] William Wordsworth, "Salisbury Plain," in *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, ed. Stephen Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 1.

natural environments are endured and precarious. Humanity undoubtedly plays a significant role in environmental changes; however, William's poetry fails to acknowledge the plenty of opportunities to lament what nature makes of other nature and to point out how natural forces that have no moral content in and of themselves can create and contribute to human suffering.

"a day / Stormy, and rough, and wild": Inclement Weather Recollected in Poetry

William's attitude toward his childhood in *The Two-Part Prelude* is similarly pastoralized; he turns away from the harsh climate of the Lake District as he constructs his poetic identity. As the poem traces his poetic growth and his evolving relationship with nature, it underscores the extent to which his poetic representation of himself in relation to nature is deeply invested in "harmoniously dwelling" in, and having a special access to and understanding of, nature. William takes his experience of his father's death from prolonged illness as a direct result of exposure in inclement weather and not only presents his death as sudden and unaccounted for, but then presents himself as even more in harmony with inclement weather as a result. He describes anxiously waiting for horses sent to bring him and his brothers home from school. He was "Feverish, and tired and restless" and goes out to watch for the horses from a vantage point on the road:

> …'twas a day
> Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
> I sate, half-sheltered by a naked wall;
> Upon my right hand was a single sheep.
> A whistling hawthorn on my left…
> ….
> …ere I to school returned
> That dreary time, ere I had been ten days
> A dweller in my Father's house, he died (1805 I. 341–351)

His representation of the day's weather is prevented from becoming sublime or awe-inspiring by the emotional context of the moment and the pacing of the line. Instead, it remains vexed and uncomfortable. William's use of conjunctions and caesuras prevent the line from gaining in momentum as it plods along. The enjambment of the line momentarily speeds it up only to lead into the next line which is end-stopped and contains a caesura after the first foot. The description of the storm rhythmically matches William's account of his mood and presents the moment of rough and stormy weather as one of mundane discomfort.

However, after his father's death, William returns to the memory of the storm and in recollecting finds it a source of spiritual nourishment:

> And afterwards the wind, and sleety rain,
> And all the business of the elements,
> The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
> And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
> The noise of wood and water, and the mist
> …
> All these were spectacles and sounds to which
> I often would repair, and thence would drink
> As at a fountain, and I do not doubt
> That in this later time when storm and rain
> Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
> When I am in the woods, unknown to me
> The workings of my spirit thence are brought. (361–374)

In recollection, the day's weather becomes more lyrical as the clauses are lengthened and thus rendered less plodding. The only sonic element in the first landscape is the "whistling hawthorn"—halfway between pure sound and melody. But in the second landscape, there is "the bleak *music* of that old stone wall" and "The noise of wood and water" which by virtue of the elongated "w" and "o" sounds is softer than the more aspirated "whistling." The sonic elements gain importance in the second landscape as they form one half of the "spectacles and sounds to which" William "repair[s]." "Repair" here moves in two directions, in the sense of "repair" as

"return to" and "repair" as "mend." He repairs to the "spectacles and sounds" in order to "be repaired." His father's death thus inducts him into an understanding of inclement weather which is stripped of tension and discomfort becoming instead a source of nourishment. Even in his recounting of a traumatic event of his childhood that resulted directly from the harsh climate of the Lakes, he turns away from an experience of the climate as unpredictable and life-threatening, in order to poetically present himself in harmony with nature.

Conclusion: Daffodils on "a threatening misty morning"

In closing, I want to turn briefly to one of the best-known examples of Dorothy's account of an event and its recounting in one of William's poems—their encounter with a field of daffodils in April 1802—as a kind of paradigmatic example not just of how William's versions of nature tend to excise inclement weather but also of how Romanticists tend to repeat that excision, as if weather were irrelevant, even when calling attention to the differences between the two accounts. Dorothy's journal entry for Thursday April 15, 1802 opens with a description of the weather: "It was a threatening misty morning—but mild…The wind was furious & we thought we must have returned…The wind seized our breath the Lake was rough" (84–85). After they encounter the daffodils: "The Bays were stormy & we heard the waves at different distances & in the middle of the water like the Sea—Rain came on, we were wet when we reached Luffs but we called in. Luckily all was cheerless & gloomy so we faced the storm—we *must* have been wet if we had waited—put on dry clothes at Dobson's" (85). The stormy weather frames their experience of the daffodils. They encounter them not on a pleasant or leisurely walk, but rather as they are attempting to make their way home from visiting the Coleridges at Keswick. As Dorothy notes in a letter to Mary Hutchinson about the day: "Mrs. Clarkson, being very well, set

off with us…[but] she durst not face the furious wind that blew against us. Indeed we could hardly stand it. If we had been going *from* home we certainly should have turned back, but we pushed on boldly. It sometimes took our breath away, we rested whenever we found a shelter."[66] Their experience in the weather is overwhelmingly unpleasant—they "could hardly stand it"—; the only reason they persist is because they wish to return home.

When Dorothy's journal entry shows up in criticism, her experience of the daffodils tends to be removed from its contextual placement in a day of unpleasant weather and bodily exhaustion. Critical accounts which do mention the inclement weather often either elide it or subdue its effect. For example, when Kenneth Cervelli argues that the Grasmere journals contain a "harmonious vision. And this becomes especially apparent when we turn to the entry containing Dorothy's famous description of the daffodils," he excerpts Dorothy's encounter with the daffodils from the descriptions of the unpleasant and stormy weather through which she framed it.[67] When he does acknowledge the weather later in his reading, he reads Dorothy's "furious wind" as analogous to William's "mild creative breeze" (*The Prelude*, 1805 I. 43), thereby stripping it of climatic unpleasantness and converting it into a well-known Romantic poetic figure. In contrast to Cervelli, Sarah Doyle notes that Dorothy's entry foregrounds the weather, but she nevertheless dismisses this foregrounding as "largely observational" about "the relationship between weather and landscape" and certainly as uninvested in capturing "the experiential," or "the impact of weather on the human psyche."[68] Neither account finds it significant that Wordsworths' encounter with the daffodils is shaped by the bodily exhaustion and discomfort of their sodden and blustery trek home.

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[66] Dorothy Wordsworth to Mary Hutchinson, April 16, 1802, in de Selincourt, *Letters*, 350.
[67] Cervelli, *Dorothy*, 20.
[68] Sarah Doyle, "'Four Seasons Fill the Measure of the Year': Romantic Meteorology," *Keats Shelley Review* 35, no. 1 (2021): 95.

The critical omission would seem more minor were it not for the fact that it repeats the elision of inclement weather in which William's poem engages, where the day of the encounter with the daffodils gets framed as an interlude of joy and leisure. The opening line, "I wandered lonely as a cloud" depicts the speaker as pleasurably meandering where he will, blown by no force but his own inclination.[69] The cloud is the singular fluffy white cloud of a picturesque painting, not a lowering blanket of storm clouds blocking out the sun. Similarly, William's daffodils "flutter" (6) and "[toss] their hands in sprightly dance" (12), a softening and paring down of Dorothy's wilder characterization of how they "tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake" (85). In Dorothy's characterization, the daffodils, while seemingly laughing with the wind, also become analogues of a sort for the bodily discomfort she and William are experiencing on what is an otherwise arduous and exhausting trudge. She imagines the daffodils resting, much like she and William repeatedly have to in order to take refuge from the harsh wind: "some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness" (85). They mimic both her own weariness and the joy to be found in their sudden introduction of brightness and laughter into an otherwise overcast and unpleasant day.

As William wrote "I wandered lonely as a cloud" two years after encountering the daffodils, and then revised it in 1815 (with the later version better known), the extent to which his language both mirrors and modifies Dorothy's description of the incident indicates that he returned to her journal entry—with its unpleasant weather—in order to write the poem. He thus deliberately transplants the daffodils and his encounter with them from their climatic context.

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[69] Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, eds. Susan Wolfson and Peter Manning (USA: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003), line 1. All subsequent references to the poem will be provided parenthetically within the main text with the line number specified.

Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson argue that "the poem is less about daffodils than about the poet's ability to turn ordinary experiences into something delightful or transcendent, not just for his use but for the reader's."[70] When the climatic conditions of the encounter—climatic conditions which this chapter has striven to prove were integral to the Wordsworths' experience of the Lakes—are excised so as to turn the experience "into something delightful or transcendent," we are presented with a version of nature which is inaccessible. Not only does this version of Wordsworthian nature not have the capacity to produce unpleasant encounters with nature, but it can only accommodate those who are able-bodied enough to withstand the weather. Mrs. Clarkson who was "*very* well" is prevented from encountering the daffodils with the Wordsworths, and Dorothy and William are exhausted from the experience and must rest whenever they can in order to complete their journey.

The Wordsworths loved their home at Dove Cottage and remained, for the entirety of their lives, devoted inhabitants of the Lake District. However, to deny that their home at Grasmere required work and endurance and exposed them to a host of physical illnesses and discomforts is to hermetically seal Arcadia. In this way, critical and popular responses to the Wordsworths exhibit the pastoralizing impulses of William's own poetry. They return to William's poems, or Dorothy's journals, in order to discover an ecological model which is both no longer accessible to us, and therefore must be mourned, and which they believe still has something to teach us about ethically inhabiting our environments. Interrogating the myth of William and Dorothy's harmonious dwelling by attending to the profound climatic instability in which they lived, the food scarcity and suffering around them, and their own physical discomfort

[70] Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson, "Prelude: Of 'Daffodils' (1802–1815) and 'Yew-Trees' (1804–1836), Poems of Imagination," in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, eds. Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21.

within the region they loved, is to expose Arcadia to the inclement weather of the Lakes. Doing so reveals the extent to which Dorothy's journals offer a nascent consciousness of climate injustice, as they register that for many in the region, that climatic instability converged with preexisting social inequities. It also allows us to bring that version of nature into the future without mourning it. Our current moment of anthropogenic climate change is certainly distinct from the climatic instability caused by the Little Ice Age. However, the responses of both Dorothy and William to the climate in which they lived provide an example for us to reflect on what it means to endure the climate—an enduring which does not mean that we cannot also think, do all we can, "That there was pleasure there" ("Lines Written in Early Spring" 20).

2. On Seeing the Price of Keats's Bread:

or John Bull Buying the Elgin Marbles in a Time of Climate Crisis, 1816

In a June 1816 letter to her half-sister Fanny Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley describes the stormy weather she, Percy, and her stepsister Claire Clairmont experienced while visiting Lake Geneva: "An almost perpetual rain confines us principally to the house…One night we *enjoyed* a finer storm than I had ever before beheld. The lake was lit up—the pines on Jura made visible, and all the scene illuminated for an instant, when a pitchy blackness succeeded, and the thunder came in frightful bursts over our heads amid the blackness."[1] As has been well-documented, the stormy weather she experienced during the so-called "Year Without a Summer" was the climatic aftermath of the explosion of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815. Shelley's famous, oft-quoted description emphasizes all the sublime ferocity of that summer's weather, focusing on its aesthetic pleasures despite her complaint that the rain prevented them from venturing outdoors. However, while the Shelley circle holed up in Villa Diodati as rain lashed the windows and Shelley began writing what would become *Frankenstein*, the country around them suffered. By August, over 30,000 Swiss were jobless and breadless. That summer was just the beginning of a cycle of violently unpredictable weather that would continue for three years, with devasting global reverberations.

Back in England that same June of 1816, after a prolonged controversy, the British Government purchased the Elgin Marbles for £35,000. This was considerably cheaper than the £74,240 they had cost Lord Elgin, and champions of the marbles' purchase heralded it as the beginning of a wondrous new era for British art. The various debates about the value of the

[1] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley to Fanny Imlay, June 1, 1816, in *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, vol. 1, ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 20.

marbles, their artistic merits, and the ethics of their removal from Greece have been discussed in detail by other scholars, and the debate about whether they belong in the British Museum of course continues to this day.[2] My argument in this chapter, however, concerns the economic and political cost the marbles posed to a government financially strapped by the Napoleonic wars and half a decade of unusually cold and inclement weather, weather which produced severe harvest failures in 1816 that diminished crop yields by seventy-five percent.

The first post-Tambora bread riots broke out in East Anglia in May 1816. The British Government purchased the marbles a month later, in June 1816. John Keats went to see the marbles in March 1817, shortly after they went on display in the British Museum. Reread within this specific political and climatic context, a context we can access through an 1816 political cartoon by George Cruikshank, Keats's sonnet "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" contemplates the marbles' purchase as an opportunity cost, one that, consonant with Cruikshank's cartoon, calls into question the cultural value of art in the face of social and economic distress. Cruikshank makes explicit the connection between the subsistence crisis and the acquisition of the Marbles: the purchase of damaged stone bodies comes at the neglect of the bodily needs of the English public. Keats calls attention to the marbles' fragmentation—what Peter Moore, MP for Coventry, called their "broken legs, arms, and shoulders"—through the broken feet of his sonnet, replicating the weathered form of the statues as the poem's unbalanced rhythm emphasizes how time and climatic exposure caused their damage.[3]

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[2] For example, see Ian Jack, *Keats and the Mirror of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); Christopher Hitchens, *Imperial Spoils: The Curious Case of the Elgin Marbles* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987); Grant F. Scott, *The Sculpted Word: Keats, Ekphrasis, and the Visual Arts* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994); William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Eric Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2001).

[3] "House of Commons," *The Examiner* (London), June 9, 1816, *ProQuest*.

The often-repeated English epithet that 1816 was "The Year Without a Summer" is misleading, in terms of both the scale and severity of Tambora's impact. The aftermath of the explosion affected weather patterns and crop yields across the globe for three years, lasting until 1819. In Germany, 1817 was called "The Year of the Beggar" and in Switzerland, it was "*L'année de la misère*" or "*Das Hungerjahr*." Hundreds of thousands died as crop yields across Europe plummeted; some families responded to the crisis by abandoning their children or even killing them, believing that to be the more humane course. As Gillen D'Arcy Wood succinctly states: "[f]or three years following Tambora's explosion, to be alive, almost anywhere in the world, meant to be hungry."[4] In Europe, this dire situation stemmed partly from the larger climatic and political context of the 1810s. The second decade of the nineteenth century remains the coldest in the historical record. Bookended by two volcanic eruptions (an unknown mountain in 1809 and Tambora in 1815), the decade was marked by failed harvests, increased precipitation, extreme cold, and wildly unpredictable weather patterns, all compounded by the economic depression caused by the Napoleonic wars and the following postwar period.[5] The nonanthropogenic climate crisis caused by Tambora's eruption exacerbated postwar economic depression as a series of failed harvests and widespread subsistence crises pushed much of Europe to the brink of famine. The subsistence crises triggered a wave of grain riots across Europe as populations reduced to impoverishment and starvation rebelled—some more violently and desperately than others.

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[4] Gillen D'Arcy Wood, "The Volcano that Shrouded the Earth and Gave Birth to a Monster," *Nautilus* 11 (2015): 22.

[5]The 1809 volcanic eruption was undocumented and its exact location unknown. For more information on the 1809 eruption see Jihong Cole-Dai, et al., "Cold Decade (AD 1810-1819) Caused by Tambora (1815) and another (1809) Stratospheric Volcanic Eruption," *Geophysical Research Letters* 36, no. 22 (2009): L22703.

Scholarly concentration on the 1815 eruption of Tambora and 1816's "Year without a Summer" as a focalized moment of disaster, in combination with a slim amount of literary criticism about weather in the period more generally, has resulted in an understanding of the "Year without a Summer" as a singular catastrophic event instead of a climatic point within a broader enduring weather formation.[6] But the climatic aftermath of Tambora not only lasted much longer and had a broader geographical reach than the sublime thunderstorms witnessed by the Shelley circle in Switzerland, it also shaped the social turbulence of those years. The economic depression and political upheaval of the 1810s through which the decade's literary output often gets read stemmed in part from a climatic event whose effects included exacerbating existent structural and systemic social inequities.[7] As we shall see, Tambora helped create a yearslong subsistence crisis in the UK whose cultural register includes, unexpectedly, Keats's sonnet about the Elgin Marbles, a poem traditionally read as a sonnet about artistic vocation. The chapter turns, in conclusion, to a reexamination of "To Autumn" (1819), a poem which has previously been read as responding to Tambora, suggesting that the poem can be understood as articulating a version of climate justice.

In my reading of "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," I argue that Keats's sonnet engages with the period's public debate about the financial and ethical prudence of purchasing the Elgin

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[6] As I noted in the introduction, three notable exceptions to this are: Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); David M. Higgins, *British Romanticism, Climate Change, and the Anthropocene: Writing Tambora* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Anne Collett and Olivia Murphy, eds. *Romantic Climates: Literature and Science in an Age of Catastrophe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[7] Where not cited otherwise, for this account of Tambora and its impact on European climate, I've drawn heavily upon the following books: John D. Post, *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Henry Stommel and Elizabeth Stommel, *Volcano Weather: The Story of the Year Without a Summer 1816* (Newport, RI: Seven Seas Press, 1983); Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300–1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); William K. Klingaman and Nicholas P. Klingaman, *The Year Without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013); Gillen D'Arcy Wood*, Tambora*; and Wolfgang Behringer, *Tambora and the Year Without a Summer: How a Volcano Plunged the World into Crisis*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (Cambridge; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019).

Marbles during a climatologically exacerbated economic crisis, a debate we can recover through Cruikshank's cartoon about the Marbles' purchase. Both Keats's sonnet and Cruikshank's political cartoon stage the purchase of the Parthenon sculptures in terms of the opportunity cost of public relief and the potential "waste" status of art when confronted with a depressed labor market and skyrocketing grain prices. "To Autumn," on the other hand, registers the climatic and political crisis of 1819 through a poetic articulation of environmental justice which is nonetheless troubled by the experience of 1816–1819. I contend that while the poem's formal balance and imagery of agricultural abundance work to create a utopic vision of environmental justice grounded in part in climatic stability, it is continually disrupted by the repeated environmental *in*justices of 1816–1819, including the Peterloo Massacre.

The Half-Decade without a Summer: England's Volcanic Climate from 1816–1819

The story of 1816–1819's climate crisis begins on April 5, 1815, when the centuries-dormant Mount Tambora, a volcano on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa, erupted continuously for close to two weeks, resulting in catastrophic devastation of the islands in its immediate vicinity and triggering a nonanthropogenic climate crisis felt around the globe for the next three years. The Tambora eruption ranks as the most powerful eruption in recorded history. The explosion propelled an estimated 55 million metric tons of sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere, which was converted by ultraviolet light into 100 million tons of sulfuric acid, thus creating a reflective shield that reduced the amount of energy reaching Earth.[8] The details of the explosion and its impact on Sumbawa and the surrounding islands have been treated extensively in a

[8] David Gapp, "Why the 'Year without a Summer'?," in *Frankenstein and its Classics*, ed. Jesse Weiner (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 94.

number of books and articles.[9] I wish to focus more narrowly on the eruption's aftermath in Europe, with special emphasis on the UK and Ireland. The years 1816–1819 are among the coldest in the past 600 years, markedly so in Europe. July 1816 was the coldest July ever recorded in Europe, and 1816 as a whole ranks as the continent's second coldest year on record, with average temperatures plunging by 3–4 degrees Celsius. 1817 was Europe's fifth coldest year; 1818, its twenty-second; and 1819, its twenty-ninth. Sequential years of extreme weather and poor crop harvests typically prove far more damaging than a bad year here or there. What made the European impact of Tambora so disastrous was how prolonged it was, especially given, as we shall see, that it occurred within an already cold decade plagued by crop failures, wartime disturbances, and postwar depression.

It is not just that Tambora had a cooling effect, it caused a significant rise in extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, storms, and unseasonable temperatures. In parts of Europe, precipitation increased by up to 200 percent. In Ireland, it rained for 142 out of 153 days that summer. During the first decade of the century, people living in the British Isles enjoyed twenty clear, sunny summer days annually. During the 1810s, that number dropped to five. In the summer of 1816, Keats would have seen nothing but unbroken clouds and rain, as it produced not a single clear day in the UK, and in 1818, gale-force winds up to hurricane strength lashed much of the country.[10] The increase in excessive precipitation and unseasonable frosts in early spring and summer, when crops were the most vulnerable, killed or damaged plants before they could be harvested, causing a significant decline in overall yields. On July 20, 1816, the London

[9] Stommel & Stommel, *Volcano*; Clive Oppenheimer, "Climatic, Environmental and Human Consequences of the Largest Known Historic Eruption: Tambora Volcano (Indoneisa) 1815," *Progress in Physical Geography* 27, no. 2 (2003): 230–259; and *Eruptions That Shook the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Klingaman & Klingaman, *Year*; Wood, *Tambora*; and Behringer, *Tambora*.

[10] From 1816–1818, record-breaking gale-force winds battered Edinburgh, one storm almost demolishing St. John's Chapel in the center of the city.

Times commented on the unusually inclement weather and offered the following dire prognostication for the coming harvest: "should the present wet weather continue, the corn will inevitably be laid and the effects of such a calamity and at such a time cannot be otherwise than ruinous to the farmers, and even to the people at large."[11]

The excessive precipitation throughout 1816–1818 meant that even when grain could be harvested, it went bad in storage before it was consumed. The Irish strove to keep starvation at bay by digging seed potatoes out of the ground, the effect of which was to destroy the next year's harvest; meanwhile, the Swiss were reduced to eating cats, nettles, and moss.[12] At the beginning of the 1816 harvest season in England, mold and fungus had damaged crops, there was a boom in the rat and vermin populations in grain, and a large amount of hay across the country had already decayed. As one reporter witnessed in Scotland, "in many places the potatoes and turnips are so completely saturated by the late rains, as to afford no appearance of a crop; and the corn crops look as if they would require another summer to ripen, the top pickle of the oats only showing itself above the blade."[13]

As crops failed, farmers had insufficient fodder to keep animals fed, the effect of which was that British markets were flooded with livestock. Due to the excess supply, the animals fetched considerably lower prices, with many farmers forced to slaughter them instead. As a result of the subsequent shortage of dairy cows, the price of milk rose along with the price of bread. As temperatures dropped, fuel supplies also decreased, leading to a rise in heating costs. In England, when the Utilitarian philosopher James Mill noted the continued rain and cold and the stubbornly unripening corn, he bleakly and ruthlessly concluded: "There must now be of

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[11] "The Weather," *The Times* (London), July 20, 1816, *The Times Digital Archive*.
[12] Margaret E. Crawford, ed., *Famine: The Irish Experience, 900–1900: Subsistence Crises and Famines in Ireland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1989), 17; Gapp, "Why," 99.
[13] "Crops and Harvest," *The Times* (London), September 4, 1816, *The Times Digital Archive*.

necessity a very deficient crop, and very high prices—and these with an unexampled scarcity of work will produce a degree of misery, the thought of which makes the flesh creep on ones [sic] bones—one third of the people must die—it would be a blessing to take them into the streets and highways, and cut their throats as we do with pigs."[14]

For some, the relentlessly terrible weather stoked millenarian fears. As Jonathan Bate was the first to note, Byron's "Darkness," which he wrote in July of 1816, was responding to one such end-of-the-world fear triggered by the unusual weather events. Noting the unusual appearance of sunspots, an astronomer in Bologna (nicknamed the "mad Italian prophet") had concluded that the sun would soon be extinguished. He predicted that July 18, 1816 would be the final day of life on Earth. His prediction had such an effect on a local populace already concerned by the strange weather and the grim prognostications for the coming harvest that government officials threw him in jail to silence him.[15] The opening line of "Darkness," "I had a dream, which was not all a dream. / The bright sun was extinguish'd," directly echoes the prophecy of the "mad Italian prophet," and as the darkened world plunged further into waste and chaos in 1816–1819, Byron's account of how "the pang / Of famine fed upon all entrails" came to feel prophetic as what Coleridge termed "this end of the world weather" continued.[16]

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[14] James Mill to David Ricardo, "August 14, 1816," in *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, vol. 7, ed. Piero Sraffa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 61–62.

[15] Klingaman and Klingaman, *Year*, 116.

[16] Jonathan Bate, "Living with the Weather," *Studies in Romanticism* 35, no. 3 (1996): 431–447; George Gordon Byron, "Darkness," in *The Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 4, ed. Jerome McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), lines 1–2, 43–44; Samuel Taylor Coleridge to J. J. Morgan, July 7, 1816, in *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 4, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 660. In London, *The Times* repeatedly reported on—and mocked—those driven to panic and suicide by their fears that the world was truly coming to an end. They initially blamed the spread of the "mad Italian prophet's" prediction on "Old women [who] have taken the alarm, and the prediction is now a general subject of controversy" ("Brussels, July 5," *The Times* [London] July 13, 1816, *ProQuest*). A little over a week later, however, they were forced to admit that the prophecy had gained traction across Europe: "In France as well as in this country, and generally throughout Europe, the prediction of the mad Italian prophet, relative to the end of the world, had produced great dread in the minds of some, so that they neglected all business and gave themselves up entirely to despondency" ("The Prophecy," *The Times* [London], July 23, 1816, *ProQuest*). There were reports of those who were so shaken by this prospect that they were driven to suicide.

Though 1816–1819 may have generated the harshest weather, the climatological effects of those years were compounded in England by their occurrence within an already exceptionally cold and war-torn decade. While Tambora's 1815 eruption is the most powerful in recorded history, with the largest impact on global temperatures, a volcanic eruption in 1809 whose whereabouts remain unknown is the second most powerful volcanic event ever recorded, with the second largest impact on global temperatures. 1809–1812 saw dismal harvests, and an especially severe winter in 1810–1811. For English populations, the negative impacts of sharp frosts, high winds, and deep snow exacerbated an ongoing economic depression tied to the Napoleonic wars. Subsistence was already extremely difficult for the working classes in England at the beginning of the decade. As temperatures dropped further in the winter of 1813–1814, people across England froze to death, agriculture slowed, coal prices shot up, and fuel became increasingly hard to obtain. So extreme was the cold in London in the winter of 1813–14 that the Thames froze for the last time.[17] The lower-than-average temperatures persisted through the spring and summer, with frequent and violent rain and hailstorms doing extensive damage to crops. Despite a hot August, the wheat crop turned out to be mildewed and of poor quality. The year 1815 similarly opened with a harsh winter characterized by frequent frosts and heavy snowfall.[18]

In short, while the eruption of Tambora would usher in a period of increased social and economic distress in Britain, that distress only intensified existing entwined climatological and economic problems. Many of these economic problems stemmed from the aftermath of

[17]As it had then, the frozen river played host to a series of fairs and mass entertainments. One enterprising printer even set up a press on the ice and printed a novelty book about the phenomenon.
[18] This account of the weather in the beginning half of the decade is drawn from Lucy Veale and Georgina H. Endfield, "Situating 1816, the 'Year without Summer', in the UK," *The Geographical Journal* 182, no. 4 (2016): 318-330; as well as Behringer, *Tambora*.

Waterloo. As political historians have documented extensively, Napoleon's defeat in 1815 precipitated an extended period of economic hardship throughout much of Europe, including England. The end of over two decades of war on the Continent left England with stagnating industries and soaring unemployment as the cessation of wartime manufacture and the increasing price of food in 1816 led to a decline in the demand for goods. Additionally, the already depressed labor market was flooded by hundreds of thousands of men previously employed by the armed forces. Manufacturers halted or slowed production leading to massive unemployment in almost every branch of industry in England. In 1816, over 30,000 beggars were recorded within the city of London, with economic distress even worse in the country. What I have been trying to make clear here, however, is that a contributing factor to this broader economic crisis—a crisis that typically gets discussed primarily in terms of political events—was an underlying climatic history precipitated by Tambora's 1815 eruption.

A July 1816 article in *The Times* makes clear the extent to which the climate crisis of 1816–1819, though not known at the time to stem from Tambora, was experienced in Britain as a converging with the public's political and economic crises: "The continuance of the present very unseasonable weather has been attended with the most baneful effects in various parts of the country…This unexpected visitation from Heaven, *added to the severe distress to which the country is otherwise reduced*, has infused into the minds of the people generally the greatest apprehension and alarm."[19] A subsequent article in *The Times* commenting on the latest newspapers from Paris more explicitly connects the climatic disturbances with the Napoleonic Wars and the depressed labor market.

> The state of the weather is now almost as interesting a political topic as can well occur, considering the effect which it must have upon the contentment and tranquillity [*sic*] of States for a year to come. We regret to observe…that [the weather] has been of the same

[19] "The Weather," *The Times* (London), July 20, 1816, *The Times Digital Archive* (emphasis mine).

> description in Paris as in London…we observe with pleasure, that [in France] sums subscripted for festive purposes, such as setting up a bust of the KING, in many places, have been more appropriately applied to the relief of local distresses. We wish those foolish women in England who are intent upon commemorating the victory at Waterloo by the statue of a man and a horse, would apply their funds in the same manner; or if they will erect statues, that they would also give orders to the Spitalfields weaver to provide a number of silk dresses, at least for the male figure, in order that he may be clothed in a fresh suit, like Indian idols, every day of the year. (September 5, 1816)

The Times declares the unusual weather a matter of political concern, emphasizing its profound impact on the country. The proposal that the funds earmarked for a commemoration of England's triumph at Waterloo be redirected to poor relief has the effect, by proxy of the statue, of implying that money spent on England's military victories represents an opportunity cost in terms of the country's ability to care for its people in the face of climatic instability. In a strikingly misogynistic move, the burden of this blame is shifted from the government directly to the "foolish women" who, in their insistence on military commemoration, are presumably neglecting the charitable relief works with which they should be more properly concerned. The suggestion that if these women cannot be convinced to use their funds more benevolently, they might at least commission a comically large order from the Spitalfields weavers further stresses how the combination of post-war distress and climate crisis has politicized the weather. After Waterloo, the silk weavers in Spitalfields were one of the most severely depressed industries. In November 1816 it was estimated that 45,000 of Spitalfields' inhabitants were in want of food and requesting admission to the workhouses.[20] While the weather has largely been relegated to the background in modern scholarly accounts of the period's politics, for those living through it, the political and economic turbulence was closely linked with climatic instability.

A similar reframing of the postwar period's bleak economic history through the lens of planetary history becomes possible in relation to British grain prices, whose instabilities

[20] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), 633.

stemmed from a combination of politics and volcanic-related climatic changes. The Importation Act of 1815, commonly referred to as the Corn Laws, was Parliament's response to the decreased prices that resulted when foreign trade renewed after Waterloo. The laws benefitted landowners at the cost of the public by keeping grain prices artificially high, something achieved by prohibiting foreign wheat importation until domestic grain increased to a certain price. Because the Corn Laws ended up coinciding with the climate crisis that Tambora exacerbated, however, they inadvertently deepened the trade recession and economic distress of 1816–1819. As the public struggled to afford enough food, households lacked surpluses for other expenditures, thereby contributing to the declining demand for other goods. The high importation ceiling meant that it was only late in 1816 that the British government began importing foreign grain. By that point, however, prices had already been driven sky-high by demand from other countries in Europe that were similarly reeling from their own meager harvests.

A working-class British family in the 1810s might regularly spend two thirds of its income on food and drink, primarily bread, which made up the bulk of their diet. This made the increasing cost of grain disastrous as wholesale cereal prices nearly doubled between 1815–1817. Workers still employed at normal wage levels were unable to afford bread at such prices, while those unemployed or employed at depressed wages of course faced even greater challenges. When the first European post-Tambora grain riots broke out in England, in May 1816, they did so in East Anglia, where the unemployment rate was at fifty percent. Even those East Anglians fortunate enough to be employed were earning significantly depressed wages, just three to four shillings per week. Riots swept through the region. In Norfolk, a group of fifteen hundred protestors armed with iron-studded sticks smashed shop windows, destroyed farm

machinery, attacked the homes of gentry, and forcibly seized sacks of flour while holding aloft a flag bearing the slogan "Bread or Blood."

This kind of economically precipitated class violence—including bread riots, arson, and the destruction of grain stores, livestock, and farm buildings—became frequent in Britain throughout 1816–1819. One observer highlighted the widespread distress, writing in 1816 that in both Glasgow and London, where Keats was residing, "the people seem to be wandering about without employment, looking wretched, unhappy, and disconnected, and ripe for any mischief."[21] Public disturbances, theft, and other property crimes became so prevalent in Europe generally that, while some authorities responded harshly and violently, many offenders were simply not prosecuted as governments struggled to cope with both the scale and the causes of public distress. As the subsistence crisis became more acute in the late spring of 1817, popular disturbances moved from riots to rebellions in northwestern Europe. In England, the Riot Act was read frequently in 1816–17, often with the threat of the death penalty, and the right of Habeas Corpus was ultimately suspended by the government in 1817.

Vagrancy was also on the rise across the UK and Europe in 1817 as people left their homes in search of food. In France, tourists mistook the large number of beggars on the road for armies on the march. In Glasgow, bread riots broke out with such violence that the government called in military force to control the crowds. In Wales, which was experiencing true famine, the military violently suppressed a riot at Merthyr Tydvil, and an army detachment deployed in order to maintain order with nighttime patrols, patrols that ultimately continued for six months. In Ireland, which was also experiencing true famine, several counties were placed under military supervision, and a series of attacks on grain exports ended in bloodshed.

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[21] "Extract of a letter from the Clyde and Lanark, (N.B.), September 30," *The Times* (London), October 5, 1816, *The Times Digital Archive*.

The subsistence crises contributed to outbreaks of typhus due to malnourishment, poor hygiene, increased itinerancy, and the continued cold and wet weather. Though Ireland bore the brunt of the typhus epidemic, outbreaks were reported in Scotland and in almost every town and village in England. London saw a particularly high incidence of cases when, in 1817, a typhus outbreak that had originated among Spitalfield silk workers the year before spread to many poorhouses and working-class households in the more crowded districts of the city. Thomas Bateman, the medical superintendent of the London House of Recovery, described the poorhouses as overflowing with "half-starved beings, many of them deriving their sole claim to relief from having slept in the streets of the parish, and who were already seized with fever."[22] Keats likely experienced some of the impact of the typhus outbreak firsthand, as he was apprenticed at Guys Hospital and living in the London borough of Southwark during 1816, before moving to nearby Hampstead in April 1817.

While 1816–1817 saw the worst of the subsistence crises, it was not until 1818 that harvest yields began to stabilize. The harvest of 1817 improved markedly upon the year prior, but it was still much lower than usual and below average in comparison to the first decade of the century. The price of food did fall in accordance with higher yields, but it nevertheless remained high, and a subsistence diet continued to be out of reach for most people. The combined toll of the previous year's difficulties also created persistent problems. As families had become destitute during the climatologically exacerbated subsistence crisis of the previous half decade, many had sold their property and belongings to stave off famine and ensure their families' survival. The social safety net for the working class was virtually nonexistent before the summer of 1816, and even as the climatic effects of Tambora began to subside, people thus continued to

[22] Post, *Last*, 131.

find themselves in straitened circumstances. While the effects of the climate crisis triggered by Tambora's eruption faded after 1819, it left an indelible mark on the lives of those who lived through it, and the experience of those years would continue to reverberate in a variety of ways throughout history and literature.[23]

Trade Is Very Bad & Provision Very Dear & John Bull Can't Eat Stones

The 1816 Parliamentary vote to purchase the Elgin Marbles passed by a mere two votes, reflecting the contentious debate about their worth. While many of the arguments revolved around the cultural and aesthetic value of statues in so fragmented a state, they also concerned the prudence of making such a costly purchase with public money at a time when the economy was depressed and both bread prices and poverty were rapidly rising. When Peter Moore, MP for Coventry, reduced the marbles to "broken legs, arms, and shoulders," he did so in the context of declaring that "he would claim £35,000 on behalf of his constituents rather than give such a sum to look at" fragments.[24] Lord Brougham made an impassioned plea for the money to be used instead to aid the scores of men who in the wake of Waterloo had been discharged from the armed forces and found themselves unemployed and entering a depressed labor market. Brougham argued that if the country was unable to "give them bread, we ought not to indulge ourselves in the purchase of stones."[25] In a later debate, Lord Milton directly connected the public's inability to purchase reasonably priced food to the uptick in social disorder, stating that

[23] For example, Fagan argues that Charles Dickens' childhood in England's coldest decade shaped his later writing, especially his depictions of Christmas, as white Christmases were commonplace during those years (*Little*, 170). Post contends that public opinions shifted toward a wider acceptance of the government's responsibility for public welfare and distress relief (*Last*, 175), and much of Europe and North America saw mass emigration as families faced with the impossible difficulties of surviving those years set out quite literally for greener pastures and hopes of a more predictable and temperate climate elsewhere.
[24] "House of Commons," *The Examiner* (London), June 9, 1816, *ProQuest*.
[25] St Clair, *Lord*, 246.

"the want of subsistence was the cause of riot and disturbance in many parts of the country."[26] Noah Heringman has drawn attention to the similarities between the language used to praise the Elgin Marbles and the language William Cobbett used to comment on the state of the country: "It is revealing that Cobbett's *Political Register* (March 23, 1816) describes the agricultural crisis and the spate of bankruptcies cited throughout the Commons debates in terms that repeat those widely used to praise the anatomical fidelity of the Parthenon sculptures: 'national ruin is no longer a rhetorical figure but a literal and naked reality.'"[27] At the time of their purchase, many commentators and Members of Parliament understood the acquisition of the marbles to come at the direct cost of being able to relieve the climate-exacerbated economic distresses of the public.

In June 1816, after the Parliamentary vote approving the purchase, Cruikshank published a political cartoon entitled "The Elgin Marbles! or John Bull buying Stones at the time his numerous Family want Bread!!" which stages the cost the English people paid for the purchase of the marbles (See Figure 1). The cartoon emphasizes Lord Castlereagh's indifference to the starving and impoverished public, symbolized by John Bull's emaciated and ill-clothed family. Castlereagh stands on the left in the position of a salesman, gesturing to the statuary fragments with his right hand while his left pulls Bull closer as he tries to convince Bull that the stones were purchased for him: "Here's a Bargain for you Johnny! Only £35,000!! I have bought them on purpose for you! Never think of Bread when you can have Stones so wonderous Cheap!!"

[26] Hitchens, *Imperial*, 137.
[27] Heringman, Noah, "Stones so wonderous Cheap," *Studies in Romanticism* 37, no. 1 (1998): 60.

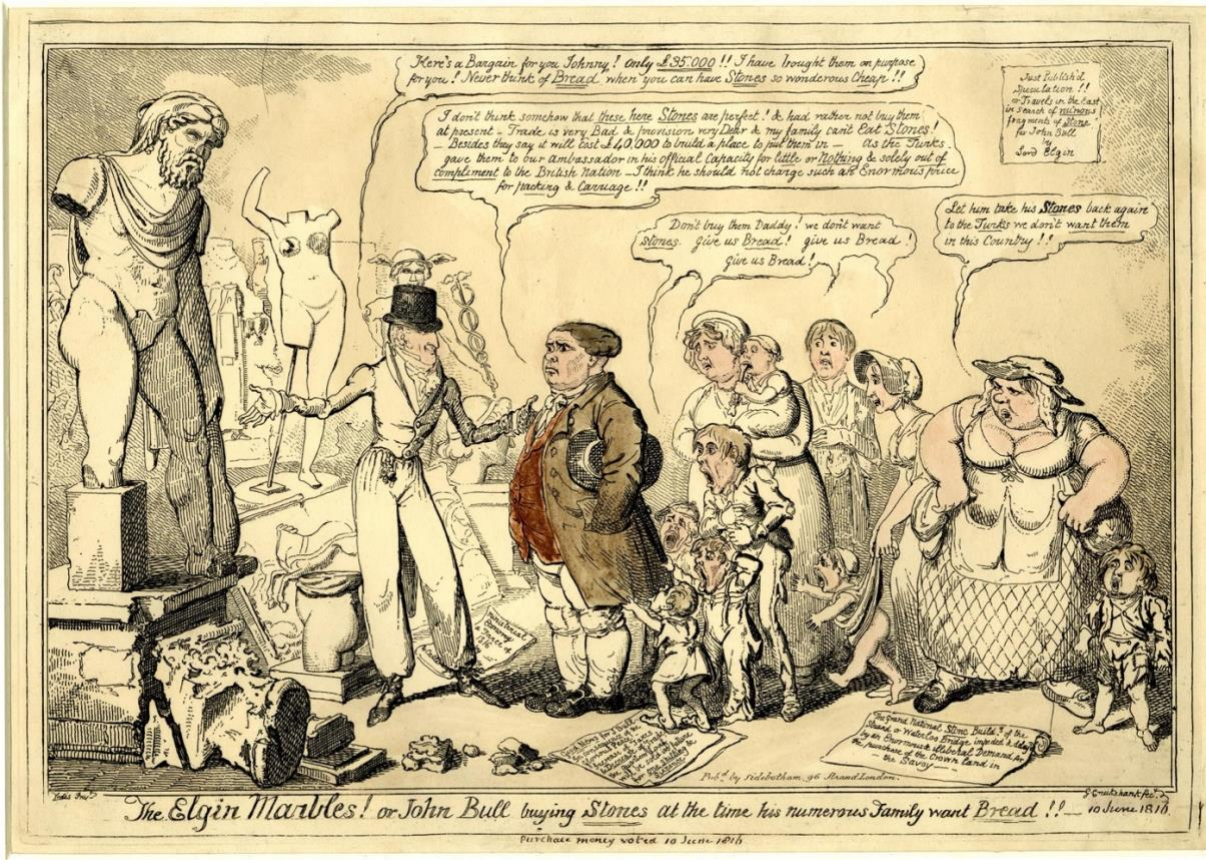

FIGURE 1. George Cruikshank, 1792–1878, *The Elgin Marbles! or John Bull buying stones at the time his numerous family want bread!!*, June 10, 1816. Satirical print. 247 mm x 347 mm (9.7 in x 13.7 in). Printed by J. Sidebotham, *The British Museum*. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The depiction of Castlereagh as a conniving salesman and his deceitful insistence that he has bought the stones at a bargain specifically for Bull pushes back against a common argument in favor of the Elgin Marbles purchase: that they would lead to an improvement in British art and thus usher the country into a new era of artistic achievement. Not only was most of the suffering public unlikely ever to see the marbles, let alone benefit from the example of their artistic genius, but also, they were not given the option to weigh in on the debate despite ultimately shouldering the cost for the marbles. Cruikshank picks up on Brougham's rhetoric and makes this opportunity cost explicit as Bull refuses the stones. Bull declares that: "I had rather not buy them at present—Trade is very Bad & provision very Dear & my family can't EAT STONES!" and

remarks on the additional expenses that will be incurred by housing the marbles: “Besides they say it will cost £40,000 to build a place to put them in.” Several children tug on his coat, their cheeks hollowed from hunger and their expressions desperate, as the rest of his family looks on in abject misery and distress, pleading: “Don't buy them Daddy! we don't want Stones. Give us Bread! Give us Bread! Give us Bread!"

The cartoon’s background further critiques the direct opportunity cost of the marbles on a broader public scale. Various broadsides are scattered across the ground; one partially blocked by Castlereagh’s left foot calls attention to growing distrust in Parliament reading: “Ministerial Economy a Farce of 1816 by—Castlereagh.” One of John Bull’s small shabby children stands upon a broadside which reads: “Good News for J Bull—In consequence of the Glorious Peace Increase of Taxes & Decrease of Trade, the quarten Loaf will be sold in future for one shilling & sixpence,” emphasizing postwar public distress and the rising bread prices occasioned by the climate crisis. The third critiques the uselessness of the government’s decision to purchase ruined, or wasted, “stones” instead of funding a stonework project that might help repair the economy: “The Grand National Stone Building of the Strand or Waterloo Bridge impeded & delayed by an Enormous & illiberal Demand for the purchase of the Crown land in —the Savoy—.” Opponents of the marbles’ purchase also felt that Lord Elgin’s removal of the Parthenon sculptures from Greece too closely mirrored Napoleon’s own prolific theft of art from across Europe during his reign, art which had only just been recovered the year prior. The “Crown land in—the Savoy—” calls attention to this fear that Parliament’s purchase of the not entirely lawfully removed marbles brought them in uneasy proximity to Napoleon.

Fantastical caricatures of the marbles are haphazardly positioned behind Castlereagh, with a fragment composed of just an ass grazing his right leg, a visual jab at his character.

Referencing the mercurial nature of politics, a statue of Mercury peeps out over Castlereagh's hat, with the hand holding his caduceus prominently positioned in the negative space between Castlereagh and John Bull. As a symbol of trade and commerce, the caduceus once again points to the opportunity cost of the marbles. With its two snakes entwined about a winged rod, it visually recalls the rod of Asclepius (which features a single snake wrapped about a rod), and thus also obliquely references the well-being of the public, which is being neglected for the well-being of the already ruined and now ruinous stones. Another common argument in favor of the marbles and the ethics of Lord Elgin's removal of them from Greece revolved around the danger posed to their welfare by being left exposed to the elements and to military damage (which they sustained repeatedly throughout the centuries). By acquiring them, the government in effect privileged the well-being of broken stone bodies over the well-being of the living bodies of its constituents. As Cruikshank's cartoon makes clear, the purchase of "ruinous fragments of Stone" by Castlereagh's government came at the direct expense of the public's ability to afford bread and of the government's ability to fund public works projects that could have a reparative or restorative effect on the nation's economy.

"On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" in a Time of Climate Crisis

My spirit is too weak—mortality
   Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
   And each imagined pinnacle and steep,
Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
   Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
   That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
   Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,

That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old time—with a billowy main—
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.[28]

On March 2, 1817, Keats's friend, the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, brought him to the British Museum to view the marbles for the first time. The story of this visit is often presented as a catalyst in the shaping of Keats's creative vision, a profound encounter with art that enabled his poetic maturation. Most discussions of Keats's sonnet "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" focus on its historical context within the life of the poet and his poetic aspirations, or within Romantic-era aesthetic discourses about artistic value and style. The sonnet typically gets read as expressive of Keats's anxieties about his poetic inadequacy, his inability to measure up to the level of artistic skill found within the marbles, his fears about his own mortality, and his realization that all art is impermanent. Nicholas Roe, for example, describes Keats's visit to the marbles as an artistic crossroads: "Confronted with all that the Parthenon sculptures represented, and with his ears dinned by Haydon's enthusiasm, Keats's dilemma on seeing the Elgin Marbles challenged him with questions of what kind of poet he was, and what he should write."[29] He further suggests that "Keats's response on first seeing the Marbles in 1817 initiated a breakthrough in creative self-understanding from which grew his later poems and some of his ideas about poetic genius."[30] Given that it is one of Keats's earlier poems, Roe is not alone among the poem's commentators in treating it as a precursor to the poetic maturity Keats had yet

[28] John Keats, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," in *John Keats: The Major Works*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 56. Subsequent references for this poem will appear in parentheticals in the main text with line numbers specified.
[29] Nicholas Roe, "A Rhinoceros among Giraffes: John Keats and the Elgin Marbles," in *Selected Papers from the Wordsworth Summer Conference*, ed. Richard Gravil (Penrith: Humanities Ebooks, 2009), 201.
[30] Roe, 201.

to gain, an assessment to which the sonnet's unbalanced meter and tortured syntax doubtless contribute.[31]

There is a different account to be discovered, however, if focus is shifted away from a prototypical Romantic encounter with artistic genius and transcendent beauty to the more mundane political events that Keats also encountered on March 2, 1817, and in the ensuing week. When situated within the context of the climate catastrophe and subsequent subsistence crisis caused by Tambora's eruption, the sonnet reads very differently. "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" was written nearly a year after the marbles were purchased, in the shadow of the year without a summer and in the midst of the ongoing climate crisis, social distresses, and crop failures outlined in the first section. It is a poem, I contend, whose reflections on time and mortality amount to a meditation on climate and the potential valuelessness of art when faced with such widespread suffering.

The Sunday Haydon brought Keats to see the marbles, Leigh Hunt postponed the publication of one of Keats's poems in *The Examiner* in light of the national emergency occasioned by the imminent suspension of Habeas Corpus. Habeas Corpus would be suspended two days later, on March 4, and its suspension would not be lifted until February 1818. It was one of the many effects of the climatic and economic disasters of 1816–1819 as the British Government struggled to contend with the ongoing subsistence crisis and consequent rising discontent and radicalism. Hunt delayed the publication of Keats's poem to print instead an address "To the English People" on the subject. Over the span of several pages, he passionately

[31]E.B. Murray notes that "commentators have been less willing to assign any esthetic value to the poem because they feel it fairly well illustrates Keats's admission of artistic impotence which they feel is its sole meaning" (23), and Stephen Larrabee argues that "Keats was too overwhelmed, then, by the first sight of the Elgin Marbles to be able to write good poetry about the experience" (213). Stephen A. Larrabee, *English Bards and Grecian Marbles: The Relationship between Sculpture and Poetry especially in the Romantic Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943); and E.B. Murray, "Ambivalent Mortality in the Elgin Marbles Sonnet," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 20 (1971): 22–36.

defends the importance of Habeas Corpus and argues that its suspension is akin to a complete loss of liberty, concluding with a call urging the people to use this violation of their rights as further momentum in the fight for Reform: "The right of Habeas Corpus is the right of having your personal liberty kept inviolate, till proof be brought, and open judgement given, to warrant the suspension of it…it is the right, in short, and the whole real definition, of being a free man".[32] While the arguments used to justify the suspension of Habeas Corpus revolved around government claims to have uncovered a conspiracy aimed at overthrowing Parliament, Hunt asserts that it is the Members of Parliament's own guilty consciences that lead them to redirect the rightful accusations leveled at them by the people.

> We call upon them not to be guilty of seat-selling, and they say 'You are unconstitutional, you knaves.' We call upon them not to keep their Parliament sitting for seven years in violation of our rights, and they say 'You want a rebellion, you traitorous rascals.' We call upon them not to heap up taxes and a profligate expenditure, and to restore us our proper quantity of liberty and property, and they say, 'You shall have fines and imprisonments, and be taken up on suspicion, you inordinate vagabonds.' (March 2, 1817)

Hunt underscores the opportunity cost between "heap[ed] up taxes and a profligate expenditure," such as the public funds used to finance the purchase of the Elgin Marbles, and the people's "proper quantity of liberty and property." Michael J. Sider contends that as a follower of the civic humanist concept of history-painting, Haydon believed the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles would be the dawn of a more democratic England, "restor[ing] art to its public function, and thereby revitaliz[ing] English culture and the nation."[33] In the economic and political context of 1816, however, the purchase of the marbles had the opposite effect in the eyes of many,

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[32] Leigh Hunt, "The Political Examiner," *The Examiner* (London), March 2, 1817, *ProQuest*.
[33] Michael J Sider, *The Dialogic Keats: Time and History in the Major Poems* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 153.

including some within Keats's immediate artistic circle, for they came at the expense of the public's "proper quantity of liberty and property."

When Keats accompanied Haydon to the British Museum on March 2, the political crisis occasioned by the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act cannot have been far from his mind. Aside from his publication having been delayed in favor of a more pragmatic response, he had spent the day before with Hunt celebrating the presentation copies of his first collection of poems. During this time in Keats's life, he was especially close with Hunt, who played a crucial role in the development of his poetic career and in whose opinions he placed great value.[34] *The Examiner* had covered the debate about the marbles extensively during 1816, and while agreeing with Haydon on the artistic and cultural merits of the purchase, Hunt also printed many of the economic concerns voiced by Members of Parliament about its financial prudence. In addition, *The Examiner* frequently expressed its more general concerns about the economic state of the country.

In March 1816, *The Examiner* printed an essay of Haydon's arguing that the judgment of the artistic merits of the marbles should be left to the artists, not wealthy connoisseurs.[35] Haydon's piece appeared immediately after an editorial of Hunt's decrying the unjust continuation of a wartime tax levied against the public. Hunt dwells at length on the impoverished state of the public who "want of that particular sum, which just enables them to furnish their families with food, clothes, or fire, or to meet the demands, scarcely less necessary to many, of ordinary and decent society."[36] In his essay, Haydon never mentions the financial

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[34] Roe lays out how Hunt, by decisively declaring Keats, Shelley, and John Henry Reynolds to belong to the same "new school of poetry rising of late" (*The Examiner*, December 1, 1816), "had publicly associated Keats with his own poetry and politics; at the time this was a matter of immense gratification to Keats" (125). Nicholas Roe, *John Keats: A New Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[35] Benjamin Robert Haydon, "On the Judgement of Connoisseurs Being Preferred to That of Professional Men,—Elgin Marbles, &c.," *The Examiner* (London), March 17, 1816, *ProQuest*.

[36] Leigh Hunt, "The Political Examiner," *The Examiner* (London), March 17, 1816, *ProQuest*.

debates surrounding the marbles, but their opportunity cost could not have escaped Hunt or regular readers of *The Examiner*, such as Keats. A June article covering the debate summarizes Brougham's position as thinking "these marbles would be most valuable, as a school of art in this country. But at the same time 35,000*ls* would not be all we should have to pay, for it would cost a good deal more to house them. Now the question was, had we 70 or 80,000*l.* to spare to pay for these marbles, or was this a time for us to involve ourselves in such an unnecessary expence?" He voted against the purchase "for the purpose of redeeming the pledge given of attending to economy."[37] As an avid reader of *The Examiner* and eventually a member of both Hunt's circle and Haydon's, Keats would have been exposed to the multiplicity of concerns surrounding the marbles' purchase, including that they represented an opportunity cost in relation to public economic well-being. The controversy over the potential purchase of the marbles played out over several press cycles, not unlike the recent coverage, in late 2023, of the standoff between the UK and Greek Prime Ministers over Lord Elgin's legal right to have purchased the marbles in the first place.

A week after viewing the marbles, on March 9, *The Examiner* published two poems by Keats, but not the poem delayed by the suspension of Habeas Corpus. That poem, "Written on a Blank Space at the End of Chaucer's Tale of 'The Floure and the Lefe'," would be postponed another week. Instead, Hunt published the two sonnets Keats wrote on the Elgin Marbles: "To Haydon, with a Sonnet Written on seeing the Elgin Marbles." The choice to substitute the two Elgin Marbles poems suggestively positions Keats's response to the Elgin Marbles within the political context of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act.[38] As many scholars have noted, the

[37] "House of Commons," *The Examiner* (London), June 9, 1816, *ProQuest*.
[38] Roe has called attention to the way the paratextual contexts of Keats's poetry, such as the layout of his poems within *The Examiner*, and the dedication and title page of his first book, *Poems* (1817), serve to lend "a keen political edge to his poetry" (*Keats* 149); see also, Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford:

sonnet addressed to Haydon appears to be a rather straightforward (if awkwardly phrased) expression of gratitude for Haydon's friendship and artistic taste.[39] "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," however, is an ambivalent questioning of the merits and immortality of art.

Concerns about the potential valuelessness of art must have been connected in Keats's mind to the ongoing political and climatic crisis. Not only had Hunt's address to the people just superseded his poem, but also Keats, a sensitive man, had forsaken his career in medicine for poetry just weeks before. Upon seeing the Elgin Marbles, Keats was forced to confront his own feelings of poetic inadequacy, the mortality of art, its potential worthlessness in the light of political exigency, and the opportunity cost embodied in relocating the marbles to the British Museum. Faced with the imminent suspension of a fundamental civil liberty, accumulated years of unrelenting economic hardship, climatic instability, increased riots and social disturbances, and the financial burden of the marbles which prevented governmental relief to those in need, Keats's sonnet locates his response to the marbles at the nexus of these concerns, through its broken rhythm. As we shall see presently, the fragmentation of the sonnet form resonates with the fragmentation of the marbles, and the key mode of its expression is rhythmic; the broken time of the sonnet mirrors the temporal ruination of the statues, a *weathering* created through the interaction of time and climate.

One of the frequent complaints voiced by detractors of the Elgin Marbles' artistic merits was their weathered appearance. Richard Payne Knight, for example, referred to them as having "a dirty corroded surface."[40] Stripped of their varnish and paint, fragmented by climatic exposure

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Clarendon Press, 1997). I expand upon this claim here in contending that the timing of the sonnets' publication places them in dialogue with 1816–1819's climate crisis.

[39] For example, see Thomas McFarland, *The Masks of Keats: The Endeavour of a Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Shahidha K. Bari, *Keats and Philosophy: The Life of Sensations* (London: Routledge Studies in Romanticism, 2012); and Susan Wolfson, *A Greeting of the Spirit: Selected Poetry of John Keats with Commentaries* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2022).

[40] Heringman, "Stones," 58.

and their dislocation from the Parthenon to England, the marbles testify to the ruins of time. While the poem is entitled "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," the marbles themselves only appear after the volta, with the octave focused on the feelings of inadequacy and mortality they engender within the speaker. The sonnet contends with the mortality and limitations of art, as well as the mortality of the artist.[41] The "dim-conceived glories of the brain" (9) encompass Keats' poetic aspirations as well as the sculptures themselves, which can no longer be understood in their original glory and were perhaps, even in their whole and undamaged form, "dim-conceived" all along in their attempt to represent life. The latter reading is taken up again in the final phrase of the poem, with "a shadow of a magnitude" (14) potentially suggesting that all art is merely a shadow of more magnificent conceptions or ideas. While Keats laments his mortality, he also expresses relief that the "cloudy winds" are not his "to keep / Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye" (7–8). His humanity prevents him from having to undertake such "godlike" climatic tasks, even as it limits his art within a mortal scope. While the sestet explores the weathered nature of the sculptures, the poem is at pains to bring weather into play earlier on, reminding the reader of its role in the passage of time and the seasons, as well as its position outside of human control.

Formally, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" mimics the fragmented and broken form of the statues with its awkward syntax and rhythmic variations.[42] Its broken rhythm works against its poetic form, highlighting the dissonance between what the statues once were and what they are now. By Keats's day, the sonnet form implicitly opposed fragmentation, insofar as it amounted

[41] See Murray, "Mortality"; and Alison Pearce, "Magnificent Mutilations: John Keats and the Romantic Fragment," *Keats Shelley Journal* 21 (2006): 22–34.
[42] Both Scott, *Sculpted*; and Theresa M. Kelley, "Keats and 'ekphrasis': Poetry and the description of art," in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 170–185; call attention to this as an aspect of Keats's ekphrastic technique within the sonnet.

to a starkly defined whole characterized by a series of formal boundaries and restrictions. The Romantic fragment was a popular poetic genre that Keats could have adopted. Choosing to represent the fragmentation of the Elgin Marbles within the bounded form of the sonnet creates tension between the poem's form and its subject, and Keats utilizes that tension to further emphasize the marbles' wasted and weathered nature. Christopher R. Miller argues that in "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," "the sonnet serves as both a reassuringly bounded container and a frustratingly arbitrary horizon" which enables Keats to undertake a task he "felt unequal to," that of "writing about the sublimity of the experience."[43]

The bounded container of the sonnet does not function as a guardrail for Keats, but instead points to his attempt to capture the current weathered nature of the statues while simultaneously gesturing to their prior undamaged and complete state. From the first line, the sonnet emphasizes its halting step: "My spirit is too weak—mortality" (1) with its caesura, dactyl, and dissonant enjambment. The awkward placement of "mortality" in the line functions rhythmically like missing a step—the poem stumbles, and the landing comes unexpectedly and unsatisfyingly. Grant F. Scott notes that the sonnet throughout contains "an abundance of dactyls…that help contribute to [its] weak or falling rhythm" and that "pronounced enjambment…breaks up the rhythm of the line and dramatizes the poem's ruggedness, its rough-cut, apprentice quality. We find ourselves constantly pausing at the wrong times in the verse, unable to gain a sturdy foothold, unable to make harmonious and comforting connections that the rhyme would normally invite."[44]

[43] Christopher R. Miller, "Lyrical Genres," in *John Keats in Context*, ed. Michael O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 272.
[44] Scott, *Sculpted*, 56.

The sonnet's broken rhythm mirrors the fragmented statues and reproduces the relationship between their current damaged state and time as the cause of that damage. The marbles as a medium of time's capacity to ruin, are mirrored medially in the ruined time, or broken rhythms of the poem. The Elgin marbles are of course weathered by time—by centuries of exposure to the climate. In this way, "the rude / Wasting of old time" (12–13) becomes a marker of the climatic ravages of time, one which seems especially pregnant with meaning in light of the climatic ravages Keats was currently witnessing around him. Recontextualizing the sonnet by placing it in dialogue with the Cruikshank cartoon and Tambora's climatic aftermath makes possible a reading that locates the poem's anxieties not only within Keats' poetic inadequacy but within concerns about the larger value of art. The line break between "rude" and "Wasting" takes on added significance as it sunders the syntactical relationship between the two lines, allowing for them to point simultaneously to the way time has ruined the "Grecian grandeur" of the sculptures and to the way the sculptures themselves are a "Wasting of old time." The ambiguity of the phrase allows for the possibility that viewing the marbles in the present is perhaps a waste of time given the immediately pressing concerns of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act—while Hunt busies himself trying to rouse the people to fight for their civil liberties, Keats ponders some old broken hunks of marble—as well as the opportunity cost of their presence in the British Museum. It also suggestively points to the possibility that their creation in the past was perhaps a waste of time all along; it depends on whether it is old time that is doing the wasting, or old time that was wasted.

The end of the sonnet is its most fragmented section; its final lines are ruptured by caesuras and incomplete images: "Wasting of old time—with a billowy main— / A sun—a shadow of a magnitude" (13–14). The em dashes serve to suggest a causal link between the

mingling of "Grecian grandeur" (12) with the "rude / Wasting of old time" and the "billowy main," "a sun," and "a shadow of a magnitude," although this connection is one that the poem itself seems unable or unwilling to voice. Heringman contends that "the sun has long ago burned away the colors of the frieze and the 'billowy main' has played a part in swallowing one of the ships carrying the Marbles to England (its cargo was eventually recovered)," but the fragmentation of the line does more to suggest the unknowable and "undescribable" (10) interaction between time and weather: temperature (sun) and wind (that which makes the main "billowy").[45] The poem refuses to assign a definitive causal relationship between the elements of sun and sea and the marbles' ruin, instead literalizing the ruin within the punctuation and syntax of the line. The "shadow of a magnitude" becomes Keats' own grappling with poetic inadequacy, alongside a recognition that all art—which was perhaps all along a shadow of a magnitude—is further reduced to an even dimmer shadow of its former magnitude by time, thus gesturing to the sculptures' diminished power in their current state.

These readings privilege the magnitude of what is being shadowed over the magnitude of the shadow itself, the latter of which is especially provocative in light of inclement post-Tambora weather patterns, which increased overcast (or shadowed) skies and prompted scientific concerns about sunspots. As I alluded to earlier, many believed that sunspots were the underlying cause of the unusual weather, as in 1816 they were especially visible and numerous. This reading of "a shadow of a magnitude" is suggestive given an earlier untitled Keats sonnet from January 1817, which seems to be responding directly to the climate crisis triggered by Tambora's eruption: "After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains / For a long dreary season."[46] The sonnet's

[45] Heringman, "Stones", 54.
[46] John Keats, "After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains," in *John Keats: The Major Works*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), lines 1–2. Subsequent references for this poem will appear in parentheticals in the main text with line numbers specified.

language calls attention to the relationship between the unusually inclement weather and the increased political unrest with its use of "oppress'd" to describe the overcast skies, an association strengthened by the poem's later characterization of pleasant weather as a "long lost right": "The anxious Month, relieving of its pains, / Takes as a long lost right the feel of May" (5–6). The affective and medical resonances of "dark vapors" point toward the general sense of unrest and discontent as well as the typhus outbreaks. These allusions are carried through in the description of the month as "anxious," and the arrival of a warm sunny day which "clears away / From the sick heavens all unseemly stains" (3–4). The "unseemly stains" on the "sick heavens" indicate that Keats may have imbibed his contemporaries' preoccupation with overcast skies and sunspots. The phrase "a shadow of a magnitude" could thus have been read by some as having the sun's astronomical magnitude as its reference. By leaving blank the cause or effect of time and weather, the poem gestures to larger concerns and anxieties about the way climatic exposure can wear away the solidity of stone and the immortality of art. As a destructive force, climate shapes both the current state of the marbles and the conclusion of Keats's sonnet.

"On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" troubles the value of art in light of the opportunity cost embodied by the marbles' placement within the British Museum. Keats dramatizes the fragmented state of the marbles by reproducing the damaging effects of time and climate within the sonnet's broken rhythm and in so doing calls attention not only to external causes of the statues' current condition, but also the climatic instability which was ruinous to the bodies of the British public. Within this political, economic, and climatic context, the sonnet questions not only whether the power of the marbles has been diminished by the "rude / Wasting of old time," but whether art is always potentially powerless, a powerlessness that would render its ruination by climate another form—really, a kind of material fulfillment—of its "waste" status. The relief

of the British people is neglected as money is "wasted" on fragments. The broken rhythm of the sonnet and its awkward syntax stage this loss of respite by consistently withholding or troubling expected harmonies and satisfying conclusions to rhythmic or grammatical phrases. This art offers no relief.

Conspiracies of Climate Justice in "To Autumn"

I

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
  And still more, later flowers for the bees,
  Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

2

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
  Drows'd with the fume of poppies while thy hook
    Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
  Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

3

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
  Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
  And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
  Among the river sallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.[47]

In England, the breaking point of the post-Tambora years—and an event familiar to scholars of British Romanticism—was the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. The mass demonstration demanding parliamentary reform and protesting the Corn Laws at St. Peter's Fields in Manchester on August 16, 1819, ended in a bloody military attack on an unarmed crowd. Though not traditionally thought of as such, the Peterloo Massacre deserves recognition as a significant event in the history of environmental justice and not just in the histories of political and economic justice. Widespread hunger was a catalyst for the demonstration, as a people who had suffered under the severe climatic and political conditions of the decade protested importation laws that lined the pockets of landowners by keeping grain prices high at the expense of people struggling to afford enough food for their survival. In his recent history of Peterloo, Robert Poole underscores the importance of foregrounding the subsistence crisis in accounts of the event. Commenting on the conjunction of the economic distresses of the post-war period with Tambora's climatic aftermath, he writes: "The numerous prints from the period which depicted working people as thin, pale, and ragged were not making it up; for the economically defenceless, squalor had become normal. There was never a worse time to be working class than in the Peterloo years."[48] He later remarks on Peterloo's relationship to other events influenced by the climate crisis, such as the suspension of Habeas Corpus in 1817. Poole quotes from a reported speech George Philips, an MP from Manchester, gave the House, in

[47] John Keats, "To Autumn," in *John Keats: The Major Works*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 324–325. Subsequent references for this poem will appear in parentheticals in the main text with line numbers specified.
[48] Robert Poole, *Peterloo: The English Uprising* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18.

which he stressed: "few if any, of those who were employed, could maintain themselves—and those who could obtain subsistence, were not able to obtain clothing…The suffering was so severe and so general, and such as no man living had ever before witnessed."[49] As Poole comments immediately afterward, "In a way that few in the western world two centuries later are equipped to appreciate, the survival instinct was harnessed to the cause of reform."[50]

In my reading of "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," I have been contending that when resituated within the climatic and political context of 1817, the broken feet of Keats's sonnet can be understood as formally "weathered," gesturing to the ruined and ruinous Parthenon sculptures as they registered both the ravages of climate and the climate injustice engendered by Parliament's purchase of the sculptures. In turning to "To Autumn," I offer a variation on that argument, focusing instead on that poem's much-celebrated formal harmony. The formal balance of Keats's ode can be understood in relation to its climatic and political context as a poetic imagining of environmental justice, one which is nevertheless disrupted by the manifold environmental *in*justices of 1816–1819, with Peterloo the most recent and shocking of these. "To Autumn" has been interpreted in relation to Tambora and Peterloo before—most notably by Bate and Roe, respectively—but not through the lens of Tambora as a subsistence crisis and Peterloo as an event precipitated in part by a desire for environmental justice in response to that subsistence crisis. Doing so allows us to glimpse an incipient climate justice consciousness in Keats and in "To Autumn."

"To Autumn" is Keats's last completed poem and perhaps his most famous. The ode's politics have been vigorously and incisively debated over the years. Jerome McGann's paradigmatic reading of the poem critiqued it as an escapist retreat from the politics of the day,

[49] Poole, 117.
[50] Poole, 117.

turning its back on the horrors of Peterloo and turning toward aesthetic pleasure instead.[51] Roe's seminal reading of the poem, and of Keats, pushed back against McGann and others' assumptions that Keats's verse was apolitical, arguing instead for the poem's deeply allusive entanglement with the events of Peterloo and the period's politics.[52] Many scholars have since read the poem in this vein, including, more recently, Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley, and Howard Thomas, who have contended for the importance of placing the ode squarely within its local origin point of Winchester. They argue that doing so reveals a Keats who was "'radical' in the sense that he understood the relationship between the metropolitan, political radicalism articulated by contributors to the *Examiner* and the early nineteenth-century crisis in agricultural livings, land use, food supply and food prices," and while "Keats may not have taken part in a food riot himself…he would have recognized the nexus of social and economic factors that helped to spark such events."[53] Bate's pivotal ecocritical reading contended that Tambora's climatic aftermath and its effect on Keats's failing health played a major role in shaping the poem. Bate centers the improved weather of late 1819, suggesting that "'To Autumn' is not an escapist fantasy which turns its back on the ruptures of Regency culture; it is a meditation on how human culture can only function through links and reciprocal relations with nature."[54]

As this chapter has been making clear, the climate crisis of the 1810s was inextricably bound up with the decade's political events. Despite this, however, with some exceptions, critical responses to Keats's ode tend to place it in the camp of either politics or ecology. Those who understand it as political obscure its ecological dimension, while those who understand it as

[51] Jerome McGann, "Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism," MLN 94, no. 5 (1979): 988-1032.
[52] Roe, *Culture*.
[53] Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley and Howard Thomas, *Food and the Literary Imagination* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 109.
[54] Bate, "Living," 440.

ecological obscure its politics. The prior political situation and preexisting structural inequities converged with the nonanthropogenic climate crisis triggered by Tambora's eruption, resulting in much greater suffering, distress, and social unrest. Furthermore, as I noted earlier in this chapter, the Corn Laws, coinciding as they did with the low harvest yields of 1816–1818, not only had the effect of deepening the economic and subsistence crises but also meant that by the time grain prices had risen enough to hit the Corn Laws' high importation ceiling, most of the surplus grain (of which there was very little to begin with) had been bought up by other European countries, and foreign grain was at a premium.[55] *The Times* bitterly commented on this discrepancy: "While we are upon this subject, it may be fair to ask how it happens that, when the people of London pay 1s. 6d. for the quarten loaf, the French consumer pays only 10d. (and that considered a famine price)?"[56]

For the purposes of this section, I want to foreground two biographical aspects of the poem's composition. Firstly, Keats was in increasingly desperate financial straits. Secondly, he was among the crowd of the estimated 30,000 who witnessed Henry "Orator" Hunt's first public appearance in London since his arrest following Peterloo. Keats wrote "To Autumn" on Sunday September 19, 1819, while out for a walk in the fields surrounding Winchester. The dating of the poem is definitive and the biographical details surrounding its composition have been discussed in detail by many critics. During his stay in Winchester, Keats received a letter from his brother

[55] In 1817, as grain yields continued to fall, grain prices rose, and unemployment and industry stagnation cut severely into the wages of people already living on the edge of subsistence, European governments tried to secure surplus grain from other countries to stave off famine. This was easier said than done, because all of western and central Europe were suffering from the extensive harvest failures of 1816, meaning grain had to be imported from eastern Europe, the Ottoman empire, or North America. But even those markets were under duress since the entire world grain supply was depleted by below-average harvest yields and wartime pressures. Additionally, in 1817, the Baltic seaports—the most logical source of grain for northwestern Europe—were blocked by ice as a result of the cold weather and unable to make any shipments until late spring.

[56] "London, Friday, May 2, 1817," *The Times* (London), May 2, 1816, *The Times Digital Archive*.

George in America informing him he had been swindled out of his savings. On the urging of a man he had just met, James Audubon, George had invested all his money in a scheme to fund a Mississippi steamboat. As it turned out, Audubon was bankrupt and had no financial stake in the scheme; George lost everything. At the same time, as their uncle's widow was suing the Jennings estate, the Keats siblings were prevented from withdrawing funds from their inheritances, held in trust by their legal guardian, Richard Abbey. After hearing about George's financial difficulties, Keats rushed to London on September 10, hopeful that he would be able to talk his publishers, Taylor & Hessey, into quickly printing some of his new poems and that he could convince Abbey into releasing some of the funds. However, Taylor & Hessey had lingering qualms about the sexual content of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and Abbey refused to pay out any more money until the estate suit was settled. Keats returned to Winchester with no improvement in his financial prospects. On September 22, 1819, a mere three days after writing "To Autumn," Keats was so worried about remaining solvent that he wrote to his friend Charles Wentworth Dilke that he was seriously considering giving up poetry altogether and taking up magazine journalism instead, which he described as being "tempted to venture on the common," a Regency-era euphemism for sex work.[57]

On September 13, during his trip to London, and with financial concerns at the forefront of his mind, Keats saw Henry Hunt's post-Peterloo entry into London. In a letter to George, written September 18 (the day before he wrote "To Autumn"), Keats makes reference to Peterloo and describes having witnessed Hunt's procession through the streets:

> You will hear by the papers of the proceedings at Manchester and Hunt's triumphal entry into London. I[t] would take me a whole day and a quire of paper to give you any thing like detail. I will merely mention that it is calculated that 30,000 people were in the

[57]John Keats to Chares Wentworth Dilke, September 22, 1819, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 153.

> streets waiting for him—The whole distance from the Angel Islington to the Crown and anchor was lined with Multitudes (September 17–27, 1819)

Not only would Keats, as a close friend of political radicals such as Leigh Hunt and Dilke have felt the full import of what he was witnessing, but given his current financial situation, it likely struck him on a more personal level.[58] As a response to middle-class pressure, Parliament abolished the wartime income tax in 1816, making up the deficit by increasing taxes on everyday goods such as soap, salt, beer, malt (for brewing), candles, and paper. This, in combination with the Corn Laws, which of course artificially inflated the price of bread, meant that in 1819, the working classes were paying up to a quarter of their earnings in tax alone.[59] In addition to his mounting personal financial concerns, Keats had witnessed the steeply rising cost of everyday goods over the past several years and Parliament's repeated refusal to enact adequate relief measures, decrease taxes, or abolish the Corn Laws. In light of the tax on paper, Keats's comment to George that it would take "a quire of paper to give you any thing like detail" of Hunt's arrival reads like an economic concern as much as a time concern. While the climatic aftermath of Tambora's eruption was finally on the wane in 1819, most of the country continued to live perilously close to, or under, the breadline, with no political recourse. Keats himself, in addition to having witnessed these years of hunger, poverty, and turmoil, had seen his finances, never stable in the best of times, decline throughout this same period.[60] Bate emphasizes the role that the return of warm, pleasant weather after three years of rain, cold, and climatic instability plays in Keats's poetic representation of the season. But the poem is attempting something more complex. Through its formal balance and overflowing images of abundance, "To Autumn"

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[58] Both Hunt and Dilke published on the public's inability to afford bread, with Hunt attacking the Corn Laws with great vigor and frequency (Archer et al., *Food* 109).
[59] Poole, *Peterloo*, 19.
[60] As Lucasta Miller puts it, "Money was an issue that made Keats scared and cynical." *Keats: A Brief Life in Nine Poems and One Epitaph* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021), 120.

works to articulate a poetic vision of environmental justice in dialogue with the climate crisis of 1816–1819 and Peterloo. Keats's ode emphasizes the interrelationship between climatic stability and bounty, highlighting the importance weather plays in the availability of food and offering a vision of equitably distributed sustenance. This is an equitable distribution, I contend, that the poem enacts formally and symbolically through its metrical balance. At the same time, however, the poem's equity and bountiful agricultural production are continually troubled by unsettling and uneasy moments as the climate injustice of 1816–1819 haunts Keats's poem.

Proponents of politically charged readings of "To Autumn" in relation to Peterloo work to situate the poem within its literary, political, and biographical contexts. I have already briefly glossed some of the key aspects of these readings, noting that when Keats witnessed Hunt's return to London just before writing the poem, he was struggling with financial concerns. He also ran in fairly radical political circles. He was a committed reader of *The Examiner*, which reported extensively on Peterloo, and Dilke regularly sent copies of the magazine to Keats in Winchester from London. In addition to several articles on Peterloo, the September 5 edition of *The Examiner* included an installment of Leigh Hunt's "The Calendar of Nature," a regular monthly column. Hunt opens the column with an excerpt from Edmund Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*, before providing his own prose account of the season. As scholars have pointed out, the imagery in "To Autumn" is heavily indebted to the September 5 column, drawing from Spenser as well as Hunt. Tellingly, immediately below the excerpt from Spenser, Hunt provides the following commentary: "The poet still takes advantage of the exuberance of harvest and the sign of the Zodiac in this month, to read us a lesson on justice."[61] In his reading of the influence of Hunt's column on "To Autumn," Roe contends that within this framework "the conspiracy of

[61] Leigh Hunt, "Calendar of Nature," *The Examiner* (London), September 5, 1819, *ProQuest*.

sun and season may now appear less of an escape from historical tensions, than as a harvest-home fulfilling the call for justice."[62]

Bate's reading of "To Autumn" chafes against interpretations of the poem that insist on situating it solely within its sociopolitical context, arguing instead for the importance of 1819's climatic context. He suggests that as 1819 was the first year to experience a good harvest after the poor yields of 1816, 1817, and 1818, the ode's evocation of a bountiful harvest needs to be understood as a direct response to the return of climatic stability. Bate's reading highlights the climate crisis of those years, and he takes critics like McGann to task for treating historical events such as the Corn Laws as purely matters of politics without situating them in relation to ecological questions of agriculture or climate. However, he ultimately falls back upon a highly individualized reading of "To Autumn" that focuses on the impact the climate of those years had on Keats specifically. In particular, he emphasizes the effect of air quality on Keats's failing health, suggesting that "the bad weather of the immediate post-Tambora years…tragically coincided with the first taking hold of his pulmonary tuberculosis. The good summer and clear autumn of 1819 very literally gave him a new lease of life."[63] Bate's reading of the poem's ecosystem is rooted in the idea that the climate of 1819 in Winchester was more habitable to Keats than the climate of the preceding years or of London and that the poem reflects this habitability and comfort, leading to what Bate refers to as an achievement of "being-at-homeness-in-the-world."[64]

The formal aspects of "To Autumn" contribute to a sense of its balance and abundance. From the very first line, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness," the poem emphasizes

[62] Roe, *Culture*, 261.
[63] Bate, "Living," 441.
[64] Bate, 445.

equitable distribution. By beginning with a trochaic inversion in the first foot, the final foot of the line becomes symmetrical with the first, offering a sense of completion and fullness further picked up by the strong internal rhyme of "mists" and "fruitfulness." The positioning of "and" in the middle of the line turns it into a fulcrum upon which the two halves balance. The line's iambic split is weighted toward "mellow fruitfulness" (containing three of the line's five stresses and five of its syllables) as it swells toward ripeness, an impression strengthened by the final stress at the end of "fulness." The repeated instances of sibilance throughout the poem further this sense of ease and grace as the ode emphasizes soft, fluid sounds. Critics and readers frequently comment upon the poem's harmony and formal balance, often describing it as "perfect" and complete: "the whole is 'perfected'—carried through to completion—solely by means of the given parts and the parts observe decorum…by contributing directly to the whole, with nothing left dangling or independent," as well as emphasizing its poetic equilibrium: "Each stanza…is so equal in its poetical weight, so loaded with its own harvest."[65] Anahid Nersessian calls it "perfect and unforgivable." She contends that in comparison with what she argues is the formally "messy, spectacular performance" of Percy Shelley's explicit response to Peterloo in "The Mask of Anarchy," Keats's ode is "so intrusively lovely thirty-four days out from a high-profile human disaster."[66] She later claims that "To Autumn" "fills our ears and hijacks our awareness so that we too are over-brimmed, knowing, for a few moments, nothing but this language and its great impenitent grace."[67] In my reading of the first line of "To Autumn" I

[65] Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1963), 581; Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Fate of Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 129.
[66] Anahid Nersessian, *Keats's Odes: A Lover's Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 117, 119.
[67] Nersessian, 121. For Nersessian, the poem's formal balance and linguistic grace make it so flawless and beautiful as to be "unforgivable" in the aftermath of Peterloo. She argues that the poem's "virtuosic show of ease" can in fact be understood as a more nuanced response to political injustice, suggesting its stylistic "perfection" is essential to its content: "the problem with beauty is not that it is so fragile but that it is so durable. It is there and true even in an avalanche of shit and despair. To acknowledge that fully, as this poem does, is a profound act of self-mortification" (122).

pointed to an aspect of the ode's poetics which is being underlined here in the descriptions of the equitable balance of its poetic weight or its "grace." Each aspect of the poem is congruous with the whole and often has a corresponding counterpart, lending it its overall feeling of completion and balance. The evidence for these claims about the poem's equilibrium is often left rather vague and unstated. However, the extent to which it has become a critical commonplace suggests that readers and critics of the poem frequently notice the poem's formal ease and balance, even if they rarely stop to parse or enumerate what exactly about Keats's poetics lends it that quality. My brief analysis of the formal elements of the first line's composition is meant to provide a sense of both what is meant by "equal…poetic weight" and how the formal elements of Keats's verse accomplish this balance.

Ecocritical and political readings of the poem both cite the poem's formal equilibrium as evidence of its utopian longings. In ecocritical readings, its formal balance amounts to a kind of ecological balance, thematically in line with the poem's celebration of abundance. For Bate, the poem primarily achieves its equilibrium through what he sees as the natural progression of its metaphors, so seamless as to appear more like metonymies. He argues that the "effect of this naturalization within the poem is to create contiguity between all its elements."[68] Bate locates an ecological awareness within the poem's formal balance, understanding it as a "well-regulated ecosystem," "a network of relations."[69] He emphasizes the poem's ecological balance, as its many living components are provided for and provide for each other. Extending Bate's argument, by putting it in dialogue with my contention that Peterloo should be understood as partially a response to the climate injustice of 1816–1819, it becomes possible to read his "well-regulated ecosystem" as an aspect of the poem's articulation of environmental justice as it

[68] Bate, "Living," 442.
[69] Bate, 442, 443.

presents an ecosystem of plenty for its array of biodiverse inhabitants. Readings of the poem that center on its political connection to Peterloo and the Corn Laws connect its formal balance thematically instead to an emphasis on *judicial* balance, often highlighting its invocation of Autumn as "like a gleaner" ("And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep" [18]). Roe notes that the image of the scales or the balance was emblematic of both September's primary astronomical zodiac constellation (Libra) and the political imagery surrounding Peterloo, appearing on the reformists' banners at the event and in subsequent satirical prints responding to the day's injustice. As he suggests, "in formal terms and in some verbal details the three stanzas of Keats's poem exhibit a fine equity, resuming the current discourse of (in)justice as a politics of style."[70]

The centrality of the placement of the image of Autumn as a "gleaner" in the second stanza of the ode points up how Keats's articulation of ecological abundance is in dialogue with the subsistence crisis of its political and climatic moment. *The Examiner* ran a letter written by a "J.L." who had previously argued against the Corn Laws, entitled "The Corn Bill—Gleaning Made Robbery" which protests the recent outlawing of gleaning in 1818 in combination with the Corn Laws as a creating a state of impossibility for the rural poor.[71] The letter opens with a vehement critique of the Corn Laws: "That the measure of misery is not sufficiently heaped, and that the present *dearth* after a fine harvest is below the average intended, is plain: for bread, which the miscalled and misbegotten Corn Bill has *proved* to be the standard for the price of other provisions also, and in fact every thing else, has not reached the importation price yet."[72] The letter turns to the language of abundance in its description of famine and poverty, as misery is "heaped" and the counterpart of "a fine harvest" is "the present *dearth*." The letter later refers

[70] Roe, *Culture*, 261.
[71] J.L. "The Corn Bill—Gleaning Made Robbery," *The Examiner* (London), November 22, 1818, *ProQuest*.
[72] J.L., "Corn Bill".

to the Corn Laws as "the Famine-Bill" in a sentence which links them with another aspect of the climate crisis of 1816–1819: "Worse than typhus fever, the Famine-Bill has spread over the land one general epidemic *moral* influenza."[73] The conjunction between dearth and abundant harvest similarly appears in Keats's ode, as his descriptions of seasonal plenty are shadowed by uneasy images.

Keats's description of the season's "conspiring" serves to linguistically couple the poem's political and climatic concerns. Readings of "To Autumn" that place it in dialogue with Peterloo frequently point to the word's political implications: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, / Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun; / Conspiring with him how to load and bless" (1–3). Certainly, within the political context of 1819, conspiracy was a loaded word. Not only were the leading reformers threatened with the charge of "treasonable conspiracy to alter by force the constitution of the realm as by law established," but the word repeatedly appears in newspaper reports of Peterloo, referring to it as the "Manchester Conspiracy". But the word also has an atmospheric etymology, one relevant in the poem to recognizing its celebration of ecological plenty at a time of economic scarcity.[74] "Conspire" comes from the Latin "*conspirare*" meaning "to breathe together". "Conspiring" is centered in air, atmosphere. In the context of a poem that takes as its subject "Season of mists," the word yokes together the climatic characteristics of the season, its planetary positioning, and its abundance: the weather of Autumn conspires with the "maturing" sun over "how to load and bless" the land and its inhabitants. If, in the aftermath of Peterloo, the protestors were labeled guilty of "treasonable conspiracy," Keats inverts that image, making the process of "conspiring" productive of plenty and equity instead of a marker of dissent and injustice. However, his decision to use the same

[73] J.L., "Corn Bill".
[74] Roe, *Culture*, 255.

word simultaneously invokes that injustice, causing it to echo insistently within the poem's evocation of balance and fruitfulness.

The poem as a whole is laden with atmospheric and climatic language: its opening "mists" and "conspiring"; the bees' "clammy cells" (11); the personification of Autumn's hair "soft-lifted by the winnowing wind" (15); "the fume of poppies" (17); and "barred clouds" (25). The poem's final stanza with its invocation of the songs of Autumn repeatedly pulls the reader's attention to the presence of sound moving through the atmosphere, and also to the various living and climatic creators of that sound (gnats, the interaction of river sallows and wind, lambs, hedge-crickets, red-breasts, and swallows). Emphasizing the various sonic elements of an atmosphere might be one of the more effective ways to render in verse what is so often relegated to the background or forgotten entirely. By calling attention to the songs of Autumn, Keats asks the reader to notice the movement of soundwaves through the air, momentarily rendering ambient atmosphere visible within the poem. The description of bad or unusual weather is perhaps a more common mode of making atmosphere noticeable, but as I have been arguing, Keats's poem articulates a climatic balance that it tightly links to political justice, a balancing act that the poem continually troubles in its awareness of the climatic instability and political injustice of 1816–1819.

The poem's evocations of ecological balance and abundance, however, are troubled by what one critic has called the poem's "uneasy images."[75] It continually disrupts its "mellow fruitfulness" with uncomfortable or unsettling phrasings and images: "clammy cells" (11), "winnowing wind," "last oozings," "in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn" (27), "full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn" (30) (given the season and the lambs' maturity they are often

[75] Miller, *Keats*, 251.

read as soon to be butchered). Keats's use of the dialect "river sallows" (28) instead of "willows" has also been remarked upon for its association with a "sallow" or unhealthy complexion, an allusive reading strengthened by the morbidity of the description of their interaction with the wind: "born aloft / Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies" (28–29). The "poppies" similarly get rolled into readings of political violence, signifying either the redcoats of the British army or the bloody aftermath of Peterloo. The bees' "clammy cells" are tactically unpleasant and also read in relation to Peterloo with their echoes of jail cells. The "barred clouds" are likewise read as evocative of imprisonment, and the "soft-dying day" which "touch[es] the stubble-plains with rosy hue" (25–26) as an image of the blood left on St. Peter's Fields. Notably, many of the lines I initially called attention to for their atmospheric resonances are also the lines that recurrently show up in accounts of the poem's "subtly queasy" moments.[76] While "oozings" is not strictly atmospheric, the damp, viscous quality of the word evokes humidity or the emission of moisture in a way that seems to leave the "cyder-press" and seep into the surrounding air.

The point I want to make here has less to do with the individual merits of each of these readings, but instead, that, taken together, they emphasize a common and repeated sense that there is something atmospherically troubling about "To Autumn" while at the same time its formal elements are expressive of balance and harmony. In the poem's attempt to articulate a vision of environmental justice, its formal balance is repeatedly knocked off center by the insistent haunting of the climatic instability, subsistence crisis, and political injustices Keats has witnessed in the past few years. The crux of both the poem's expression of environmental justice and its inability to move past the continued experience of environmental injustice is atmosphere: climate. The poem's balance is created in great part through its metrical equipoise, its formal

[76]Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 47.

composition, and this equity is disrupted by these moments of atmospheric uneasiness and discomfort. I called attention earlier to the word "conspiring" as yoking together the climatic and political within the poem. Lyric poetry itself is often associated with breath, both as an aspect of its vocalization when read aloud, as well as a marker of the poem's rhythms: its beats and pauses. Romantic poets' turn to the wind as a figure for poetry or poetic inspiration is an aspect of the longstanding linkage between lyric and breath, or air. In his own autumnal ode to November, John Clare figures the act of poetic creation as one of breathing in conjunction with the climate. He describes himself wishing that the melody of the winds "belonged to me / That I might breath [sic] a living song to thee" (13–14). The atmospheric resonances of Keats's "conspiring" thus bring together the political, climatic, and poetic. The poem's formal balance, its harmonious breath as it were, is an aspect of its articulation of political justice, which is, in turn, linked to its utopic vision of climatic and ecological harmony.

Both "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" and "To Autumn" are responding to different moments within the political, economic, and climate crisis of 1816–1819. While I suggested that "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles" reckons with the possibility that art is powerless in the face of climate injustice, "To Autumn" works to articulate a type of climate justice that can only exist within the carefully balanced constraints of poetic verse. In both poems, it is their meter, their breath, which serves as a register of the historical climate of 1816–1819 as Keats manipulates verse's formal atmospherics to reflect the shifting climatic and political atmosphere around him.

3. THE STORMS BEFORE THE FAMINE:

Irish Romanticism and Environmental Justice after Tambora

Irish Studies has been slow to develop a sustained ecocritical approach to Irish literature. Though a growing body of scholarship in this area has emerged since Eoín Flannery wrote in 2016 that the "creative and critical legacies" of Irish literary and economic history "have yet to yield a body of ecocritical writing," ecocriticism continues to struggle to gain critical traction within Irish Studies.[1] Claire Connolly has diagnosed the problem as stemming from the hold postcolonial studies has over the field, contending that what makes it challenging to frame "Ireland's environment as an object of scholarly inquiry"—to "conceiv[e Irish] natural history on its own terms" – is that, "[in] Irish Studies, we are familiar with thinking about place as expressed in complex, often metaphoric relationship to patterns of dispossession and resettlement."[2] As a corrective, Connolly argues for the importance of adopting an ecocritical approach that allows that "historical change involves the history of nature as well as the more familiar forms of social and political history."[3] Such an approach would require "pay[ing] closer

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[1] Eóin Flannery, *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History, and Environmental Justice* (London: Routledge, 2016), 15. Recent contributions include several special issues: "Ireland and Ecocriticism," ed. Flannery, *The Journal of Ecocriticism* 5, no. 2 (2013); and "Irish Environmental Humanities," eds. Derek Gladwin and Maureen O'Connor, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 40 (2017); a series of edited collections: *Out of the Earth: Ecocritical Readings of Irish Texts*, ed. Christine Cusick (Cork: Cork University Press, 2010); *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, eds. Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin (Cork: Cork University Press, 2014); and *A History of Irish Literature and the Environment*, ed. Malcolm Sen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); along with a series of monographs, such as Tim Wenzell, *Emerald Green: An Ecocritical Study of Irish Literature* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009); Donna Potts, *The Pastoral Tradition in Contemporary Irish Poetry* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011); Eamon Wall, *Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); and Eoín Flannery's *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History, and Environmental Justice* (2016), as well as Claire Connolly's 2015–2017 environmental humanities project, "Deep Maps Cork."

[2] Claire Connolly, "Natural History and the History of Nature: Environmental Narratives in Irish Romanticism," in *Narratives of Romanticism: Selected Papers from the Wuppertal Conference of the German Society for English Romanticism* eds. S. Heinen and K. Rennhak (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2017), 195.

[3] Connolly, 196.

attention to ways of representing change outside familiar political and social narratives of union and revolution that structure our understanding of Irish Romanticism."[4]

The tenuous position of ecocriticism within Irish Studies is to some extent symptomatic of broader critical tensions historically between postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism. As Rob Nixon noted back in 2005, early ecocritical approaches neglected the geopolitics of environmental harm and its uneven social and ecological effects, and this resulted in part from ecocriticism's tendency to think through universalizing terms like a timeless "nature" and to value purity, uncorrupted wilderness, and rootedness in place (as opposed to postcolonialism's interest in hybridity, dispossession, and migration).[5] In the past two decades, however, in part due to Nixon's influence, the fields have been brought closer together through a shared concern with studying environmental justice, or what is sometimes referred to as "environmentalism of the poor." A considerable body of postcolonial ecocritical work, including Nixon's own *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), has started to attend to the sociohistorical dimensions of environmentalism and the continued ecological impacts of colonialism and globalization, alongside the uneven allocation of environmental and climatic vulnerability caused by these histories of inequity and conflict.[6]

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[4] Connolly, 195.

[5] In a 2005 essay addressing the issue, Nixon outlines what he contends are the four main schisms between the two areas of study. He cites, firstly, postcolonialism's focus on hybridity and cross-culturation as opposed to ecocriticism's investment in purity and uncorrupted wilderness. Secondly, postcolonialism's interest in displacement, dispossession, and migration versus ecocriticism's privileging of rootedness, the local, and literature of place. Thirdly, postcolonialism's tendency to favor the cosmopolitan and transnational versus ecocriticism's interest in the national and tendency to skew toward nationalistic viewpoints. And finally, postcolonialism's investment in reimagining or excavating the past in relation to marginalized histories, as opposed to ecocriticism's tendency to suppress this type of historical specificity in favor of "the pursuit of timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature." Rob Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism," in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, eds. Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Etsy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 235.

[6] In addition to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), other foundational works of postcolonial ecocriticism include the edited collections *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives*, eds. Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); and *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, eds. Elizabeth DeLoughrey

Still, an ecocriticism focused on studying such concerns in Ireland has been slow to emerge. Postcolonial ecocriticism allows for an examination of the complexity of Irish environmental stances, shaped as they were by a violent colonial legacy studded with repeated tragedies of food scarcity and depopulation. Yet, as Lisa Fitzgerald put it in 2020, the specter of early ecocriticism's "fetishization of the landscape as an uncultivated wilderness" remains especially problematic within a context where, historically, it was the colonizers who were most often invested in Ireland's supposed "wildness" and "greenness."[7] In her 2020 overview of the state of ecocriticism in Irish Studies, Fitzgerald notes that representations of the Irish landscape were as "often a metaphorical examination of the trauma of depopulation in the rural areas" as they were "a sensitive rendition of the landscape itself."[8] Flannery makes a similar point when he observes that there "have always been creative and critical engagements with the Irish

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and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); along with Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010); and Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture, and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Additional works include Byron Caminero-Satangelo, *Different Shades of Green: African Literature, Environmental Justice, and Political Ecology* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014); *Ecocriticism of the Global South*, eds. Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan and Vidya Sarveswaran, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); and Cajetan Iheka, *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[7] Lisa FitzGerald, "Border Country: Postcolonial Ecocriticism in Ireland," *Ecozon@* 11, no. 2 (2020): 61. Outlining the challenges to Irish ecocriticism, John Wilson Foster calls attention to the complexity of Irish ecocritical attitudes in light of Ireland's colonial history. While the persistent association of Ireland with the color green might seem to align it with ecocriticism, Foster argues that this myth of a green Ireland, with its fertile and sparsely inhabited rural landscapes, comes at the direct cost of a flourishing Irish population. The starvation, mistreatment, and forced dispossession of countless Irish resulted in a "green" Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. Irish ecocritical attitudes are thus necessarily complicated by this history: "landscapes in Irish novels…seem more fraught with cultural tension than their counterparts in English novels… 'the land' which as we all know was, and still is, a contested venue, between individuals, families, classes, and ethnicities; it was the locus of power, greed, envy, hunger, the eponym (with its synonym 'agrarian') of wars and outrages, controversial parliamentary Acts and commissions" (2). The origin of the phrase "emerald isle" itself, as Julia M. Wright argues, actually serves as a marker of Ireland's "economic viability as the basis for sovereignty" (x) in addition to an aesthetic description of its landscape. The notion of Ireland as synonymous with "green" is complicated by its colonial history, rendering ecocritical approaches which cannot adequately account for these more equivocal and fraught relationships to the environment intellectually unproductive within an Irish context. John W. Foster, "Challenges to Irish Eco-Criticism," *Journal of Ecocriticism* 5, no. 2 (2013): 1–13; Julia M. Wright, *Representing the National Landscape in Irish Romanticism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014).

[8] Fitzgerald, "Border," 61.

landscape—a trend partly occasioned by the country's history of colonialism."[9] Flannery therefore notes the potentials Ireland holds as a locale for thinking through questions of environmental justice: Ireland provides "telling reminders of the intrusive footprints of both the material realities and the signifying exercises of imperialism," he writes, adding that there has been a long history of complex textual mediations of Irish spaces and environments through "the legacies of place, climate change, environmental justice, colonial history, identity, gender and environmentalism, capitalism, and locality and globality."[10]

If Irish Studies in general has been slow to develop an ecocritical tradition, let alone one focused on questions of environmental justice, ecocritical approaches of all kinds to Irish Romanticism have been even more sparse. Most ecocritical work on Ireland to date has focused on medieval Ireland or Irish literature from the Great Famine on, ignoring, for example, the late 1810s following Tambora's eruption, which saw wide-scale ecological and social devastation as Ireland's colonial history converged with the climatic event. The historical context of the climatic aftermath of Tambora in Ireland allows for a space in which the concerns of postcolonial Irish Studies can be productively opened up through attention to the amplification of colonial oppressions in the light of climate-altering events. Admittedly, this is a history that is especially difficult to write given the paucity of voices in the historical record. As Gillen D'Arcy Wood writes, "In early nineteenth-century Ireland, most peasants were illiterate, spoke Irish exclusively, and left no records of their lives and sufferings. This includes the traumatic events of 1816–1818, for which even official records are scant."[11] In Connolly's overview of the importance of developing a postcolonial ecocriticism in Irish Studies, she calls attention to

[9] Flannery, *Ireland*, 15.
[10] Flannery, 4, 3.
[11] Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 174.

Wood's chapter on Tambora's aftermath in Ireland as both paving the way for environmental humanities approaches to nineteenth-century Irish literature and showing how much more needs to be done to get there: "[Wood's] *Tambora* suggests just how much an environmentally-minded approach to nineteenth-century Irish narratives might achieve. The acres of unreclaimed bogland described in Maria Edgeworth's novels and her close interest in the realities of a subsistence economy built around turf would repay reading in this light."[12] My chapter seeks to contribute to such an approach by using the little-known post-Tambora writing of two northern Irish natives, John Gamble and Catharine Quigley, to present an alternative literary record of those years.

The chapter's main focus will be on recovering what I take to be a nascent consciousness of environmental justice in Quigley's poetry. Getting there, however, requires offering a brief account first of the climatic, political, and economic impact of 1816–1819 in Ireland, which I frame through the Irish travelogue Gamble wrote during this period, a travelogue that recognizes climate disaster but never reckons with how colonialism has exacerbated it.[13] Gamble was a Presbyterian physician and writer from Strabane, County Tyrone, in northern Ireland who had studied medicine at Edinburgh University and served as a surgeon in the British army. While he wrote several novels, all focused on his home province of Ulster, he is better known for his travel writing about the north of Ireland. Gamble resents prejudiced English views toward the Irish people and laments the increase in sectarian violence and poverty he sees in his native country after the Act of Union, but his travel writing carefully embeds his critiques within its pointed arrangement of anecdotes, or through the voices of those he meets on his travels.[14] His *Views of*

[12] Connolly, "Natural," 196–197.
[13] Unless cited otherwise, this account of Tambora's aftermath in Ireland is compiled from the sources listed in Ch. 2, n.7.
[14] Politically, his affiliation with the United Irishman's Rebellion of 1798 is ambiguous, as are his views toward England in general. Breandán Mac Suibhne offers the following assessment of Gamble's politics: he was "emphatically a Dissenter partisan…but a partisan who was not a bigot…he socialized and engaged intellectually with Catholics…he wrote with passion about their historical 'sufferings' and argued trenchantly for Catholic

Society and Manners in the North of Ireland, in a Series of Letters Written in the Year 1818 was published in London in 1819 and recounts his return to Ulster in 1818 after an absence of several years. *Views of Society* never goes so far as to voice outright anti-colonial sentiments; however, it criticizes the political and social structures that have served to create such poverty and misery in Ireland. Gamble's hesitation to recognize Britain's colonial government as a source of Ireland's distress results, as we shall see, in an oftentimes agentless account of injustice, where misery is seemingly inflicted on Ireland at random, although shaded with his awareness of the cruelty of colonial policies. Gamble draws back from an assessment of Ireland which understands political and colonial injustices as converging with climatic ones, often presenting them instead as arbitrarily overlapping.

In contrast, the poetry of Catharine Quigley, the chapter's primary focus, offers a nascent environmental justice consciousness in its articulation of the intersection of unjust colonial practices and ecological degradation. Quigley was a literate rural Ulster cottager about whom little is known.[15] I contend that the title poem from her collection, *The Microscope; or Village Flies, in Three Cantos; with Other Poems, Never Before Published* (1819), gestures toward an emergent sense of climate injustice in its attempt to convey the relationship between Ireland's colonial history and Tambora's climate-altering reverberations. Christian Parenti's model of "catastrophic convergence" proves especially useful for this kind of ecocritical unpacking of

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Emancipation"; furthermore, "John Gamble has been described as 'a northern supporter of the United Irishmen, or at least, a supporter of their general policies'. It is an inadequate description. Gamble may acknowledge and admire the heroism of executed United Irishmen and enjoy the 'society' of surviving rebels, but he repeatedly deplores rebellion…he may explain why people became rebels in the 1790s, but he still regrets it, regarding their republicanism, like their rebellion, as an unnecessary and unwarranted step. Politically, Gamble might be better represented as a sentimental Patriot." Breandán Mac Suibhne, "The Gothic Travels of John Gamble (1770–1831)," *Field Day Review* 4 (2008): 66–67, 100.

[15] She published two books of poetry, *Poems* (1813) and *The Microscope; or Village Flies, in Three Cantos; with Other Poems, Never Before Published* (1819). Most information about her life has been gleaned from her verse itself or the preface to *Poems*.

Quigley's work. "By catastrophic convergence," Parenti writes, "I do not merely mean that several disasters happen simultaneously, one problem atop another. Rather, I argue that problems compound and amplify each other, one expressing itself through another": in other words, "current and impending dislocations of climate change intersect with the already-existing crises of poverty and violence."[16] Part of what makes Quigley so politically and ecocritically distinctive, I argue, is the extent to which her awareness of something like "catastrophic convergence" diverges from the nascent Romantic-era discourse of environmental justice around animal rights, which tends to be built around a pre-Darwinian vision of nature as a place where existence need not be a struggle between species.

To register Quigley's divergence from rights-based conceptions of environmental justice in Romantic Britain, the chapter's final section will trace the presence of such conceptions in several canonical Romantic poems about animals that have grievances against humanity. Quigley's thinking, as we shall see, continues to be worth reckoning with in a contemporary theoretical context in which questions of environmental justice continue to be mired in rights-based discourses whose utility and efficacy climate history can sometimes challenge. Tambora was a nonanthropogenic event that triggered a climate crisis whose impact intensified, and was intensified by, prior structural inequities created by colonialism. As such, its climatic aftermath provides a provocative case study to think through the complexity and inadequacy of predominant Romantic-era discourses of environmental justice. As the initial climate-altering event was caused by a volcanic eruption, it differs from our contemporary moment of anthropogenic climate change in that it was the result of planetary processes, not human histories of uneven development and resource consumption. It is precisely this estrangement from our

[16] Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 7.

present understanding of the anthropogenic causes of climate change today that allows for an opportunity to grapple with how we sometimes remain problematically beholden to Romantic legacies of natural rights and environmentalism.

"the howling blast and gathering wintry wave of climate, situation, fortune, and time": Traveling Ireland with Gamble, 1818

In the summer of 1818, John Keats and Charles Brown set off for a walking tour of Scotland. En route, they decided to cross over into Ireland, intending to take in the sublime rock formations of Giant's Causeway near Belfast. Their excursion into Ireland was short-lived, lasting a little under two days and never making it as far as Giant's Causeway. They found northern Ireland in 1818 to be a disappointing addition to their picturesque walking tour. As Nicholas Roe puts it, they came to the conclusion that "Ireland was expensive, the landscape dreary, and the rags, dirt and drunken misery of the poor were too much to bear. A Scottish cottage with smoke coming from its door was a palace compared to an Irish hovel."[17] Turning their steps toward the port city of Donaghadee to make the Irish sea crossing, they encountered a woman whom Keats styled as "the Duchess of Dunghill." He described the encounter in a letter to his brother Tom:

> The Duchess of Dunghill—it is no laughing matter tho—Imagine the worst dog kennel you ever saw placed upon two poles from a mouldy fencing—In such a wretched thing sat a squalid old Woman squat like an ape half starved from a scarcity of Buiscuit [sic] in its passage from Madagascar to the cape—with a pipe in her mouth and looking out with a round-eyed skinny lidded inanity—with a sort of horizontal idiotic movement of her head—squab and lean she sat along and puff'd out the smoke while the two ragged tattered Girls carried her along—What a thing would be a history of her Life and sensations. (July 3–9, 1818)

[17] Nicholas Roe, *John Keats: A New Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 246.

It is a shocking account of human suffering as a result of the interplay between the climatic, political, and economic events of the previous years, even more so in its casual dehumanization of the "Duchess of Dunghill," whom Keats depicts as more animal than person.

In Wood's account of Tambora's Irish aftermath, he stresses that while most of the written record from the post-Tambora years comes from a relatively sheltered and privileged group of authors, the brunt of the climate-exacerbated suffering was borne by the marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged. He uses Keats's "Duchess of Dunghill" anecdote to frame his account, signaling that he intends to carry out Keats's desire to write a history of the Irish people's "Life and sensations" during the years 1816–1819. However, his desire to forgive Keats for the national prejudice and classism embedded in his description results in an awkward defense of English attitudes toward the Irish in the nineteenth century: "Even to a sensitive, liberal-minded city poet such as Keats, the poor Irish peasant appeared barely human…Can it be any wonder then that the English rulers of mostly rural Ireland, with less than poetic souls, were able to justify to themselves their indifference to the deaths of the tens of thousands of their Irish subjects during the Tambora emergency?"[18] Wood calls attention to England's inadequate and prejudicial response to the emergency in Ireland during those years, but the implication that colonizers must necessarily be endowed with "poetic souls" in order to perceive their colonized subjects as human is an odd and uncomfortable way to excuse imperial wrongs. Furthermore, his assessment of Keats's response to the excessive suffering he saw in Ireland mistakes the symptom for the disease. Keats understands the "Duchess of Dunghill" as less than human precisely because of the intentional refusal of many members of the British Government (less than poetic souls or not) to treat the rural Irish as such.

[18] Wood, *Tambora*, 173.

Wood does briefly call attention to some voices from rural Ireland as documentary evidence and provides an insightful analysis of William Carleton's novel, *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine*, yet he contends that the novel "stands alone as a literary monument to that doleful chapter of Irish history."[19] He argues that in lieu of more such texts, we must "scrutinize closely what [the Shelley circle] wrote for clues to the experience of the silent millions who suffered displacement, hunger, disease, and death in the eruption's wake."[20] However, the writings of both Gamble and Quigley merit closer attention as literary responses to the climatic events that demonstrate their awareness of the relationship between the extreme poverty and epidemic illness of Ireland during these years and the British Government's willful neglect of the Irish people.[21] Their accounts are not so willing to write off the colonial response as a failing of "less than poetic souls" and instead call attention to the relationship between unjust colonial governance, sectarian violence, and climatic events. Gamble's *Views* provides a nuanced and detailed account of the state of Ireland in 1818, especially in rural areas in the north, but it never goes as far as Quigley's *The Microscope* does to gesture toward an articulation of catastrophic convergence or climate injustice.

While much of Europe was in the throes of subsistence crises from 1816–1819, the Ireland that Gamble returned to in 1818 was experiencing true famine. As a result of a booming population, depressed postwar industry, and relatively no voice in government due to the 1800 Act of Union, the Irish population lacked a safety net for the series of failed harvests. Nearly 80,000 perished in the first year of the famine alone. Poor living conditions and a lack of

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[19] Wood, 174.
[20] Wood, 171.
[21] Gamble does make an appearance in Wood's chapter, although he is rather quickly dismissed as "a minor society writer from County Tyrone…[who] never enjoyed the literary fame of William Carleton, his fellow Ulsterman" (186).

adequate nutrition worsened by Tambora's aftermath led to a typhus epidemic that ravaged the impoverished rural populations in Ireland from 1817–1819, killing 65,000 and sickening another 1.5 million. Ireland's colonial position exacerbated the Irish populace's distress as it was neglected by the British Government and largely left to fend for itself. Additionally, English merchants continued to import large quantities of grain and flour from Ireland, further depleting the country's meager stores. While there was some skepticism in England regarding the bleak state of the Irish harvest, *The Times* ran the following assessment on October 19, 1816: "I have just returned from Gort. Let no one impose upon you, the harvest is destroyed." The article later remarks that "I see nothing before us but the prospect of the most grievous of all earthly calamities—*famine*…God is powerful, and can, by a miracle, save his creatures from destruction; but without such, we see nothing for it but the desolation of the land." It then reports that a gentleman from Belfast gave the following description: "All the low grounds flooded—the people struggling to save whatever they can of the harvest, up to the knees, and many places to the middle, in water. The potatoes in the flooded ground are looked upon as lost, the season being so far advanced; the turf not saved."[22]

Even before the climatic aftermath of Tambora, Ireland was in a precarious position. Five decades of economic growth between 1765 and 1815 saw the prices of Irish agricultural goods double. The Anglo-Irish landlords responded to this high demand for Irish goods by increasing land cultivation, most of which they undertook on borrowed funds. They drained bogs in order to turn them into arable pasture and planted on marginally productive land, all the while racking up substantial debts.[23] In theory, the position of landlord carried with it the expectation to provide

[22] "Ireland: from the Irish Papers," *The Times* (London), October 19, 1816, *The Times Digital Archive*.
[23] Often, the Anglo-Irish landlords then funneled the profits from the trade into the construction of houses on their estates, leaving their rural indigenous Irish tenants in the lurch. They had a stranglehold on rural trade and economy

charitable relief, but this was neglected, and the situation worsened as absentee landlordism rose after the Act of Union. Gamble remarks on this division, praising the efforts of the gentry who remained on their estates to alleviate suffering, while those who lived elsewhere were unmoved to provide charity or relief: "In general, it is but justice to [the gentry] to say, that their humanity seems to have been great, and though most inadequate to the evil, fully adequate to their means; I speak of those who live on their estates, for those who live from home, heeded little the evil which they did not behold."[24]

At the same time, Ireland saw a population boom, in part due to increased potato cultivation.[25] Gamble calls attention to the relationship between Ireland's "superabundant population" and potato farming, understanding Ireland's population boom as the primary aggravator of most of the suffering he witnesses. His assessment of this relationship highlights the extent to which the potato's presence in Ireland was a result of imperialism, although it draws back from explicit colonial critique:

> the history of Ireland is a melancholy one, and melancholy it is to think, that time, which gives relief to the sufferings of others seems only to give increase to her's. That in this enlightened age, and under a British Government, she should endure as great evils as in the rudest times, and under the most barbarous one… she should meet first, and feel the most and the longest, the howling blast and gathering wintry wave of climate, situation, fortune, and time. Even that Atlantic which bore to the New World the crimes of the Old, bore back to Ireland, who was in no degree their participator, a fell portion of the punishment of them; for it is my decided opinion, that much of the actual misery, of this province at least, is owing to the undue cultivation of the potatoe [sic], which a few years back, confined as it ought to be to the garden, like the bramble, has now overrun every spot almost to the mountain-top.

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as the only employer in the surrounding areas of their estates for day laborers, servants, and artisans, commonly owning the grain mills which their tenants used for their harvest as well.

[24] John Gamble, *Views of Society and Manners in the North of Ireland in a Series of Letters Written in the Year 1818* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), 89. Subsequent references to the travelogue are provided in parentheticals within the main text with page numbers specified.

[25] Potatoes offered a significant nutrient boost over grain-based diets. The increased population meant a corresponding increase in demand for land, and many landlords responded to this by raising rents. Sometimes they evicted tenants in favor of rearing more profitable livestock as demand for Irish products such as pork, beef, and butter remained high.

> The multiplication of human beings by this means, is far beyond what the earth can properly nourish, and these bleak and misty hills, fit habitations alone for shepherds and their flocks, are now thickly swarming with men. Far better not to be, than to be for purposes of misery, and to be trodden on and oppressed; and to be trodden on and oppressed man ever will be when he is too abundant, and, like every object, to be valued, he must be rare. The superabundant population of Ireland is not the parent evil, but it aggravates every other. (419–421)

Gamble's sentence construction initially appears to hold up the British Government as the antithesis to a "most barbarous" government; however, the implication that Ireland suffers as much under the British Government as it would under a "most barbarous" one has the effect of bringing the two close together while still grammatically retaining their difference. Furthermore, by blaming imperialism for the cultivation of the potato, he leaves open the possibility of reading his assessment of Ireland's "parent evil"—which he indicates is not its superabundant population but the root cause of that overpopulation—as an oblique colonial critique. The imperial logics underlying colonization of the New World and colonization of Ireland have the same root; however, he presents the Atlantic Ocean as the preparator of injustices more than the nations who traverse it, pushing his assessment further from colonial critique. His view on overpopulation has shades of Malthusianism, although his assertion that man must be rare to be valued and thus escape being "trodden on and oppressed" seems slanted toward a critique of capitalist systems of value which understand man as subject to the same logics of supply and demand as "other object[s]," but this is never fully voiced. He lists "climate, situation, fortune, and time" as factors poised to wash over Ireland in a "gathering wintry wave," but it is unclear how he thinks the interaction between the factors will be expressed in this "wintry wave," although the very metaphor itself registers the climatic distresses of Tambora.

The oddest turn of thought in the passage is his laying blame on the potato itself for its rampant spread in Ireland. His description of it "overrun[ing]" the Irish hills frames it more like a

supernatural curse fated to heap misery upon Ireland than an edible tuber that was intentionally cultivated as land and labor were used as expendable resources for England's benefit. Gamble's account of the potato rising to prominence in Irish agriculture makes the potato the agent of its own spread through Ireland, turning it into the source of Irish misery, complicated by his assigning blame to imperial exploration for the potato's presence in Ireland in the first place. The climate itself is implicated in this tangle of responsible parties, not because it enables the potato to flourish but because it contributes to unsustainable living conditions for the superabundance of men caused by the potato.

In Gamble's critique of the potato's prominence in Irish agriculture, he calls attention to the plant's complex colonial history as it grew to supersede the production of other staple crops. Traditionally, Irish agriculture had consisted primarily of dairy and oat farming, as its climate is not well-suited to growing cereal crops. Arriving in Ireland sometime in the final decade and a half of the sixteenth century, the rain-loving potato thrived in the inclement Irish weather. As it was able to weather the sudden shifts that were characteristic of the country's climate, it was soon widely cultivated in combination with oats as a famine safeguard.[26] Potatoes were easy to cultivate and highly nutritious, becoming a staple in the diets of the Irish peasantry. Eventually, over the centuries, potato farming began to supplant the farming of other cereal grains, moving

[26] As the edible portion of the potato grows below ground, it remains protected from excessive rainfall or sudden frost which pose a danger to other cereal crops. When the unpredictable weather decimated the cereal crops, the potatoes, which were easy to grow and store, could be counted on to stave off famine.

Ireland closer to monoculture.[27] Ireland's increased potato cultivation resulted in the population boom mentioned above, which fed into the country's other economic problems.[28]

Despite the illusion of the potato's infallibility, however, it was subject to the vagaries of climate like any other crop, and Ireland experienced famine in 1740–1741 and again in 1782–1783. Both famines were the result of exceptionally cold, inclement weather, and 1740–1741 became known as *Blaidhain an air*, or "the year of the slaughter." Neither famine was anywhere near as catastrophic as what Ireland experienced and Gamble documented in the aftermath of Tambora, largely because the prior famines predated the Act of Union. In both instances, the government intervened to some extent, prohibiting grain exports and providing famine relief. In 1782–1783, the Earl of Carlisle, who was serving as the lord lieutenant of Ireland at the time, embargoed food exports to England, allocated £10,000 to facilitate wheat and oat imports, and coordinated relief at the parish level in hard-hit areas of the country. After the Act of Union, the position of lord lieutenant of Ireland became meaningless, and as those in power resided in London instead of Dublin, it was easy to ignore distress in Ireland. Gamble comments on the emptiness of the position after the Act of Union; passing by the lord lieutenant's residence in Dublin, he enquires what the other travelers in the coach make of him: "but no one seemed to know any thing of him, and one gentlemen actually did not know his name…The title of Lord Lieutenant remains, but all which gave it lustre is for ever gone" (83–84). Ireland's loss of

[27] "Grain was no longer part of the diet in the south and west of the country and had become predominantly a cash crop in the north. The beauty of the potato was that it fed the laborers who produced oats and wheat for export to bread-hungry England" (Fagan, *Little* 185). Not only was the dietary substitution of the potato for other cereals used to maintain grain production for English exports, but the potato itself came under demand in order to facilitate English industrialization: "The illusion of infallible supply caused a growing demand for Irish potatoes in northeast England to feed the growing populations of rapidly industrializing Liverpool and Manchester" (Fagan, *Little* 185).
[28] Fagan comments on the structural issues that left Ireland vulnerable to food shortages and famines: "Even in plentiful years, thousands of the poor were chronically unemployed and dependent on aggressive government intervention for relief…In 1770 alone, 30,000 emigrants left four Ulster ports for North America. They departed in the face of rapid population growth, archaic land tenure rules that subdivided small farming plots again and again—and the ever present specter of famine" (*Little* 185).

political, legislative, and economic autonomy after the Act of Union resulted in increased disparity between the two countries.[29]

Irish commercial agricultural production was disproportionately used for English benefit. Yearly generating enough cattle and grain exports to feed two million people, a quarter of Ireland's cereals and livestock were mandated for sale abroad, keeping English grain prices down at the cost of the Irish working classes. While the English benefitted from lowered bread prices, the Irish who farmed the grain lived on the meager amount they could grow on rented lands, with the plots so small as to make it virtually impossible to produce a food surplus. As Gamble puts it, "we have given the English jaunting cars to ride in, as before we had given them eggs to their breakfast, and potatoes to their meat, and had they left us meat to our potatoes, it would have been but fair" (65). When disaster hit Ireland in 1816, instead of following the example of the previous lord lieutenants, the British government refused to ban exports or allocate adequate relief funds, leaving their Irish subjects to starve.

An August 26, 1816 account from the *Dublin Evening Post* lamented how the interplay of climatic events with other economic and political factors created an impossible situation for most of the Irish population:

> Fallows are dirty and difficult to work, from constant wet and much land *totally desert from Emigration*, as well as from the impolitic *system of Still Fines*. Throughout the country there is the greatest distress—no trade, no money—of course, rents, tithes and taxes cannot be paid. The best and ablest labourers beg for work as for charity, at 4d. to 5d. or 6d. a day, but nobody has even now the means of employing them. Agues, intermittents [sic], and other diseases, the consequence of bad and scanty food, become very prevalent. To make or save turf has been nearly impossible from the state of the

[29] Britain rapidly industrialized, killing off many of Ireland's smaller industries which were unable to compete economically. The introduction of weaving machinery and steam power meant that the Irish linen industry became concentrated in large mill facilities near Belfast, in Gamble's home province of Ulster, where it had previously existed as a cottage industry spread throughout the country. This concentration forced small holders who had lived off their weaving and spinning profits in conjunction with the crop yield of a rented plot of land to depend solely on subsistence farming, encouraging in turn a greater dependence on the potato which took up less space and required less labor to farm than cereal crops.

> weather, which with the inability to purchase frize [sic], adds greatly to the distress of the poor. (August 26, 1816)

The lack of turf for fuel, in addition to the increase in cold and inclement weather, contributed to the typhus epidemic as people huddled together for warmth, often reduced to sharing clothes and bedding. This created an ideal environment for the spread of disease-carrying lice as they were able to move easily between bodies. In the spring of 1817, a large portion of Ireland's small tenant farmers were forced to abandon their homes and beg as they had already consumed 1816's scanty harvest.[30] As groups of people moved from town to town, they unwittingly brought typhus-carrying lice with them, thus facilitating the disease's spread throughout the country.

In the early nineteenth-century Ireland that Gamble knew, small tenant farmers, cottiers, and laborers comprised between seventy-five to eighty percent of the rural population.[31] Several decades later, in 1870, only an estimated three percent of Ireland's population was landowning. As Flannery writes, "the historically protracted and geographically lateral colonization of Ireland, then, resulted in a deeply uneven and hierarchical social formation, particularly in rural areas, where the vast majority of the indigenous Irish population subsisted across the nineteenth century. In ecological terms, what we witness is a social metabolic rift as a consequence of which profits and incomes are heavily weighted in favor of the landlord class."[32] Social division and conflict were rife in Ireland, especially so as class divisions tended to break along religious lines with the harsh penal laws making social mobility for Irish Catholics next to impossible.[33]

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[30] Post, *Last*, 47.

[31] Dwelling in single room huts built out of turf with perhaps a glassless window covered by a wooden board, the Irish peasantry slept on straw and heath in lieu of a bed, and used tree stumps as chairs, with a large iron pot as their sole cooking utensil. Many were without shoes or overcoats, especially the women and children. Their diet was composed of potatoes and water with the occasional scrap of salt fish or meal. Those who were a bit better off would have lived in a cabin with a limited amount of handmade furniture and crockery and a more varied wardrobe of functional, if often-mended, clothing.

[32] Flannery, *Ireland*, 166.

[33] Under the penal laws, Irish Catholics were unable to attend British Universities, serve in Parliament, or pursue a career in the civil service, the law, or the armed forces. This division was further sharpened by a language divide as

With the added climatic pressures and distresses of 1816–1819, whose widescale and lasting effects Gamble records in *Views of Society*, and the inadequate governmental response on both a local and national level, Ireland saw an uptick in social disturbances. As the historian John Post writes, in reaction to the intensifying subsistence crisis, "public disorders multiplied to the point of social anarchy in the countryside."[34] Violence broke out as people struggled to survive on the little they were able to harvest, and fears about the continued inclement weather escalated.[35] A correspondent to the editor of the *Newry Telegraph* wrote on October 15, 1816: "Sir—Our weather has been so desperate, and there seems to be so little chance of a change, that it behooves every rational man to turn his thoughts to some means of even partially averting the horrors of famine, which seems so certainly before us."[36] While the British Parliament's passage of the Poor Employment Act in June 1817 allocated a total budget of £1.75 million to alleviate the widespread suffering across the United Kingdom, a paltry £250,000 of that was sent to Ireland, despite the increased severity of their conditions.[37]

Gamble's travelogue remarks upon the many political, economic, and climatic factors that have resulted in the devastation he encounters in Ireland in 1818, although it never quite articulates the intersection between these factors. Instead, as with his critique of the potato, it often presents them as a litany of agentless wrongs suffered by Ireland. For example, when he first reaches County Tyrone, he grimly remarks on the changes wrought by the past few years:

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the majority of the rural Irish spoke Irish exclusively, while the landed classes spoke English. They were neglected by both local governments and charitable organizations which tended to favor their Protestant constituents as well as by British Parliament and shut out from politics with next to no voice in government.

[34] Post, *Last*, 72.

[35] Several grain barges bound for Dublin were attacked and intercepted as people strove to keep the resources from leaving their respective counties. In a particularly bloody event in northwestern Ireland a military detachment fired into a crowd armed with stones, killing three and wounding twenty.

[36] "To the Editor of the Newry Telegraph. Tuesday, October 15, 1816," *Dublin Evening Post* (Dublin), October 15, 1816, *The British Newspaper Archive.*

[37] Klingman and Klingman, *Year*, 263.

"Since I was last here, this town and neighbourhood have been visited by two almost of the heaviest calamities which can befal [sic] human beings. Fever and famine have been let loose, and it is hard to say which has destroyed the most" (155). Although several of Gamble's earlier comments demonstrate his awareness of the relationship between Ireland's impoverishment and its colonial position, his account positions the famine and ensuing typhus epidemic as an arbitrary tragedy, not the result of Parliamentary neglect in conjunction with climatic events. Fever and famine have passively "been let loose" on or "visited" the neighborhood.

A similar dynamic emerges in his later depiction of his hometown of Strabane as a desolate ghost town depopulated by tragedy. Though once again registering the interplay between the factors that devastated Ireland during those years, Gamble presents tragedy as an unfolding series of unlucky coincidences and not as compounding causes:

> If I stand still, I have full in view the market-house, where I played a thousand times with companions, not one of whom remains. A few are gone to America, but by far the greater number are dead. Many by shipwreck and battle, many more by sickness, and some no doubt by sorrow a disease which, though inserted in no bill of mortality, kills more than we are aware. I walk therefore nearly as much alone as I should in the wilds of America, and somewhat I have of their solitariness too. Commerce, as well as riches, seems to have taken its flight; and in these very streets, where not many years back was all the bustle of business, I wander up and down almost as undisturbed as in the fields. (169)

Gamble's account reads with eerie similarity like a scene from Mary Shelley's plague novel *The Last Man* (1826), with a bustling urban center turned into an abandoned wild space, in part through the typhus epidemic. The economic fallout from Waterloo, coupled with failed harvests, led to the cessation of industry and commerce, which was compounded by the typhus epidemic that ran through Ireland's rural population, weakened as they were by famine. Emigration had the adverse effect of worsening Ireland's economic situation as those with the means to do so left the country, thus stranding the most impoverished members of the population with decreased chances of relief from charity. Gamble's *Views of Society and Manners in the North of Ireland,*

in a Series of Letters Written in the Year 1818 recognizes the relationship between prejudiced colonial practices, sectarian violence, and climatic factors but does not go so far as to understand that in terms of climate injustice, in which the brunt of environmental violence ends up shouldered by those already oppressed politically and economically.

Ireland through the Microscope Glass: Quigley, Colonialism, and Climate Injustice

As Gamble's writing reveals, Ulster in 1819 was a place deeply altered and scarred by the post-Tambora years. The changed climate, ensuing typhus epidemic, and the political and economic troubles caused by Ireland's colonial position had left their mark on the region. Quigley's most developed and intellectually ambitious work, the poem from which her 1819 collection takes its title, *The Microscope; or Village Flies, in Three Cantos*, formulates an anti-colonial critique of environmental degradation in Tambora's climate-altering aftermath. Using a destructive infestation of flies as an analogue for corrupt government, Quigley delineates the relationship between structural inequities and climate injustice; those in power lay waste to natural resources by greedily devouring them, resulting in famine and impoverishment. The poem moves beyond political allegory, however, in its leveraging of two distinct sets of flies. While the first set of flies is initially presented as an invasive political force within the poem, the titular microscope enables Quigley to shift scales, revealing a second set of previously unseen human-like flies whose appearance exposes the nonhuman quality of the first set of flies, in turn allowing them to be read as an apolitical ecological force. The coexistence and interaction of the two sets of flies and the different types of environmental harm they produce proffers a critique of how colonial contexts inflict and exacerbate environmental injustices.

Despite the large number of Irish women poets publishing in the Romantic period, there has been a lack of scholarly attention to their contributions to Irish Romanticism that has, in turn, made their verse hard to find. Until Stephen Behrendt's recent *Romantic-Era Irish Women Poets in English* (2021), most women poets from the period had remained out of print and poorly anthologized.[38] In Quigley's case, this longtime neglect has also meant that very little is known about her.[39] Her poetic adeptness in a variety of verse forms and intertextual allusions to neoclassical verse—"The Broken Saucer" in *The Microscope* playfully parodies Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock*—demonstrates that she was well-read and indicates a certain desire to experiment with more complex verse than the scope afforded her by the poems she was commissioned to write for friends and neighbors. In the only published critical essay on Quigley's poetry, Theresa Adams makes this case. Adams teases out signs that, in Quigley's

[38] By D.J. O'Donoghue's estimate, around fifty women published one or more volumes during the period. In 1991, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* ambitiously attempted to catalogue 1,500 years of Irish writing in order to prompt the reconsideration of Irish literature and literary history through a postcolonial framework. It almost immediately came under fire when it was pointed out that a very slim number of women writers were included within the 4,044 double-columned supposedly comprehensive pages, and every editor of the 44 sections was male. While Field Day attempted to remedy the error by publishing a second installment in 2002 devoted entirely to and edited entirely by women, the misogynistic debacle illustrates some of the tenuousness of women's poetry in studies of Irish Romantic literature. For example, *The Field Day Anthology* section "Poetry and Song: 1800–1890" features the work of twenty poets over 66 double-columned pages. The only woman poet whose work appears is Mary Balfour, whose three small lyrics take up a little over half a page and whose work is prefaced by the following paragraph that begrudgingly admits to her poetic skill: "Mary Balfour's are among the earliest translations from the Irish. In the first of these poems, there is no serious attempt to come to terms with the original. The second confirms that her idiom is as conventional as that of Thomas Campbell, the Scottish poet, of whom she is an imitator. Nevertheless, Balfour's stanzas are more intricate than her mentor's" (10). Behrendt's anthology endeavors to return these women's verse to scholarly considerations of the period. It includes the work of 52 Romantic-era Irish women poets writing in English, all of whom published one or more volumes of poetry from a wide range of social classes and political and religious backgrounds. Catharine Quigley is one of the poets who owes her appearance in print for the first time in centuries to Behrendt's anthology, although his selection does not include the poem *The Microscope*. Stephen Behrendt, ed. *Romantic-Era Irish Women Poets in English* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2021).

[39] She refers to herself as a "friendless orphan" several times in the two books and used poetry as a means of financial support, both through the commission of individual poems and the publication of her two poetry collections. *Poems* includes a list of subscribers, *The Microscope* does not. *The Microscope* was published in the village of Monaghan, which was situated between Dublin and Derry and where she was likely a schoolteacher. A copy of *The Microscope* held by the National Library of Ireland contains an inscription believed to be in Quigley's hand gifting the copy "to her dear little pupil and friend Miss Fleming who is at present very high in Miss Q—'s esteem."

"mock-occasional poems and in the surprising variety of modes and forms (satire, ballad, allegory) in which she works," she "rebelled against" the "restrictions" afforded to her "by her own marginal position as a woman writer," allowing her poems to "champion…the poor and vulnerable" even when "molding her subjects and style to fit her audience's sentiments and specifications."[40]

The Microscope, a dream allegory, may be a much more overtly political poem than the Quigley verses that Adams treats, although it is precisely in its ironic distance from the conventions of allegory too—specifically, the ability to read the titular "flies" of the poem as insects in addition to allegorical tyrants—that will allow us to recognize in it a nascent awareness of what Parenti terms "catastrophic convergence." The poem's speaker—a version of Quigley herself as signaled through the Preface—imagines she awakens in "A perfect paradise" whose sunny Edenic landscape is shaded by strong tall trees, perfumed by blooming flowers, and filled with delicious fruit.[41] Quickly, however, paradise is spoiled by a horde of flies that feast with unchecked greed upon the plants. As Quigley mourns this scene of ecological destruction, she is interrupted by the arrival of an angel or goddess, who promises to show her greater cause for sorrow. The angel produces a microscope and asks Quigley to reexamine the glade through its lens, which reveals to her "a rustic village" (I. 116) inhabited by humanlike flies who tyrannize and mistreat one another. The poem concludes with a final canto devoted to the goddess's disquisition on the senselessness of sectarian violence, as the poem reaches its most explicit political statement in an argument for the cessation of religious intolerance among Christian

[40] Theresa Adams, "Catharine Quigley," Biographical/Critical Essay, *Irish Women Poets of the Romantic Period*, database (*ProQuest*, 2007), 1.
[41] Catharine Quigley, "The Microscope; or Village Flies, in Three Cantos," in *The Microscope; or Village Flies, in Three Cantos; with Other Poems, Never Before Published* (Monaghan: Printed by Nathaniel Greacen, 1819), canto I, line 19. Subsequent references to the poem will be given in parentheticals in the main text with canto number and line number specified.

denominations in Ireland. To a degree, the poem engages in conventional moralistic didacticism with many commonplace set-pieces. However, the ecological import of its unusual overarching metaphor and Quigley's initial framing in the Preface of the dream as prompted by thoughts of "foreign feuds and home bred strife" (51) gesture to the complexity of her thinking. Situated within the political and climatic context of Ireland in the second decade of the nineteenth century, Quigley's poem can be understood as articulating an emergent sense of climate injustice, wherein ecological degradation is akin to, and intensified by, the long-standing political inequity of colonization.

At first glance, or more precisely, until the poem's titular microscope appears, the pestilential flies in Quigley's poem appear consistent with a straightforward political allegory insofar as the language of the poem makes it easy to interpret them as an invasive political force, and the poem's seeming ecological overlay as less literal than a rhetorical challenge to the ecological metaphors sometimes used by the period's writers to naturalize Union. Quigley's initial description of the first set of flies before the introduction of the angel and her microscope draws heavily on political language, as the insect devourers of paradise are presented as tyrants:

> For e'er Favonius gently blew,
> To spread their beauties all to view,
> Or Sol inhaled the pearly dew,
> 'Till hateful flies, as numerous grown
> As midges in the torrid zone,
> Swarm'd round the bloomy scented bower,
> And clung to every fragrant flower;
> And fastening with rapacious rage,
> Did ruin and destruction wage.
> …
> Thus all that once the eye delighted,
> Was by these rude intruders blighted.
> With horror struck, and sore amazed,
> Upon the ravagers I gazed,
> And curs'd the tyrants of an hour
> …

> For nature seem'd a chaos wild,
> Of all her beauties robb'd and spoil'd. (I. 52–73)

Quigley's blossoming paradise turns into a scene of environmental destruction as the flies blight and consume the plants with excessive violence. The language of colonial conquest and political domination runs through her description with its politicized metaphors, and the comparison of the flies to "midges in the torrid zone" at the beginning of the passage works to position the flies as imperial intruders who intend to rob and spoil nature's beauties. The ambiguity of the origins of the flies allows for a reading of them as both emblematic of colonization and an endemic ecological component of paradise.

In reading the poem as political allegory, the ambiguity of the flies' origins points to the way English colonial rule gradually reshaped Irish agricultural practices over several centuries, thus making the agrarian ecology of Ireland in the second decade of the nineteenth century appear endemic while remaining a product of colonization. The flies inhabit this equivocal ecological space as Quigley's syntax has them multiplying rapidly within the line ("numerous grown") until they overrun paradise. The ambiguous origin of the flies is reminiscent of the potato's condition in Ireland. While not initially native to the island, the potato is now in many ways synonymous with Irish agriculture, despite, as I outlined in the previous section, its predominance in Irish agriculture being a direct result of its ability to benefit the advancement of England's colonial project. One aspect of colonial agricultural practices is the transplantation of foreign plants which are then cultivated and naturalized at the expense of indigenous flora and fauna. In Ireland, as we have seen, the emphasis on potato cultivation pushed Irish agriculture perilously close to monoculture and left the Irish vulnerable to successive famines. Recall Gamble's censure of the potato as an invasive species, which, thanks to its "undue cultivation," has "now overrun every spot almost to the mountain-top" (420). However, earlier in his

travelogue, when asked if he is an Englishman or native to Ireland, he answers: "I am an Irishman, bred like yourselves on the potatoe [sic] ridge" (271). For Gamble, the over-proliferation of the potato is both a source of Irish woes and a defining aspect of Irish identity. Quigley's flies offer a pointed critique of this agricultural history, serving as a mediating metaphor in navigating the ecological ambivalence of a landscape reshaped through colonization.

The ecological influence of imperialism surfaces repeatedly in the literature and popular writing of the period in the form of botanical metaphors. Agricultural language becomes especially pertinent at a historical moment when scientific study is so closely tied to imperial exploration.[42] Within an Irish context, such imagery shows up in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, where Lady Delacour's possession of a rare tropical plant—an aloe that blooms once every hundred years—operates as a form of cultural capital, enabling her to gain the upper hand over her social rival Mrs. Luttridge and serving as a signifier of her wealth and taste.[43] The collection of rare botanical specimens became a fashionable pursuit for the wealthy in the final decades of the eighteenth century, as it marked not only a degree of genteel intellectualism and scientific knowledge but, more importantly, the social connections which allowed for the procuration of such specimens from imperial expeditions, alongside the financial ability to grow tropical plants in the inclement English climate. This often entailed the construction of greenhouses, the hiring of horticulturalists, and the purchase of other costly paraphernalia. Such language also appears in *The Wild Irish Girl*, as Sydney Owenson turns to similar metaphors to assert Glorvina's

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[42] The relationship between British imperialism, scientific advancement, and botanical cultivation has been critically engaged with by scholars such as Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters 1760–1820* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Theresa Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); and Alan Bewell, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017).

[43] Tobin makes this argument, contending that "the aloe, because of its expense and the degree of difficulty in procuring it, was a way for [Lady Delacour] to solidify her social position and reaffirm her mastery of high society's forms. As Edgeworth's episode suggests, possessing tropical plants became socially recognized as a form of cultural capital, a way of signaling one's sophistication and worldliness" (*Colonizing* 172).

homegrown Irish identity as a superior form of femininity in comparison with the overcultivated worldliness of upper-class English women. Horatio initially asks himself, "What had I to expect from the unpolished manners, the confined ideas of this Wild Irish Girl? Deprived of all those touching allurements which society only gives; reared in wilds and solitudes" (60), only to then oppose the luxurious flowers of the tropics to the more humble flowers of northern climates: "And yet, the roses of Florida, though the fairest in the universe, and springing from the richest soil, emit no fragrance; while the mountain violet, rearing its timid form from a steril [sic] bed, flings on the morning breeze the most delicious perfume."[44] The period's botanical language was heavily gendered, with a distinction often being made between the excessive and corrupting sexuality of luxurious imported hothouse flowers and the more virtuous and virginal flowers native to the English climate such as the snowdrop or violet.[45] Edgeworth calls upon the botanical language of imperialism to critique the social maneuvering and shallow intellectualism of Lady Delacour and her peers, while Owenson utilizes it to naturalize Glorvina's exoticism. In comparison, Glorvina's foreign sexuality becomes both more wholesome and more English than those women who have been cultivated in the "richest" soil and given all the "touching allurements" of society.

Metaphors of sustainable ecological integration appear in political texts as well, as the colonial relationship between Ireland and Britain is frequently figured as a form of cultivation. In a 1594 letter from Thomas Lee to Elizabeth I, a proposed military approach to the political threat of Irish rebels in Ulster gives orders for their dispossession in agricultural terms: "make royal

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[44] Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl*, ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 60.

[45] As Sam George notes, "British flora denotes private virtue in contrast to the suspiciously alien exhibitionism of cultivated florist flowers or 'exotics', which signify a kind of harlotry". Sam George, *Botany, Sexuality, and Women's Writing 1760-1830: From Modest Shoot to Forward Plant* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 95.

war upon them, and so utterly…overthrow and root them up through all the whole north of that kingdom and plant others in their room or places."[46] This language reappears in an 1800 speech from John Earl of Clare, then Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, describing Oliver Cromwell's political tactics: "his first act was to collect all the native Irish who had survived the general desolation and remained in the country, and to transplant them into the province of Connaught, which had been completely depopulated and laid waste in the progress of the rebellion."[47] In his 1775 *Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies*, Edmund Burke uses agricultural metaphors to describe the creation of a colonial government in Ireland: "a form of Parliament, such as England then enjoyed, she instantly communicated to Ireland…The feudal Baronage, and the feudal Knighthood, the roots of our primitive constitution, were early transplanted into that soil; and grew and flourished there."[48] He goes on to assert that "It was not English arms, but the English constitution, that conquered Ireland," making the figurative image of the English constitution taking root in Irish soil the overarching metaphor for Ireland's conquest.[49]

Of course, the ecological realities of imperialism were quite different, which is what makes Quigley's invasive, ecologically devastating flies read initially like a critique of such metaphors. Her metaphor emphasizes the underlying violence of such figurative ecological language for colonization as environmental degradation both amplifies and serves as the medium of expression for political inequity. I alluded earlier to the impact colonialism had on native ecosystems, as imperial governments altered environments to better serve their financial and

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[46] John Curry, *An Historical and Critical Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland from the Reign of Queen Elizabeth to the Settlement under King William with the State of the Irish Catholics. From that Settlement to the Relaxation of the Popery Laws in the Year 1778* (Dublin: P. Wogan, 1793), 323.
[47] John Earl of Clare Fitzgibbon, *The Speech of the Right Honourable John Earl of Clare, Lord High Chancellor of Ireland: in the House of Lords of Ireland. On a Motion Made by Him. By Authority* (Dublin: J Miliken, 1800), 16.
[48] Edmund Burke, *Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq. On Moving His Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies, March 22, 1775, Third Edition* (London: J. Dodsley, 1784), 57.
[49] Burke, 58.

cultural interests.[50] Gamble's narrative points to the stark visibility of these changes in Ulster, and Edgeworth's novels repeatedly return to critiques of the impact absentee landlordism has on Irish communities as ecological resources are consumed to excess with no concern for longevity or sustainable maintenance of the land. *The Microscope*'s presentation of the flies as both endemic and foreign to the ecosystem they annihilate serves as an articulation of the long-term transformative ecological impacts of colonialism.

Quigley's politicized characterization of the flies' destructive and self-serving impact on the flourishing ecosystem she perceives with the naked eye before the angel hands her a microscope initially seems to position the poem purely as an anti-colonial eco-critique of the effect British imperial interests have had on the Irish landscape. But when the angel hands her a microscope, revealing the human flies on the ground, it moves away from straightforward political allegory toward a poem about catastrophic convergence, in which the slow and cumulative temporality of the ecological impacts of colonialism needs to be understood in conjunction with the sudden and apolitical ecological devastation of a climate event.[51] I suggest that the coexistence of two sets of pestilential flies in Quigley's poem can be understood as an attempt to articulate the convergence of these two types of violence as the climatic events of Tambora both amplified and laid bare the prior violence of Ireland's colonial history.

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[50] Tobin calls attention to this, noting that a few highlights in Joseph Banks's "long career of managing the globe's resources for Britain's benefit" include: "Carrying tea plants out of China and planting them in Bihar and Bhutan for British tea drinkers, transplanting breadfruit trees from the Pacific to the Caribbean for starving slaves who produced the sugar for the Briton's tea and jam, and populating Australia with Britain's superfluity of human beings" (*Colonizing* 9).

[51] Nixon defines the slow violence of environmental harm as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (*Slow Violence* 2), arguing that one of the impediments to our understanding this violence is that it is not spectacular, asking "how can we convert into image and narrative the disasters that are slow moving and long in the making, disasters that are anonymous and that star nobody" (*Slow Violence* 3). My argument concerns the interaction between the slow violence of colonialism and the sudden nonanthropogenic violence of a spectacular climatic event such as that triggered by Tambora's eruption.

The Microscope's characterization of the flies as analogous to tyrants, and the microscopic inhabitants of the village as analogous to flies, presents anthropogenic and nonanthropogenic forms of suffering and ecological degradation as intertwined. The angel continues to refer to the inhabitants of the village as "flies…of each description" (II.18), despite Quigley's additional characterization of them as "Of human form, indeed, they seem'd, / Or such as might be human deem'd" (I.121–122). In the third Canto, the angel uses the descriptor "flesh-flies" (III. 2), which in its strange viscerality serves to emphasize the conjoined nature of human and insect ruin within the poem while preserving difference. This slippage allows for the poem's articulation of catastrophic convergence as Quigley separates nonanthropogenic ecological agents of destruction from anthropogenic ones, only to then present them as intersecting, with tyrannical government analogous to, and sometimes—but importantly not always—the source of, ecological destruction. They amplify each other as their convergence creates injustice on a more significant scale.

Such a reading emerges in part by focusing on how Quigley figures the first set of flies less as politically invasive than as climatic and migratory. Her description of the "hateful flies as numerous grown / As midges in the torrid zone" (I. 52–56) not only positions the poem as an anti-colonial critique through its echoes of imperialism but calls attention to foreign climates as themselves capable of altering ecosystems. Quigley's description of the ecosystem's flourishing is described in atmospheric terms at the precise moment the flies make their incursion: "For e'er Favonius gently blew, / To spread their beauties all to view, / Or Sol inhaled the pearly dew, / 'Till hateful flies…" (I. 49–52). The language of atmosphere and breath that precedes the tropical multiplication of the flies gestures toward the supersession of a native climate by a foreign one, which then leads to the ecosystem's collapse.

Migratory weather patterns can cause climates to move and shift, and in the aftermath of Tambora, Ireland experienced several years of erratic weather patterns that felt invasive and hostile, although not politically so. Newspaper reports from across the United Kingdom during those years provide a glimpse of how under siege and geographically unmoored the unusual weather made people feel. On July 25, 1818, the London *Star* printed the following description of the weather from Stafford, which, like Quigley's poem, presents the current weather patterns as foreign and encroaching: "The heat for some days past has been so excessive, we seem to have exchanged climates with Italy and the West Indies—the one at present deluged with rains, and other surprised with a visit from the icebergs."[52] A portion of a letter from Bordeaux reprinted in the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* from July 1816 likewise registers this sense of climatic displacement: "We really do not know here where we are. We sit with our doors and windows closed and fire burning as in the middle of winter, it is cold as in October, and the sky is dark and rainy; violent winds, accompanied with heavy rain and hail, rage round our country houses; the low grounds are under water."[53] The strange phrasing of "We really do not know here where we are" foregrounds the letter writer's sense of place (here), only to immediately unsettle any claims to geographical knowledge by turning that "here" into the source and cause of not knowing "where we are." In so doing, it captures how much the unseasonable and abnormal weather destroyed local and inherited knowledges of place. The drastically altered climate results in "here" no longer being where it used to be, insofar as it has taken on the characteristics of foreign climates and thus become geographically estranged.

[52] "Stafford. July 25, 1818," *Star* (London), July 25, 1818, *The British Newspaper Archive*.
[53] "Friday, July 12, 1816," *The Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* (Cambridgeshire), July 12, 1816, *The British Newspaper Archive*.

News reports often turn to the climate of the tropics for comparison, as a chaotic and threatening climate which is the antithesis of settled and orderly British climates. The *Chester Courant* described an 1816 November storm in Cheshire as an "Indian tornado": "The thaw was accompanied by violent gusts of wind, one of which, about a quarter before eight o'clock on Monday evening, resembled an Indian tornado.—Throughout that night it blew a hurricane."[54] The *Caledonian Mercury* recounts a fierce thunder and hailstorm in Cumberland in July 1816 with language that positions it as an incursion of tropical climates: "a tremendous volley of pieces of ice, some of them an inch or more in diameter, impelled with the violence of a hurricane that may be compared to a West Indian tornado, shattered the windows of the houses, tore up the soil, beat down the vegetable products of each, and did great and extensive damage," later referring to the hail as "heaven's artillery."[55] The resonances of this type of weather report surface in Quigley's verse, and the consistent impulse to turn toward the climate of the tropics as the epitome of foreign, hostile, and unnatural weather not only aligns with Romantic-era climate and disease discourses but also brings Quigley's simile into dialogue with post-Tambora weather patterns as it similarly uses tropical climates ("torrid zone") in order to emphasize the excessive damage caused by the flies.[56] The violent and destructive ecological force of the first set of flies mirrors weather reports from Tambora's climatic aftermath, and within the political context of both the poem and Ireland, leverages such language to offer an anti-colonial critique in the face of nonanthropogenic, foreign, and inexplicable environmental harm and injustice.

In each of the above examples, the weather becomes hostile, invasive, and needlessly destructive as the climatic events set in motion by Tambora's eruption have, much like Quigley's

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[54] "Friday, November 15, 1816," *Chester Courant* (Cheshire), November 15, 1816, *The British Newspaper Archive*.
[55] "Monday, July 29, 1816," *Caledonian Mercury* (Midlothian), July 29, 1816, *The British Newspaper Archive*.
[56] For further information on Romantic conceptions of climate—especially that of the tropics—and disease, see Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

flies, made "nature [seem] a chaos wild, / Of all her beauties robb'd and spoil'd." As an early account of the weather's impact on the harvest laments: "Whole districts have been ravaged and laid waste, houses have been blown down, the labours of the husbandman destroyed, rivers have burst their banks, and inundated vast tracks."[57] That same month, in Ireland, there was a ferocious hailstorm: "The hail stones were nearly as large as marbles and of an oblong shape…the potatoe stems and other tender vegetables much injured; the damage sustained by individuals in the neighbourhood is almost incalculable; the floods, which seem to run their course from the heavens, have swept whole districts of tillage into ruin."[58] In June of 1819, there were a series of frosts which damaged much of Scotland's fruit harvest: "The whole of the larger fruits on the banks of the Clyde, with the exception of a few pears and plums have been destroyed in the blossom, or in the formation."[59] A related language of ravage and waste appears in Quigley's poem, which similarly features the sudden appearance of a pestilential airborne ecological force despoiling a previously flourishing ecosystem.[60] The complexity of her metaphorical flies, coexisting in two sets on drastically different scales, allows for a reading of nonhuman apolitical climate disaster as concurrent with, and exacerbating, the prior ecological and political ravages of colonialism. Within the poem, the angel's microscope allows for this shift in lens and scale as the humanness of the second set of flies makes the first set, in comparison, appear more like an adverse apolitical ecological phenomenon such as the weather.

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[57] "Thursday, July 25, 1816," *Caledonian Mercury* (Midlothian), July 25, 1816, *The British Newspaper Archive*.
[58] "Thursday, July 25, 1816."
[59] "Thursday, June 3, 1819," *Caledonian Mercury* (Midlothian), June 3, 1819, *The British Newspaper Archive*.
[60] It would be remiss not to note in passing that "pestilential," while my term, is a common descriptor for invasive pests in addition to one for disease or plague, something that seems especially provocative within the context of the typhus epidemic, especially given that the vector for that pestilence was of course pests—more specifically, lice. The manifold linguistic echoes between Quigley's cloud (another term frequently used to describe insects in addition to inclement weather) of pestilential flies, and the pestilence amplified in part by another type of aerial force (e.g. the climate), which was itself caused by yet another insect pest, seem too suggestive to be overlooked completely, even if never fully expressed in the poem, and with regards to the disease vector of the typhus epidemic, outside of Quigley's knowledge.

Tambora may not be explicitly invoked by Quigley's poem, but this structure wherein a nonanthropogenic ecological event reveals structural political ills is certainly suggestive in its aftermath. As we started to glimpse in Gamble's travelogue, Tambora laid bare how Ireland's loss of autonomy and political authority after the Act of Union made the Irish reliant on the goodwill of those far enough removed from their suffering to be able to comfortably ignore it. Far from granting the country more security and governmental oversight, the Act of Union stranded it in a legislative no-man's-land, where Ireland lacked the economic and political autonomy to impose adequate relief measures on its own, instead being unequally folded into Parliament's larger relief measures which heavily favored their English constituents. Tambora's climatic aftermath threw these long-standing inequities into sharp relief, not least because British Parliament refused to place embargoes on exportation, continuing to rely on the influx of Irish produce to English markets as rural Irish populations faced the twinned calamities of famine and typhus. In a similar fashion, the devastation caused by the first set of flies leads to the revelation of the injustices perpetrated by the second microscopic set, and their coexistence within the poem gestures toward an attempt to articulate the convergence of these intertwined injustices as they are expressed through each other. Within this framework, the poem points to an effort to understand the additional complexity of nonanthropogenic climatic instability as an ecology-altering factor that compounds colonialism's prior injustices and unevenly distributed environmental vulnerabilities.

The Microscope distinguishes between the different capabilities of tyrannical flies and fly-like tyrants to consume natural resources and lay waste to the environments they inhabit. Colonialism's temporal scope allows for environmental abuse on a much larger and longer scale than the sudden violence of a nonanthropogenic ecological disaster, such as the climatic events

of 1816–1819, with the prior inequities of colonialism amplifying the environmental injustice of such disaster. In the moment before she produces the microscope, the angel distinguishes between the extent to which humans and flies are able to lay waste to their environment:

> Those blooming flow'rs that grac'd the plain,
> Shall rise and bloom in spring again:
> Again shall foliage clothe the trees,
> And fruit hang clust'ring thick from these,
> When each rapacious tyrant fly,
> Shall only glut itself and die.
> Cease then, their ravage to deplore,
> There's other cause for grief in store. (I. 96–103)

The flies' biological limitations prevent them from carrying resource consumption past the point of no return. The distinction the angel draws between the flies Quigley sees with the naked eye and the "other cause for grief," or the human flies she views through the microscope, revolves around the question of ecological renewal, whether or not the ecosystem is able to return to its pre-infestation, or pre-colonial, state.

This distinction not only seems especially pertinent in our current moment, a point to which I will return, but it also appears to echo another Irish writer's metaphorical flies. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke argues that the overthrow of long-standing legal and political customs would undo the cultural longevity of man:

> But one of the first and most leading principles on which the commonwealth and the laws are consecrated is, lest the temporary possessors and liferenters in it…should act as if they were the entire masters, that they should not think it among their rights to cut off the entail or commit waste on the inheritance by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of their society, hazarding to leave to those who come after them a ruin instead of an habitation…the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer. (141)

While Burke's concerns center on the inheritance of legal and political institutions, his worry that in laying waste to such hereditary structures, "Men would become little better than the flies

of summer" is given its reverse expression in Quigley's assessment of the difference between flies and men. Flies are less harmful precisely because they are ephemeral and thus unable to leave the same lasting damage; they cannot erect habitations that shelter their builders at the expense of those they leave out in the cold. In its negative echo of Burke's flies, Quigley's poem seeks to articulate the way unjust political systems themselves "cut off the entail or commit waste on the inheritance by destroying at their pleasure" not just "the whole original fabric of their society" but also the regenerative capabilities of an ecosystem, leaving "to those who come after them a ruin instead of an habitation."

I noted earlier that a quarter of Ireland's agricultural yield was mandated for sale abroad, meaning that despite Ireland's annual production of enough food to feed two million people, most of the Irish population lived at the subsistence level. England's overuse of Irish resources and refusal to enact relief systems in the aftermath of Tambora resulted in the desolation Gamble experienced when he returned home in 1818 and the escalating suffering Quigley would have witnessed among her community as she lived through those years in Ulster. As Gamble makes clear, the events of 1816–1819 have left Ireland greatly changed, with much of its population having emigrated or succumbed to famine or typhus. For Burke, humanity's ability to create long-lasting political institutions is crucial to cultural survival. His countrywoman's poem, however, suggests humanity's capacity to indulge in resource overuse on a large enough scale as to permanently reshape the landscape, leaving to those who come after a wasted ecosystem that is unfit for habitation. While each of Quigley's flies "Shall only glut itself and die," the generational inheritance of political and legal institutions means there is no biological limit to the consumptive structures of colonialism—or rather, there very much is a planetary limit to such anthropogenic consumption, but not one of which Quigley would have been aware—; Ireland

will continue to serve as England's breadbasket, as its agrarian ecology is modified for the benefit of English appetites at the expense of those who work and live on the land.

The human capacity to alter landscapes and impede agricultural production is given further expression in Quigley's poem through the depiction of a tyrant whose unjust rule reaps misery. The goddess calls Quigley's attention to various members of the microscopic village:

> Behold yon pettey [sic] tyrant, there,
> Whose very looks create despair;
> Who scatters with unsparing hand,
> Sad desolation round the land:
> The orphan's tear, the widow's cry,
> The wretch's groan can't steal a sigh
> From him; ah! no; his callous breast,
> Is like the storm rocked to rest. (II.52–59)

In this reversal of generative tillage, the petty tyrant sows the land with desolation and not crops, resulting in the proliferation of misery that takes root in the land and grows throughout his domain. As I noted in my previous chapter, in order to stave off immediate starvation during 1817, which was a worse year for the Irish harvest than 1816, many of the Irish dug seed potatoes out of the ground, thus consuming any hope of the next year's bounty. That desperate act plowed the land with "sad desolation," turning the fields into barren ground out of which no produce could grow. Quigley notes the poor harvest of 1817 in a footnote to one of her other poems in the collection, made more striking by its being the only footnote within the volume. It is a jarring textual interruption in what is an otherwise satirical poem entitled "The Chase," which recounts the many misadventures of the vain Miss Flacket as she courts her naïve beau. In one scene, they are conversing with dame Grubbit who remarks that "the punch is good, / And prays the meal mayn't fall," to which Quigley appends the footnote: "The dear summer 1817." Her footnote insists on the poem being understood within the context of the climatic disturbances of the preceding years, and the tyrant "who scatters with unsparing hand, / Sad desolation round

the land" affirms the link between environmental devastation and political oppression by making the act of tyrannical rule synonymous with the cultivation of barren land. *The Microscope* presents anthropogenic and nonanthropogenic causes of ecological degradation as intersecting, as each amplifies, and is expressed through, the other. In the years following Tambora, in which weather uncontrolled by the British produced catastrophic climatic events that exacerbated structural and systemic social inequities for which British colonial politics and ecological practices were very much to blame, Quigley's poem works toward the articulation of an emergent sense of climate injustice which can accommodate the catastrophic convergence of long-standing ecologically destructive and inequitable colonial practices and a transitory nonanthropogenic climatic event.

"To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Anthropocene":
Animal Rights and Romantic-era Environmental Justice in a Planetary Age

Nature metaphors are, of course, a central characteristic of Romantic literature, though, on the whole, negative natural metaphors, such as Quigley's flies, are more uncommon. Suggestively, when they do appear, they often center on climate. For example, in Charlotte Smith's "Written in the church-yard at Middleton in Sussex," she describes herself as "doom'd—by life's long storm opprest," while in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," he wishes for a storm which would soothe his suffering by mirroring his tormented emotional state.[61] Keats's *La belle dame sans merci* imagines the lifeless world inhabited by la belle dame as an eternal winter, with the knight stranded on a "cold hill side" (36), where "The sedge has

[61] Charlotte Smith, "Written in the church-yard at Middleton in Sussex," in *Major Poetic Works*, ed. Claire Knowles and Ingrid Horrocks (Peterborough, Ontario, CN: Broadview Press, 2017), line 13.

withered from the Lake / And no birds sing" (3–4).[62] Even insects tend, in the world of Romantic poetry, to become positive objects of sympathy, an aspect of Romanticism's more general extension of sympathy to animals like mice, tigers, and lambs. For David Perkins, "insects offered writers the largest opportunity for instructive, provocative, prejudice-dispelling displays of sympathy…Since most people viewed insects, as they still do, as insignificant, disagreeable, or dangerous, they had no fellow feelings with insects."[63] William Blake, Keats, Robert Burns, John Clare, and Catherine Ann Dorset are among the many poets in the period who addressed insects compassionately in verse.

Such sympathetic engagement with the nonhuman was not isolated to verse alone, instead, it was part of a much larger debate surrounding natural rights. Romantic-era models of environmental justice tend to be based primarily on such discussions of animal and other nonhuman rights. The concluding section of this chapter briefly outlines this version of environmental justice and its relationship to other rights-based justice discourses in the period and then proceeds to explore some of the limitations of such models in the face of how human histories of injustice enmesh with the intensifying ecological complexities of anthropogenic climate change. I suggest that the emergent sense of environmental injustice found in Quigley's poem offers a more flexible model with which to contend in a contemporary theoretical context as it attempts to articulate the intersection between human inequity and climate disaster, understanding them as related but not necessarily corresponding. The climatic events triggered by Tambora's eruption are distinct from our contemporary moment of climate crisis as they were caused by planetary processes, not anthropogenic ones. However, as I hope to show, this

[62] John Keats, "La belle dame sans merci," in *John Keats: The Major Works*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), lines 36, 3–4.
[63] David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

distinction is what makes Quigley's model of environmental injustice provocative in a contemporary context as it seeks to express the convergence of long-standing human processes of inequity and ecological violence with the sudden apolitical violence of an altered climate.

The Romantic period saw a shift in political and philosophical thought regarding questions of individual rights and liberties. Debates around the nature and origins of justice and discussions about women's rights and abolition gained prominence throughout the period.[64] Part and parcel of this were debates surrounding animal rights: the question of what, if any, claim animals could lay to similar rights of just treatment and liberty. Starting in the 1780s, debates about animal welfare took place in Parliament and the popular press, culminating in 1822 with the passage of "An Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle." Commonly known as "Martin's Act," it aimed at improving the conditions of laboring animals by designating a limited class of nonhumans as bearers of partial legal personhood. Discussions of animal rights largely revolved around questions of the intellectual and emotional capacities of animals. Were they capable of rational thought? Of suffering? Of feeling pain and joy? These debates registered a shift in public attitudes toward animals, moving away from a Cartesian understanding of them as organic machines, mere beasts of burden, and extending toward them instead an (often limited) amount of sympathy and fellow feeling. This was directly tied to the revolutionary fervor of those years, as Perkins notes: "For many persons, animals offered themselves as a conscience-appeasing surrogate for human sufferers, whose relief they were less ready to champion, perhaps because it might involve or symbolize a riskier alteration of the

[64] Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), and William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) all sought to determine frameworks and rationale for justice and individual rights.

social order…If animals had rights, they could not enforce them."[65] The verse of Romantic poets played a significant role in these changing conceptions, prominently featuring an array of animals from nightingales and albatrosses to field mice and sheep. Ecocritics have pointed to Romantic preoccupations with animal welfare as an important aspect of Romantic attitudes toward nonhuman nature, contending that they remain essential ecological models in our contemporary moment as we strive to come to terms with the unequal impact humans have had on the planet.[66] This model of rights-based environmentalism has continued to resurface in a variety of ways in more contemporary debates, with Christopher D. Stone's *Should Trees Have Standing?* and Bruno Latour's "Parliament of Things" being two prominent examples.

Romantic writing often positions animal (and other nonhuman) rights as natural rights that are disrupted or negated by human injustice. Animals serve to do the double work of standing in for instances of human-on-human injustice, as well as human-on-animal injustice, underscoring the claim of all living beings to rights bestowed by nature. The most famous example of this is Robert Burns's "To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest With the Plough, November 1785" where—to simplify the poem greatly—the mouse functions as a literal mouse, a proxy for rural laborers, and a proxy for Scotland. Ultimately the final stanza of the poem, as the speaker demarcates the intellectual difference between himself and the mouse, works to push back against classist assumptions of the rational capacities of the rural working classes in a move that necessitates a reaffirmation of the superiority of human consciousness in relation to animal consciousness. In the only stanza of the poem not written in Scots dialect, Burns's speaker apologizes to the mouse for humanity's breach of the contract of natural rights, "I'm truly sorry

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[65] Perkins, *Romanticism*, 4.
[66] See for example, the work of Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); and Ashton Nichols, *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Man's dominion / Has broken Nature's social union," while affirming the fellowship between mouse and man by referring to himself as the mouse's "poor, earth-born companion, / An' fellow-mortal."[67]

While this belief in natural rights feeds into and seeps out of concurrent debates surrounding abolition, women's rights, and Parliamentary Reform, it quickly becomes politically and conceptually paralyzed and paralyzing. This is because such a model of natural rights is predicated on a version of harmonious nature, such as that envisioned in Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring," where nature is the domain of pleasure and the trouble is "What man has made of man," not a version of nature where the survival of one living thing requires the death of another.[68] The concurrent natural rights of house cats and field mice cannot be squared with the biological necessity of the house cat's supper. Such squaring becomes even trickier when one remembers that historically house cats were working animals: their position as household tenants was a condition of their ability to act as effective pest control. This is not to shove aside all affectionate and familial relationships between humans and animals but to call attention to an aspect of human-animal cohabitation in the period that the epidemiological aftermath of Tambora throws into relief. While the conditions of the mice in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's, "The Mouse's Petition to Dr. Priestly" (1771) and Robert Burns's, "To a Mouse" are distinct—Barbauld's mouse is an imprisoned scientific subject while Burns's field mouse has been unhoused by the human speaker's scythe—they both ask us to consider the relatively slim claims of the mouse to sustenance in relation to our much larger human ones. As Barbauld's

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[67] Robert Burns, "To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest With the Plough, November 1785," *The Best Laid Schemes: Selected Poetry and Prose of Robert Burns*, eds. Robert Crawford and Christopher MacLachlan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), lines 7–8, 11–12.
[68] William Wordsworth, "Lines Written in Early Spring," in *Lyrical Ballads:1798 and 1802* ed. Fiona J. Stafford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), line 8.

mouse puts it: "The scattered gleanings of a feast / My frugal meals supply," asking that even if Dr. Priestly begrudges him that little, he at least free him and "Let nature's commoners enjoy / The common gifts of heaven."[69]As Burns's speaker reasons:

> I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve,
> What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
> A daimen-icker in a thrave
> 'S a sma' request. (13–16)

It would be understandable, however, if one were to begrudge a mouse even the smallest of requests if that mouse were an unwitting carrier for typhus or another communicable disease. While the typhus that ravaged Ireland in 1816–1819 was epidemic and not endemic typhus and thus spread by body lice through human-to-human contact, other places hit hard by Tambora's aftermath in those years saw heightened cases of forms of zoonotic diseases such as the endemic flea-born typhus and the bubonic plague.

Such disease ecologies make the two mice, and of course, the louse of Burns's "To a Louse, On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church," into potentially deadly creatures whose claims to sympathy and a "hospitable hearth" impinge upon human claims to those very same things.[70] While the speaker of Burns's poem chastises the louse for its impudence in dining on the head of a "Sae fine a Lady" (10), instead of "some beggar's haffet" (13), the implication, as the final verse drives home, that both the rich and the poor are subject to the same indignities—bodily and otherwise—works to extend a modicum of sympathy to the louse, too, in its attempt to keep body and soul together, just like its human hosts.[71] The poem's jocular tone, use of direct second-person address to the louse, and begrudging admiration despite itself of the louse's social

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[69] Ann Letitia Barbauld, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, eds. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), lines, 17–18, 23–24.
[70] Barbauld, 14.
[71] Robert Burns, "To a Louse, On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church," in *Best Laid Schemes*, eds. Crawford and MacLachlan, lines 10, 13.

climbing ambitions all paint the louse in a sympathetic light. Burns suggests that not only would the louse be better suited to a beggar's head in terms of class, but it would be a more hospitable and beneficial habitat: "There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle, / Wi'ither kindred, jumping cattle, / in shoals and nations."[72] In such an environment, the louse would be comforted by the knowledge that neither "*horn* nor *bane* ne'er daur unsettle, / Your thick plantations."[73] These aspects of the poem work to turn the louse from a detested pest into a poetic subject worthy of a degree of sympathetic identification by the reader. Neither poet would have known that a mouse or a louse might be capable of transmitting disease, but the point remains that while equal valuation of all living things is easy to urge in the abstract, in practice it turns out to be less than bloodless.

In our contemporary moment, we find ourselves up against an increasingly urgent and existential version of this question: asking how we square the rights of humans and nonhumans in light of climate change. Anthropogenic climate change underscores what humanity has always known—if sometimes been less than willing to acknowledge—that human life is dependent on and bound up with all other life forms on Earth. This is the genesis of environmental models such as deep ecology, which strive to codify that realization by placing it within rights-based legal and philosophical language. Rights-based models intended to assert this fact are doomed to fail, however, as they are grounded in human models of justice and individual rights and lack the capacity to accommodate the types of social inequity created by capitalism and colonialism or the increasing destabilization of planetary ecosystems. Timothy Clark makes this point, citing George Handley's critique of deep ecologists for their stance on the equal ethical value of all

[72] Burns, 14–16.
[73] Burns, 17–18.

living things as failing to address the relationship between social and environmental ills. As Clark points out:

> Slavery's evils were social *and* environmental—the recent floods in Haiti were caused by heavy rainfall, yes, but even more by the political and economic forces that have perpetuated the extensive deforestation begun by slavery; destitute descendants of slaves are forced to rely on wood for fuel and thus continue to find their hold on their sense of place slipping away. 'The consequences of natural events are often distributed according to the tragedies of human oppression and poverty' (Handley). (138)

To a degree, this is because, historically, such rights-based discourses exist in part to codify and buttress inequity by determining who does and who does not qualify for legal personhood—there always has to be an outside to that inside, which means the concept of equal rights for all living things is self-defeating conceptually because the very thing that creates a rights-bearing individual is the existence of a non-rights-bearing individual.

The question of natural rights founders in the face of human histories of oppression and capital because it cannot adequately capture the contradictory logics of the interplay between social and environmental factors. In the example of deforestation in Haiti, the necessity of fuel makes the very people who will most suffer from environmental devastation the ones who are forced to participate in the ongoing processes of deforestation. Clark additionally warns about the dangers of a conception of the Anthropocene in which environmental disasters are tightly yoked to human injustices, understanding them as "the physical manifestation or side effects of social, political and economic injustices between human beings."[74] This is not to deny the relationship between anthropogenic climate change and human injustices, but such a model where environmental disasters are read as a direct correlate for human wrongs is incapable of effectively responding to a world where environmental disasters daily grow in complexity and scale: "The clear-cut mainstream view of the Anthropocene as the historical repercussion of

[74] Timothy Clark, *The Value of Ecocriticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 158

modernization seems likely to be eroded as an increasingly fragile rationalization of a host of intended consequences whose complexity seems set to correspond less and less to amenable intellectual maps, such as the neatness of schemas of combined and uneven development."[75] He further remarks that in relation to current ecological catastrophes, "The elements of caprice and the unpredictable means that what happens at the 'world scale' becomes rather a destabilization of the concept of a 'world' itself in the sense of a common, unitary horizon of material and social factors, held in some overview as making sense together."[76]

Clark's sense of the Anthropocene as destabilizing prior conceptions of the "world," or human frameworks of justice, is similar to Dipesh Chakrabarty's model of the planetary. Building on his seminal "The Climate of History: Four Theses," his latest monograph, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, contends that as globalization and climate have become the twinned defining factors of our current age, the planet has emerged as a crucial philosophical frame. Like Clark, he cautions that the model of "global warming as a consequence of uneven capitalist development inflected by class, gender, and race" has become insufficient to adequately accommodate our emerging planetary agency[77]. One of Chakrabarty's key contentions is that the Anthropocene requires us to understand humans as geological agents in addition to biological ones. This conception of humans as geological agents has the potential to complicate prior conceptions of anthropocentric notions of justice as it moves toward an understanding of the human as species as having planetary agency.

I certainly do not mean to suggest that the fight for environmental justice should be abandoned or to argue that we should exclude nonhuman entities in ethical demands for justice,

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[75] Clark, 158.
[76] Clark, 159.
[77] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 4.

especially as such injustice and exclusion have gone a long way toward creating this mess in the first place. Quite the opposite. Instead, I want to underscore some of the limitations of the model for environmental or climate justice in the Romantic period with its emphasis on natural rights. Barbauld's mouse states the claim of all "nature's commoners" to the "common gifts of heaven," as he argues that:

> The well-taught philosophic mind
> To all compassion gives:
> Casts round the world an equal eye,
> And feels for all that lives. (25–28)

Even John Clare's "Lament of Swordy Well," a poem that deviates from the standard appropriation of animal or insect voices in its attempt to lay claim to the natural rights of a piece of land, ultimately relies on this idea of rights-bearing personhood in its argument for Swordy Well's sovereignty and mistreatment at the hands of profit: "Though Im no man yet any wrong / Some sort of right may seek."[78] Clare's poem is a truly distinct poetic act of environmental justice; however, the recourse that Swordy Well seeks in song is an extension of the rights given to men even as it takes care to distinguish itself from them. Gesturing to the emergence of a different sense of climate injustice that bears similarity to our contemporary sense of environmental justice as inflected by an awareness of human histories of imperialism, colonialism, class, race, and gender, I want to propose shifting our critical gaze from Romantic-era human, legalistic models of rights to a model of catastrophic convergence like Quigley's which locates the potential for environmental discord within paradise itself and then reads that outward into a critique of the relationship between colonial government and environmental destruction.

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[78] John Clare, *John Clare*, eds. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), lines 41–42.

As the climate catastrophe of the 1810s was not anthropogenic, it necessarily produces a different sense of climate injustice than contemporary global warming. Quigley's presentation of environmental destruction must be read as exacerbated by, and exacerbating, but not the sole result of, human inequity. Part of the challenge of conceptually wrestling with anthropogenic climate change lies in how a human accelerated process intensifies human injustices while simultaneously—as Clark points out—defying the neatness of this schema. Chakrabarty similarly makes this point regarding the unhuman temporality of the planetary. He stresses that while "those who connect climate change causally to historical origins/formations of economic inequalities in the modern world raise valid questions about historical inequalities," understanding such inequalities as the sole cause nevertheless "reduces the problem of climate change to that of capitalism (folded into the histories of modern European expansion and empires)" which has the effect of "blind[ing] us to the action—or agency, if you will—of Earth system processes and their unhuman temporalities."[79] The temporality of the climatic events triggered by Tambora's explosion was in fact, as I have been arguing, shorter in span than the temporality of Ireland's colonial history; however, Chakrabarty's contention that greater attention needs to be paid to the interaction of the vastly different temporal scale of the planetary alongside the human temporality of historical inequality is useful in illustrating an important aspect of Quigley's flies. The coexistence of the pestilential flies on two visual scales and their differing capacities to inflict lasting environmental harm can be understood as working to articulate the collision of the temporality of the history of empires with that of Earth system processes such as a volcanic eruption. Quigley's poetic response to Tambora's aftermath in Ireland presents an account of a colonial context exacerbated by nonanthropogenic climate

[79] Chakrabarty, *Climate*, 58.

catastrophe while still thinking in terms of climate injustice. Her poem offers a more flexible model for grappling with the planetary in that it attempts to articulate a version of climate injustice wherein human injustices take place alongside and intersect with climatic ones, without such climatic events being understood as solely the direct result of human injustice.

Current climate crises are undeniably the result of anthropogenic causes, although as both Chakrabarty and Clark point out (and terms like "Anthropocene," "Capitalocence," and "Plantationocene," are meant to emphasize), humanity has destabilized planetary processes on such a massive scale as to propel us into a new geological age, altering the Earth's climate and ecosystems beyond our ability to adequately predict or fully comprehend the effects of such destabilization. Returning to the nonanthropogenic climatic events of 1816–1819 offers a productive opportunity to wrestle with the convergence of the unhuman temporality and agency of planetary systems and the human histories of empire and economic inequality without flattening them into each other. While my second chapter argued for the importance of viewing the second decade of the nineteenth century and its literary production through the lens of climate, this chapter's claims have sought to emphasize how the effects of those climatic events converged with Ireland's colonial history.

Momentarily returning to eighteenth-century pests helps elucidate this approach and its usefulness as a theoretical model for my argument. If, as Perkins suggests, animal rights mediate in between conservative and radical conceptions of human rights, then both Burns and Barbauld can use their mice (and louse) to garner sympathy for marginalized human subjects without too much agitation for real political change. It is much easier not to kill a mouse than it is to fix structural injustices, and this reduced sense of political danger makes the mouse a lower threshold for sympathetic buy-in while still provocatively hinting at inequitable political and

economic systems. However, catastrophic convergence is not just a question of human inequity, but a question of how human inequity intersects with broader complex ecological, climatic, and planetary processes. The relationship between a human host and the louse that drinks this host's blood to survive is complicated by Tambora's climatic aftermath. The altered climate ruined the harvest, which resulted in the lice's human hosts spreading louse-borne disease more rapidly than they might have otherwise because they were weakened by malnutrition, forced to huddle together for warmth due to climate-related turf shortages and an increase in cold inclement weather, reduced to selling even their clothes and bedding in order to buy food, and in many cases, eventually compelled to beg on the streets or migrate. At the same time, the conditions for this kind of socioeconomic precarity existed in the first place because of Ireland's colonial history, which had created a society with steep economic disparities, sectarian conflict, little governmental or political power, and few systems of relief. The Irish populace's position as an expendable colonial resource for England meant the country's agricultural produce continued to be exported for use by the English as the Irish people starved, and British Parliament, separated from the suffering by geographic, national, class, and often linguistic distance, willfully neglected Irish welfare. These interlocking networks of catastrophic climatic events, colonial history, and the disease ecology of typhus converge, resulting in the desperate state of Ireland in 1816–1819. Attending narrowly to the well-being or natural rights of the individual mouse or louse does not conduce to recognizing or acknowledging these different networks or the ways they intersect. In contrast, Quigley's poem, in its attempt to articulate the problem through the interplay of two distinct categories of environmental devastation—the slow violence of unjust

colonial government and the sudden nonanthropogenic and apolitical violence of an invasive ecological force—comes closer to anticipating a modern understanding of climate injustice.[80]

[80] One final note on Tambora's legacy of environmental justice. The events of 1816–1819 did not lead to any significant policy or social change in Ireland, where famines and typhus epidemics continued to break out every few years (1821, 1822, 1825, and 1830), culminating in the Great Irish Famine of 1845–1849. The years following Tambora also saw many countries across Europe enact conservative and repressive policies in reaction to social disturbances such as rioting, vagrancy, begging, and crime caused by the extreme distress and hunger of those years. Long-term, however, scholars have pointed to Tambora's aftermath as a watershed moment for social welfare as governments began to implement more robust systems of ensuring basic security for their citizens in times of economic crisis and as attitudes shifted toward a wider recognition of governmental responsibility for public welfare. Post (*Last* 175), Fagan (*Little* 179–180), and Behringer (*Tambora* 265) all make this point in their historical assessment of Tambora's climatic aftermath and its lasting political and cultural impact. Much as the climate-altering reverberations of Tambora's eruption caused Gamble and Quigley to view certain aspects of Ireland's colonial government through a new lens, it also glaringly laid bare the failures of existing governmental policies to adequately provide relief in the face of such unpredictable and wide-spread climatic-shifts.

4. HURRICANE SEASON AT *MANSFIELD PARK*:

Rereading Jane Austen on Slavery through the Lens of Climate

In the middle of Zadie Smith's novel set in the late-Victorian period, *The Fraud* (2023), Andrew Bogle, a formerly enslaved man born on a sugar plantation in Jamaica, relates his personal history to the protagonist, Eliza Touchet. Later, on the train ride from London back to her home in the country, Eliza has the following realization:

> The exotic island of her conception was not some utterly different and unimaginable world. It was neither far away nor long ago. Indeed, it seemed to her now that the two islands were, in reality, two sides of the same problem, profoundly intertwined, and that this was a truth that did not have to be sought out or hunted down, it was not hidden behind a veil or screen of any kind of door. It was and had always been everywhere, like weather. (334)

The truth hidden in plain sight of Jamaica and England as "two sides of the same problem, profoundly intertwined" is the crux of Edward Said's famous argument about *Mansfield Park*.[1] He contends that while peripheral to the geographical setting of the novel's action, Sir Thomas's Antiguan holdings are crucial to its moral, political, and cultural vision and that Austen thus participates in and contributes to the imperial mindset that designated the West as center and shoved everything else to the margins. While Said was not the first to note the novel's colonial backdrop, his "contrapuntal" reading of its relationship to British imperialism in the nineteenth century ignited a lively critical debate.[2] Later critical readings, including Susan Fraiman's touchstone feminist response, have critiqued and fleshed out Said's version of Austen,

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[1] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

[2] John Wiltshire, "Decolonising Mansfield Park," *Essays in Criticism* 53, no. 4 (2003): 303–322 points out that both Avrom Fleishman, *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970); and R.S. Neale, *Writing Marxist History: British Society, Economy, & Culture since 1700* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985) noted this prior to Said, as did Frank Gibbon, "The Antiguan Connection: Some New Light on Mansfield Park," *Cambridge Quarterly* XI, no. 2 (1982): 298-305; and Moira Ferguson, "Mansfield Park: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender," *Oxford Literary Review* 13, no. 1, (1991): 118-139.

contributing a wealth of historical, literary, and biographical detail and context.[3] The contours of this debate are well-known; what interests me here is the second truth Smith refers to as also always, inescapably, everywhere—weather—and how the everywhere-ness of weather and empire were entangled in Regency Britain in ways that *Mansfield Park* engages.

The sustainability of Antiguan sugar plantations has always been intimately bound up with climate, from the planting, growing, and harvesting of cane to the imports and exports required for their sustenance and economic viability. In the century leading up to *Mansfield Park*'s publication, the inhumane system of enslavement that such plantations relied upon for labor, a system itself dependent upon global networks of shipping and trade, interwove their economic viability all the more with climatic conditions at sea and on land. As Eliza Touchet's epiphany about the centrality of imperialism to British existence foregrounds, the weather is itself "profoundly intertwined" with everyday life in the British Isles and colonial endeavors; it is, and has always been, everywhere. Deidre S. Lynch has already persuasively demonstrated how *Mansfield Park*'s oft-discussed interest in botanical discourses of growth, cultivation, and transplantation are connected thematically in the novel to concerns with "artificial" climates.[4] The importance of the novel's climatic concerns to understanding its positionality in relation to slavery, however, has thus far gone unremarked by critics. In this chapter, I rectify that omission, making the case for how Austen scholars need to begin paying more attention to the weather.

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[3] Susan Fraiman, "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture and Imperialism," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 206–223.

[4] In addition to Deidre S. Lynch, "'Young Ladies are Delicate Plants': Jane Austen and Greenhouse Romanticism," *ELH* 77, no. 3 (2010): 689-729; Manuel Schonhorn ,"Climate, Sites, and a Sanctuary: Austen's Mansfield Park," *The Age of Johnson* 21, (2011): 243–253; Sarah Marsh, "Changes of Air: The Somerset Case and Mansfield Park's Imperial Plots," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 53, no. 2 (2020): 211-233; and Mike Goode, *Romantic Capabilities: Blake, Scott, Austen, and the New Messages of Old Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) also note the thematic presence of climate in the novel. According to Goode, the novel contains "more than four dozen references to the operations of climate" (236).

Though Sir Thomas's absence early in *Mansfield Park* to deal with unspecified problems on his plantation has engendered robust critical discussion about the novel's positionality in relation to slavery and abolition, the underlying assumption of such discussions has been that the problems that prompt his trip to Antigua must be related to the changes being wrought by abolitionism and/or the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. In this chapter, I bring to the fore how the real-life political instability of Antiguan plantations in the 1810s was entwined with their economic precarity, a precarity underwritten by ecological concerns resulting from exploitative agricultural practices and climatic concerns over droughts and hurricanes. The widespread negative impacts of hurricanes on Antiguan plantations and the manifold environmental harms suffered by enslaved peoples severely impacted plantations' profitability and frequently led to rebellions. If we take Sir Thomas's departure early in the novel to be at least in part climatically compelled, as I will contend the novel's early readers would have assumed, then the novel's attentiveness throughout to climate's connection to abundance, labor, and scarcity becomes deeply relevant to interpreting its stance on the Antiguan sugar industry and its reliance on enslaved labor. Austen's novel, I conclude, aligns more with modern environmental justice thinking about slavery than with period discourses of abolition.

The first section of this chapter will close read *Mansfield Park*, showing how the novel repeatedly foregrounds a dynamic wherein actualizing climatic warmth depends upon labor, such that warmth gets conceptually and causally intertwined in the novel with both luxury and harm. Austen depicts "warmth" (geographic, artificial, emotional) as simultaneously capable, through the input of labor, of creating comfort and luxury for some as it creates scarcity, neglect, and exhaustion for others. This is particularly suggestive in a novel in which all types of labor performed at Mansfield Park, by servants, tenant farmers, and members of the family alike, are

made possible because of enslaved laborers working in a warm climate in a faraway place. The Bertram family's wealth derives from a cash crop in Antigua whose economic stability and labor demands changed dramatically with the temperature, the season, and the weather. The chapter's second section thus turns to a more thorough examination of the entwinement of enslaved labor with the ecological and climatic affordances of Antigua. To capitalize on the ecologically precarious potential of the West Indies as a geographic locale for cane agriculture, Regency-era plantations subjected millions of enslaved laborers to scarcity and physical harm, all in an effort to produce luxury and a luxury good for a few. The chapter then returns to *Mansfield Park*, reframing a few scenes from the novel in relation to the historical ecological and climatic context of Antigua. In thinking through the affordances of particular climates and the labor needed to actualize them, Austen's novel articulates some of the complexities of the relationship between British abundance and the scarcity produced through the labor it requires.

These human histories of empire and capital continue to structure anthropogenic climate change, as critics like Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing acknowledge when proposing that the term "Plantationocene" be used instead of the Anthropocene. One thrust of that term is to call out botanical colonialism for its role in the climate crisis; another is to underscore that, despite the Global North's greater responsibility for resource consumption and environmental devastation, the populations of the Global South disproportionately experience the devasting effects of climate crisis. I am not suggesting that *Mansfield Park* is offering a critique of imperialism's inequities. However, in Austen's novelistic exploration of the affordances of different climates, she registers the uneven relationship between climatic warmth's capabilities for abundance and the corresponding labor and scarcity created through its actualization. The case could be made that *Mansfield Park* is the first novel of the Plantationocene.

Mansfield Park's Climatic Affordances

The word 'climate' refers most frequently to the predominant range of weather conditions within a specific geographic area. This is the climate meant in conversation about anthropogenic climate change, or the climatic conditions that one expects to encounter in a specific location, or what makes a day's weather unseasonable or unusual for the climate. However, climate has a secondary meaning that is used almost as often, one which more fully underscores that climate is a cultural concept. The figurative use of the word "climate" signifies a set of prevailing attitudes, ideas, or feelings (e.g., "political climate," "economic climate," "moral climate," "intellectual climate," "climate of opinion," etc.). Both uses of the word assume a unique but definable set of conditions tied to a particular ecosystem: a geographic region, a nation, a political group, a body of people, or a community. However, while climate marks out a series of bounded and fairly predictable patterns, it also signals their capacity for change, their constant state of flux. Climate is dynamic and variable, although with enough limits to its variability that one can expect certain things from the climate in England (rainy, cool, good for growing grain), which cannot be expected from, say, the climate in Antigua (tropical, hot, good for growing sugarcane), even given the chances of a drought, an unusually warm or cool winter, a climate crisis triggered by a volcanic eruption halfway across the globe, or an anthropogenic climate crisis caused by centuries of excessive resource consumption and environmental exploitation.

Mike Hulme contends that "climate" is a humanmade concept that cultures use to stabilize their relationship with the weather: "climate is better understood as an idea which mediates between the human experience of ephemeral weather and the cultural ways of living

which are animated by this experience."[5] As he later notes, "the idea of climate helps stop the world falling apart. This is one of the reasons why the idea of climate *changing* is so unsettling; it undermines the 'trust' people place in climate as a cultural symbol of large-scale orderliness, an invention which eases their anxieties about the weather."[6] Different climates allow for distinct ecological and cultural formations. The ability to grow a plant (sugarcane) in one climate in order to allow for the maintenance of a cultural form (the English manor house) in another or to transplant a living entity (tea leaves, sugarcane, enslaved Africans) from one climate to another so as to allow for the growth of certain cultural practices (afternoon tea), is what leads Alan Bewell to argue that "over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the natures that materially mattered most to the British were those that existed at a distance from England, as offshore, colonial concerns."[7]

Climate's geographic and figurative meanings were both in use during Austen's day and had been for quite some time. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, "climate" also began to take on heightened currency as a predictor of national character. Imperialist projects often turned to the various climates encountered across the globe as signifiers of different nations' capacities: moral, intellectual, physical, artistic, and so on. Throughout the eighteenth century, as Europeans began to measure, record, and classify the weather with increasingly sophisticated meteorological instruments, they read preconceived notions of national character and identity into the climates they were mapping statistically and geographically. The British located their perceived national superiority in the supposed

[5] Mike Hulme, *Weathered: Cultures of Climate* (London: SAGE, 2017), 4.
[6] Hulme, 5.
[7] Alan Bewell, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017), 8.

superiority of their climate, declaring it the temperate ideal—a designation classical Greek and Roman philosophers had reserved for their own Mediterranean climate instead.[8]

The point I want to make here is that the relationship between geographic and figurative climates is complex and intimate. While "climate" signified a variable range with a degree of stability, that stability was interpreted as deterministic of character and co-opted as the biological and geographic basis for Britain's assumed cultural superiority when used in the context of the kind of cultural and supremacist thought that enabled slavery and underwrote imperialism. At the same time, regarding "climate" as a variable ecological range allowed for Britain's botanical imperial project, which demanded manipulating that variability while also transporting organisms across climates in an effort to realize, for profit, the latent ecological potentials of those organisms and climates. Both uses of the word "climate" are bound up with historically specific cultural attitudes toward environment, sympathy, and the conditions of possibility inherent in a particular location for altering or shaping physical and intellectual capacities. The idea of the affordances of certain geographic climates, given certain allowances, thus takes on new importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as British imperial projects rearrange the globe's flora, fauna, and human inhabitants in order to best suit their specific cultural needs and aims.

As Lynch has established, *Mansfield Park* is a novel preoccupied with climate. In addition to the novel's overall investment, as many critics have noted, with the discourses of landscape, transplantation, and improvement, Lynch pays particular attention to the "artificial climates" within the novel. She locates these climates within Mansfield Park and the "East Room," used mainly by the heroine Fanny Price, and aligns them metaphorically with the

[8] Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 56.

period's forcing houses and hotbeds. Lynch thus links the "blooming" and "precocious" girls of Austen's novel to gendered period conversations around gardening, botany, and hothouses as people strove to "naturalize" and "accommodate" foreign plants to the English climate. As Lynch notes, the detailed attention Austen pays to the improvement and display of nature is one of the reasons why *Mansfield Park* continues to garner such sustained critical focus:

> The global imagination at work in *Mansfield* is one cognizant of how the same enterprise of making nature portable and exchangeable that had through the eighteenth century brought roots and shoots of the geranium (in fact, the *pelargonium*) from South Africa to Britain also produced at the end of that century the effort to transplant the breadfruit, envisioned as a cheap source for African slaves, from the South Seas to the West Indies. It is cognizant of how questions about the relationship between living creatures and particular environments traversed the century's nursery trade and its slave trade. (713)

Building upon Lynch's analysis of *Mansfield Park*'s ideological investment in artificial climates and their relationship to imperial exploration, colonial ecologies, and scientific advancements in botany, I suggest that Austen's novel figures abundance as one of the affordances of climatic heat and warmth, while underscoring that such abundance contributes to and reinforces preexisting class and gender inequities. Moreover, by calling attention to the capacity of climates to be artificially manipulated, the novel emphasizes how such manipulation creates further potentials for inequity. Climatic warmth engenders scarcity and inequity since the abundance, comfort, and luxury it can afford require labor to actualize and sustain. This chapter takes Mike Goode's formulation of *Mansfield Park* as a design medium or experimental ecosystem: "a kind of environmental experiment designed to reveal the complex dynamics of an ecosystem, including the complexities of its component organisms, kept houses, and habitats," but adds an element that he neglects to take into consideration as crucial for the ecological capabilities of an ecosystem: climate.[9] In so doing, I consider climate's affordances within the context of the novel

[9] Goode, *Romantic Capabilities*, 236.

and their relationship to economies of scarcity, inequity, labor, and the estate's financial dependence upon the geographically distant climate that sustains its Antiguan holdings.

Goode distinguishes between the terms "affordance" and allowance" as they are used in design theory, contending that affordances amount to latent potentials while allowances are ranges or conditions required to actualize those potentials. To turn to an example from *Mansfield Park*, Mrs. Norris returns home from a group outing to Sotherton with a small bounty of odds and ends she has "spunged," including four "beautiful pheasants' eggs" which she plans to "get the dairymaid to set…under the first spare hen."[10] Mrs. Norris intends to capitalize on the affordance of pheasant eggs to produce a clutch of pheasants, but allowances of temperature and care need to be made for those eggs to produce live birds, allowances that in this case include having a dairy that is neither too hot nor too cold, a spare hen to help incubate the egg, and a spare dairymaid to do the necessary labor. Goode notes, "While 'affordances' is a modern coinage, a nascent idea of design 'allowances' was already in broad currency on both sides of the Atlantic by the end of the eighteenth century. The period's botany manuals refer to needing proper 'allowances' of air, water, clay, and light so that certain plants and crops might thrive."[11] My argument pertains to the overlap between Regency understandings of the allowances needed for botanical and ecological thriving, as Goode formulates it, and the complex ethical and political concern with heated "artificial climates" that Lynch has rightly identified in *Mansfield Park* and in Romantic discourse more generally. I contend that Austen's novel portrays climatic heat and warmth as a scarcity that can produce inequities, especially since actualizing positive benefits of warmth requires labor that does not share in, and can even be harmed in the service of

[10] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 75–76. Subsequent references to *Mansfield Park* will appear in parentheticals in the main text with page numbers specified.
[11] Goode, *Romantic Capabilities*, 228.

actualizing, those benefits. It is a novel in which enjoying abundance always costs someone or something else.

While many critics have noted that Austen's novel concerns itself with how different environments provide distinct conditions for flourishing, less critical attention has been paid to the labor necessary to create these conditions for flourishing. In raising questions about the affordances of different climates for particular types of thriving, and the labor required to actualize those affordances, we can begin to see aspects of the novel's relationship to global climate as unexplored territory that changes some of the ways in which we understand the novel as thinking about slavery. To do so, I contend, brings the novel intellectually and politically closer to modern-day discourses of climate justice and their thinking about the inequities of globalization. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Austen advances an environmental justice critique of imperialism in *Mansfield Park*. In thinking through the capabilities of particular climates and the labor needed to actualize these ecological capabilities, however, she articulates some of the complexities of how British abundance also creates scarcity and reinforces inequities on account of the labor required to sustain it.

Mansfield Park repeatedly establishes a correlation between scarcity and physical or affective "warmth," especially when the capabilities of that warmth include generating comfort and luxury. The novel's first mention of warmth foregrounds the notion of emotional warmth as having the potential to create scarcity. As Sir Thomas states some of his financial concerns about establishing Fanny at Mansfield Park, Mrs. Norris eagerly, and disingenuously, insists upon her own generosity: "could I bear to see her want, while I had a bit of bread to give her? My dear Sir Thomas, with all my faults I have a warm heart: and, poor as I am, would rather deny myself the necessaries of life, than do an ungenerous thing" (8). Affection here creates the conditions for

want or scarcity by pointing to subsistence as potentially a zero-sum game. Mrs. Norris's "warm heartedness" might lead her to deny herself the "necessaries of life" to ensure others have access to them.

The concept of "warm-heartedness," or emotional warmth, shows up frequently throughout the novel, often attached to a notion of it requiring a tradeoff: warm-heartedness toward one thing results in a certain callousness or lack of warmth toward something else. To provide a few examples: late in the novel, as Fanny contemplates her return to Portsmouth, she imagines she will now "find a warm and affectionate friend" in her mother, despite this not having been the case previously, as Fanny reasons she "had probably alienated love by the helplessness and fretfulness of a fearful temper, or been unreasonable in wanting a larger share than any one among so many could deserve" (252). Edmund excuses the impropriety of Mary Crawford's comments about her uncle by protesting that "it is the warmth of her respect for her aunt's memory which misleads her here. She is awkwardly circumstanced. With such warm feelings and lively spirits it must be difficult to do justice to her affection for Mrs. Crawford, without throwing a shade on the Admiral" (46). Mary's warm feelings toward her aunt causing her to "[throw] a shade on the Admiral" is a particularly suggestive figure of speech. It strengthens the metaphorical relationship between emotional and climatic warmth and additionally emphasizes that the experience of mutual climates differs depending on situational position—a point reinforced by Fanny's different experience of the Park's climate compared to her cousins, and, accordingly, her resultant growth into a dissimilar type of hothouse flower. The pattern wherein emotional warmth creates economies of scarcity plays out repeatedly in the novel's romantic entanglements. Henry Crawford carefully modulates his behavior in his flirtation with Maria and Julia so "as to lose no ground with either… just stopping short of the

consistence, the steadiness, the solicitude, and the warmth which might excite general notice (82). Similarly, when Edmund and Mary accidentally meet in Fanny's East Room, both having come to rehearse their parts in the play with her, their joy in being caught out in the same scheme overwhelms Fanny's ability to feel any comfort whatsoever: "*She* could not equal them in their warmth. *Her* spirits sank under the glow of theirs, and she felt herself becoming too nearly nothing to both, to have any comfort in having been sought by either" (118). Fanny recognizes that any affection Edmund feels toward Mary narrows the potential for him to feel similar affection toward herself.

Not only does Austen present emotional warmth as a finite resource within an economy structured by scarcity, but the labor of others creates the conditions for physical warmth and comfort in the novel. Upon Sir Thomas's return from Antigua, Mrs. Norris attempts to inflate her worth to him by recounting the effort she has put into facilitating Maria's engagement, which she considers her personal triumph, despite the notable lack of any affectionate warmth between Rushworth and Maria.[12] This effort has included a trip to Sotherton Park that Mrs. Norris emphasizes was "in the middle of winter" with "the roads almost impassable" and the carriage driven by their elderly and rheumatic coachman. Maria's marriage to Rushworth would be socially and politically beneficial for the Bertram family.[13] However, strengthened acquaintance between the two families is one of the necessary conditions that allows for the engagement, a condition created by Mrs. Norris dragging Lady Bertram and the coachman out to Sotherton on

[12] The novel repeatedly figures romantic feelings as "warmth." In addition to the examples above, Edmund presses Fanny's "hand to his lips with almost as much warmth as if it had been Miss Crawford's" (185), and Henry's pursuit of Fanny is the result of "a love which, operating on an active, sanguine spirit, of more warmth than delicacy, made her affection appear of greater consequence because it was withheld" (221), while Edmund feels he personally would never be capable of such dogged one-sided pursuit "without something more to warm his courage than his eyes could discern in [Fanny's]" (228).

[13] See Fraiman, "Jane"; and Elizabeth Fay, "Reformation in *Mansfield Park*," in *Transatlantic Literature and Transitivity, 1780-1850: Subjects, Texts, and Print Culture*, ed A. Bautz and K. Gray (London: Routledge, 2017), 19–34; among others.

icy and treacherous roads in poor weather. Mrs. Norris emphasizes that she was aware of the suffering the cold winter weather caused the coachman ("my heart quite ached for him" [131]), leveraging this knowledge to impress upon Sir Thomas her greater capacity for sympathy. Further abundance for the Bertrams is reliant on a particular type of environmental harm caused by forcing others to labor in dangerous climatic conditions. The wintery journey to Sotherton, with Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris comfortably and safely ensconced in the warmth of the carriage, serves as a metonym for all the other labor—both in English climates and elsewhere—required to provide the Bertram family with the luxury they experience within the confines of Mansfield Park.

In isolated details, the novel also drives home how agricultural productivity requires climatic warmth, thus making a warm day signify pleasure for a few and labor for many more. Early in the novel, Mary Crawford expresses her astonishment that she is unable to hire a cart to convey her harp from Northampton to the Parsonage. Her inability to procure a cart is due to its being hay harvest time, and a late harvest at that. As Edmund remarks: "You would find it difficult, I dare say, just now, in the middle of a very late hay harvest, to hire a horse and cart" (42). The warm, sunny weather which will later provide much enjoyment for the young people in the novel—with the exception, predictably, of Fanny—means the arduous and time-consuming work of harvesting hay for the agricultural laborers in Mansfield Park's environs. While Edmund and Mary's conversation concerns the hay harvest in particular, it makes more thematically prominent the relationship between climatic warmth and agricultural abundance in the novel. Romantic literature is filled with representations of harvest as a time of bounty and abundance: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness."[14] For the men and women responsible for getting the

[14] John Keats, "To Autumn," in *John Keats: The Major Works*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), line 1.

harvest in, however, it is perhaps better described, as John Clare put it, as "waken[ing] toil."[15] The agricultural abundance slowly ripened by the increasing heat of summer correspondingly means backbreaking labor from sunup to sundown for agricultural laborers, for whom the most pleasant sunny days mean additional labor. The days that the Bertrams and Crawfords spend exploring the countryside and luxuriating in the pleasurable discomfort of a hot summer's day, "the heat only supplying inconvenience enough to be talked of with pleasure" (51), would have been days when other country families were hardest at work. Added to this is the anxiety caused by a late harvest and England's changeable and fickle climate, something that Austen calls attention to at several points in the novel, which repeatedly notes seasonal deviations in the weather and unusual climatic occurrences.[16] Harvesting hay too early or too late can impact its nutritional density, a subject of concern given hay was needed to sustain livestock over the winter. In the four years just prior to *Mansfield Park*'s publication, there were, as alluded to in earlier chapters, several bitter winters, including the record-breaking winter of 1813–1814. Insufficient fodder for livestock during a drawn-out or severe winter left many families in straitened circumstances come the following spring.

As seen in the discussions of period weather journals and newspaper reports in my first three chapters, weather conditions during harvest season caused great anxiety and concern. Too late or too early a harvest created not only scarcity in the moment, but also, by preventing the

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[15] John Clare, "August," in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, eds. Eric Robinson, Geoffrey Summerfield, and David Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), line 18.

[16] In addition to the discussion of the late harvest above, the novel also features an unusually mild November which I discuss in greater detail later in the chapter. Other examples of the attention the novel pays to weather and climate include, but are not limited to, Fanny's notice of the passage of spring in Portsmouth as a marker of the length of her visit—comparing it unfavorably to spring in the countryside— (293), as well as Henry Crawford's attempt to gloss over his behavior during the Sotherton episode by later claiming to Fanny: "but it was a hot day, and we were all walking after each other, and bewildered" (168), and Mary, Fanny, and Mrs. Grant's boredom after the rest of the party has departed leading them to become "a miserable trio, confined within doors by a series of rain and snow" (195).

sowing of certain crops, potentially created conditions for scarcity in the subsequent year's harvest. Even if the crops ripened on time, a spate of rain, frost, or other inclement weather could delay the harvest. Such unfavorable climatic conditions, by preventing farmers from bringing in the crop, often led to a reduction in quality, an increase in pests, or the appearance of a blight, mold, or fungus that might destroy the crops. On top of this, the price of grain in markets fluctuated in relation to regional yields, national yields, and imports. Imports were themselves subject to the local climates in which the crops were grown, the climates they traversed in shipping, and the political climates which levied or waived taxes, embargoes, and blockades, and were constantly in flux, especially during the Napoleonic wars.

Austen was hardly unaware of the impact climate had on agricultural production in the period, or its relationship to the constantly shifting price of goods. Her letters repeatedly reference such concerns. In 1798, for example, she remarks to Cassandra, "I understand there are some Grapes left, but I beleive [sic] not many;—they must be gathered as soon as possible, or this Rain will entirely rot them."[17] A letter to her brother Frank in July 1813 demonstrates more acute awareness of the working countryside around her:

> July begins unpleasantly with us, cold & showery, but it is often a baddish month. We had some fine dry weather preceding it, which was very acceptable to the Holders of Hay & the Masters of Meadows—In general it must have been a good Haymaking Season. Edward has got in all his, in excellent order; I speak only of Chawton; but here he has had better luck than M[r] Middleton ever had in the 5 years that he was Tenant. (July 3–6, 1813)

Comparing Edward's harvest to the unlucky Mr. Middleton's implies Austen's regular noting of the haymaking season, and her disclaimer, "I speak only of Chawton," establishes her knowledge that harvests varied regionally due to a variety of factors including local weather, labor force,

[17] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, October 27–28, 1798, in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18.

soil composition, availability of a horse and cart, and so forth that impacted tenants' ability to produce and bring in a harvest. In an epistle to her sister Cassandra later that same season, Austen includes a letter written by her niece Elizabeth Knight, which concerns itself almost exclusively with various agricultural, landscaping, and climatic goings-on at Godmersham Park (Austen and Cassandra's brother's primary estate). Knight requests Cassandra "tell grandmamma that we have begun getting seeds for her…but I am afraid this wet weather is very much against them."[18]

As Edmund's comment implies, the lateness of the hay harvest would add to Mary's difficulty in hiring a cart since the farmers would not be able to spare time, labor, or equipment in the press to get in the harvest. What Mary perceives as abundance: "To want a horse and cart in the country seemed impossible…I cannot look out of my dressing-closet without seeing one farm yard, nor walk in the shrubbery without passing another, and I thought it would only be ask and have" (42–43), represents scarcity, instead, in a climatic context in which suitable days for harvest tend to be limited. Edmund's response to Mary underscores this: "The hire of a cart at any time, might not be so easy as you suppose…but in harvest, it must be quite out of their power to spare a horse" (43). This is but one of several instances in *Mansfield Park* when the abundance and comfort created by heat and warm climates are presented as reliant upon, and

[18]Jane Austen and Elizabeth Knight to Cassandra Austen, October 18–21, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 252. Austen remarks on the price and scarcity of apples in a letter to Cassandra from September of that year, "Apples are scarce in the Country; £1- 5- a sack." (Austen to Cassandra Austen, September 23–24, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 237). And a day later she writes to Frank that "Rostock Market makes one's mouth water, our cheapest Butcher's meat is double the price of theirs;—nothing under 9^{d} all this Summer, & I beleive [sic] upon recollection nothing under 10^{d}.—Bread has sunk & is likely to sink more, which we hope may make Meat sink too," before making light of her concern about the cost of common foodstuffs, "But I have no occasion to think of the price of Bread or of Meat where I am now;—let me shake off vulgar cares & conform to the happy Indifference of East Kent wealth" (Austen to Francis Austen, September 25, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 238–239), a rhetorical move that conversely underlines how great a role those "vulgar cares" played in her day to day life. A month later she has occasion to inquire of Cassandra, "I wonder whether the Ink bottle has been filled.—Does Butcher's meat keep up at the same price? & is not Bread lower than 2/6" (Austen to Cassandra Austen, October 14–15, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 249), a slate of household concerns that links the need to purchase ink in order to write with the potential sums that will have to be set aside for meat and bread.

enabling, certain types of labor which result in scarcity. Attached to this thematic is an emphasis on hierarchies of labor; the labor Mrs. Norris undertakes to secure Maria's engagement is distinct in degree and kind from the labor undertaken by the coachman, the labor undertaken by the horses pulling the carriage, and the labor undertaken by Lady Bertram when paying a social call on Mrs. Rushworth.

Later in the novel, an unseasonably warm day highlights the conduciveness of different climates—in this case, emotional and seasonal—to particular outcomes and possibilities and the various types of labor required to actualize such outcomes. Once Fanny and Mary Crawford have established a friendship—begun in part by Fanny's being caught out in a sudden rainstorm and obliged to seek shelter at the Parsonage—they enjoy the pleasures of an especially warm November walking in Mrs. Grant's shrubbery:

> the weather being unusually mild for the time of year; and venturing sometimes even to sit down on one of the benches now comparatively unsheltered, remaining there perhaps till, in the midst of some tender ejaculation of Fanny's, on the sweets of so protracted an autumn, they were forced by the sudden swell of a cold gust shaking down the last few yellow leaves about them, to jump up and walk for warmth. (143)

Following a lengthy conversation about the different conditions required for plants to thrive, Mary and Fanny debate the warmth or chill to be found in a variety of nomenclature for Edmund: his first name, "Mr. Bertram," and "Sir" or "Lord" Edmund.

Their differing perceptions of the "warmth" of these names marks the type of abundance Edmund represents for each woman. Fanny declares "Mr. Bertram" to be "so cold and nothing-meaning, so entirely without warmth or character," while "Edmund" on the other hand "seems to breathe the spirit of chivalry and warm affections" (145). Mary asserts that as a name, Edmund is good in itself "but sink it under the chill, the annihilation of a Mr, and Mr. Edmund is no more than a Mr. John or a Mr. Thomas" (145). This conversation is sparked by Mary's pleased remark

that in Tom Bertram's absence, Edmund can once again (according to Regency social custom) become Mr. Bertram, making the relative warmth or chill of Edmund's name turn on a question of social scarcity. Fanny prefers "Edmund" as it stakes out her greater emotional claim, while Mary favors the titles which confer greater wealth and status, understanding the name's warmth to be dependent upon its social cachet, not its intimacy. All of this is particularly suggestive, given its placement in between Fanny's rhapsodizing on how it can be possible that "the same soil and the same sun should nurture plants differing in the first rule and law of their existence" (144) and Mrs. Grant's following delineation of the relationship between unseasonably warm weather and additional labor. The placement of these three distinct but interrelated epistemological inquiries into the capacity for thriving and the labor generated by different climates and environments underscores how Austen's novel is playing with notions of abundances conditional on warmth and the consequent labor required to generate and maintain said abundances.

Once Edmund and Mrs. Grant join them, Fanny and Mary's conversation shifts from the generative potentials encapsulated in a name's warmth to the additional domestic work created by an unseasonably warm and changeable climate. Mary flirtatiously solicits Edmund's concern about her catching a chill by sitting down outdoors in November, only to scold him and Mrs. Grant for their unwillingness to be the least bit worried about her health, to which Mrs. Grant replies:

> I have my alarms, but they are quite in a different quarter; and if I could have altered the weather, you would have had a good sharp east wind blowing on you the whole time—for here are some of my plants which Robert *will* leave out because the nights are so mild, and I know the end of it will be that we shall have a sudden change of weather, a hard frost setting in all at once, taking everybody (at least Robert) by surprise, and I shall lose every one; and what is worse, cook has just been telling me that the turkey, which I particularly wished not to be dressed till Sunday, because I know how much more Dr Grant would enjoy it on Sunday after the fatigues of the day, will not keep beyond to-

> morrow. These are something like grievances, and make me think the weather most unseasonably close. (146)

Mrs. Grant's articulation of the relationship between inconstant climatic warmth and housework points up some of the different hierarchies of labor created by the weather. The warm weather means that Robert, the gardener, can afford to leave the plants outside for a bit longer, but any sudden chill might catch him off guard by adding carrying the plants inside to what is likely already a full list of daily tasks. If he neglects to do so as a result of other work— perhaps other work occasioned by a sudden change in the weather—Mrs. Grant will find herself with the work of replacing and regrowing the plants she has lost. This will undoubtedly be trickier and more expensive, even for container plants, in the late fall or early winter than it might have been in spring or summer. Mary's later comment that she intends to avoid all similar such vexations by having a large enough income to "secure all the myrtle and turkey" (146) she might wish for, makes it clear that Mrs. Grant's complaint is in part grounded in financial concerns. The cook's labor, while partially obscured by Mrs. Grant's focus on her own "grievances," shadows the litany nonetheless.

Austen's letters similarly note the way the weather affects and adds to domestic labor and household management. In a letter to Cassandra, she complains of trying to stave off a leaky roof caused by a change in the weather: "We have been in two or three dreadful states within the last week, from the melting of the Snow &c.—& the contest between us & the Closet has now ended in our defeat; I have been obliged to move almost everything out of it, & leave it to splash itself as it likes."[19] She later updates Cassandra on the source of the leak: "The storecloset I hope will never do so again—for much of the Evil is proved to have proceeded from the Gutter being choked up, & we have had it cleared.—We had reason to rejoice in the Child's absence at the

[19] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, January 24, 1809, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 177.

time of the Thaw, for the Nursery was not habitable.—We hear of similar disasters from almost everybody."[20] Austen's second report of the leak highlights the potential additional danger and damage caused by "how delightfully mild it is," moving from a playful account of it as a mock battle to an acknowledgment that it has made a portion of the house uninhabitable and that their friends and neighbors have been waging similar wars between the mild weather and their comfort and safety.[21]

In part, what I have been attempting to drive home is that Austen seemed deeply aware that different climates have distinct affordances for the flourishing of specific living things and that, within these climates, a certain amount of contrivance and cultivation can still create hospitable conditions. England is certainly inhospitable to a single individual without shelter or the means for generating warmth—an individual without the capacity to alter the geographical climate of England by building a home or a fire and thus creating an artificial climate to inhabit. Even if certain climates potentially afford distinct types of growth, a separate set of allowances might be needed to enable that growth. Climate can determine the range in which something is able to grow but not specific growth outcomes—those are reliant on the types of cultivation brought to bear upon it. Austen herself notes this in a letter where she teasingly warns Cassandra that her plants have suffered in her absence: "You depend upon finding all your plants dead, I hope.—They look very ill I understand."[22] She returns to this theme in a later letter to Cassandra: "I will not say that your Mulberry trees are dead, but I am afraid they are not alive."[23] Cassandra's plants are unable to survive without her being present to provide the necessary care and cultivation.

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[20] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, January 30, 1809, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 181.
[21] Austen, January 30, 1809, 179.
[22] Austen to Cassandra Austen, January 24, 1809, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 177.
[23] Austen to Cassandra Austen, May 31, 1811, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 198–199.

Critics often note the extent to which Fanny bears similarities to a transplanted plant. Though unable to thrive or bloom within the environment of Portsmouth—a point proven by her return there in the third volume of the novel— she eventually flourishes within the ordered confines of the Park, as Sir Thomas realizes upon his return from Antigua: "he was justified in his belief of her equal improvement in health and beauty" (123).[24] However, this "improvement" of Fanny's person is reliant upon the behind-the-scenes labor that runs Mansfield Park, which creates the affordances for the "elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony, and perhaps above all, the peace and tranquility of Mansfield" (266) that Fanny finds so necessary to her flourishing. Much as the sun in Portsmouth is "a totally different thing in a town and in the country…serving but to bring forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept" (298), Fanny's stay in Portsmouth also lays bare the amount of work that had been required to create the harmonious and hospitable climate of Mansfield Park conducive to her thriving. Upon Fanny's arrival with her brother William, Mrs. Price laments the state of her fire: "'what a sad fire we have got, and I dare say you are both starved with cold…I cannot think what Rebecca has been about. I am sure I told her to bring some coals half an hour ago. Susan, *you* should have taken care of the fire" (257). Far from being an unremarked upon comfort as it is at Mansfield Park, Mrs. Price's complaints emphasize all the work that goes into maintaining a fire as she articulates the hierarchy of labor and the resources necessary for a quotidian household comfort. Susan defends herself from her mother's scolding by pointing to the other labor she has been doing: "'I was upstairs, mamma, moving my things…You know you had but just settled that my sister Fanny and I should have the other room'" (257).

[24] See Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 295–344 for the economic implications of Fanny's "improvement."

The debate around Fanny's presence at Mansfield Park in the beginning of the novel largely revolves around financial and social concerns: how much it will cost them to maintain her as a gentlewoman, how they will ensure she understands the social distinction between herself and her cousins, and how they will prevent intermarriage between the cousins. However, her first few moments at Portsmouth are concerned with the amount of domestic labor her presence requires: the stoking and feeding of the fire—not to mention the purchase of coal— and the shifting of rooms. This is all in addition to the other "various bustles" attending Fanny's return home: "first, the driver came to be paid; then there was a squabble between Sam and Rebecca about the manner of carrying up his sister's trunk, which he would manage all his own way; and lastly in walked Mr. Price himself…as with something of the oath kind he kicked away his son's portmanteau and his daughter's band-box in the passage, and called out for a candle" (257). Fanny interprets all of this as proof of her family's lack of polish and civility, eventually finding life within the Price household to be intolerable and inimical to her flourishing, or even surviving—the novel presents the outsize toll it takes on her health as capable of killing her off entirely (a bit like Mrs. Grant's concerns about the effect a sudden frost will have on her potted plants). Among the things that Portsmouth's disorder and potential unhealthiness drives home to readers is that we, alongside Fanny, are witnessing the kind of labor and bustle that is effectively hidden away at Mansfield Park but on which flourishing there depends. Earlier in the novel, upon William's arrival at Mansfield Park for a visit, the narrator comments: "[Fanny] was with him as he entered the house, and the first minutes of exquisite feeling had no interruption and no witnesses, unless the servants chiefly intent upon the opening the proper doors could be called such" (160). Fanny's family in Portsmouth is concerned with activities which, at Mansfield Park, would have been smoothly and discreetly handled by household staff, leaving no band-box for

Sir Thomas to swear over, no trunk for siblings to fight about carrying upstairs, and no untended fire to engender a quarrel.

Much has been said about the symbolic import of Sir Thomas finally ordering that Fanny have a fire in the East room, where she has been shivering throughout the novel.[25] However, I would like to suggest that when juxtaposed with the fuss made about the fire in Portsmouth, what becomes most noticeable about the presence of the fire in Fanny's room is the labor it will require:

> She was struck, quite struck, when on returning from her walk, and going into the east room again, the first thing which caught her eye was a fire lighted and burning. A fire! it seemed too much; just at that time to be giving her such an indulgence, was exciting even painful gratitude. She wondered that Sir Thomas could have leisure to think of such a trifle again; but she soon found, from the voluntary information of the housemaid, who came in to attend it, that so it was to be every day. Sir Thomas had given orders for it. (219)

In marked contrast to the fire at Portsmouth, Fanny experiences the fire here as a luxury removed from its labor and cost. It appears in her room, absented from any discussion of coal or its tending, and while it seems "a trifle" to her or Sir Thomas, to "the housemaid who came in to attend it" it would have represented a daily addition to her household duties. Austen's language here underscores the relationship between comfort, warmth, and labor that I have been suggesting is crucial to the novel's presentations of climate. That Fanny has been forbidden a fire

[25] While Lynch's treatment of Fanny's fire is most pertinent to my argument, it has been discussed by many, including Carl Plasa, "'What Was Done There Is Not to Be Told': Mansfield Park's Colonial Unconscious," in *Textual Politics from Slavery to Postcolonialism*, ed. Carl Plasa (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2000), 32–59; Gabrielle D.V. White, *Jane Austen in the Context of Abolition: 'a fling at the slave trade'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Anne B. McGrail, "Fanny Price's 'Customary' Subjectivity: Rereading the Individual in Mansfield Park," in *A Companion to Jane Austen Studies*, eds. Thomas Lambdin and Laura Lambdin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 57–70. In passing, Jon Mee's reading of Fanny's fire hits on the novel's preoccupation with climates of emotional and physical warmth, as he notes that the "orderliness of Sir Thomas's house, which most definitely is valued in the novel, especially by Fanny when she returns to stay with her own chaotic family in Portsmouth, has a negative side in the absence of physical and emotional warmth." Jon Mee, "Austen's Treacherous Ivory: Female Patriotism, Domestic Ideology, and Empire," in *The Postcolonial Jane Austen*, eds. You-Me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (London: Routledge, 2004), 77.

for so long marks a hierarchy of labor, as she has been used by the Bertrams for a particular type of domestic labor, and she is allowed a fire when it becomes clear that she might be useful for a different type of gendered labor.[26] The creation of that artificial climate is made possible, however, by the additional work of others. While it provides comfort and "indulgence" for Fanny, it participates in the novel's construction of the way warm climates (emotional, geographic, and artificial) are conducive to the production of scarcity.

In pointing out how *Mansfield Park* associates warmth with thriving while simultaneously registering the labor behind it, I have been tending toward a broader reading of how the novel engages with slavery as the foundation of Mansfield Park's wealth and comfort, allowing for its creation of a hospitable climate for the manor house's inhabitants. The novel's foregrounding of how Fanny's fire imbricates comfort for some, labor for others, and climatic warmth is one of the novel's most efficient gestures toward the warmth of a much more geographically distant climate. The ecological affordances of the Antiguan climate make possible the agricultural production of sugarcane for exportation as sugar and liquor, which in combination with the conditions of enslaved labor produce the financial backing necessary to pay for the labor that runs Mansfield Park. This financial backing makes possible the coals in Fanny's fireplace, the shrubbery she rhapsodizes about, and the education that molds her sensibilities so as to appreciate the avenues at Sotherton, the verse of William Cowper, and the peaceful climate of Mansfield Park.

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[26] For versions of this argument, see Fraser Easton, "The Political Economy of *Mansfield Park:* Fanny Price and the Atlantic Working Class," *Textual Practice* 12, no. 3 (1998): 459–488; and Lynch, "Young." For more on Fanny as a figure for gendered types of labor or servitude see Fay, "Reformation," Moira Ferguson, *Colonialism and Gender Relations from Mary Wollstonecraft to Jamaica Kincaid* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and Christopher Stampone, "'Obliged to Yield': The Language of Patriarchy and the System of Mental Slavery in Mansfield Park," *Studies in the Novel* 50, no. 2 (2018): 197–212; among others.

Sir Thomas's return from Antigua produces the only use of the word "climate" itself within the novel, although as I have been contending, the whole novel is invested in climatic affordances and the conditions they create for abundance and scarcity. Upon Sir Thomas's return, Fanny is struck by his weathered appearance: "she saw that he was grown thinner and had the burnt, fagged, worn look of fatigue and a hot climate" (123). Scholars have made much of this reference to the toll that Sir Thomas's time in Antigua has taken upon him, producing readings that understand it as a marker of his moral dissolution.[27] In Bewell's paradigmatic formulation, Romantic-era understandings of disease ecologies and climates positioned England and the perceived healthiness of its climate in direct opposition to the negatively pathologized tropics which were understood to be physically and morally corrupting as a result of the warmth of their overly "luxurious" climates.[28] This understanding was both reliant upon, and used to bolster, a racialized understanding of European superiority as an argument for the benefits of colonialism. As disease theory centered around climate, air, and miasmas, many colonists and medical practitioners believed that a place could be improved culturally and medically through ecological intervention. If the environment could be made to resemble an English or European one, the climate would be "improved," and its inhabitants would experience greater physical and moral "healthiness."

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[27] Both Marsh, "Changes"; and Ferguson, "Mansfield" make this argument. Michael Karounos, "Ordination and Revolution in 'Mansfield Park,'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 44, no. 4 (2004): 715-736 makes the opposite argument, suggesting Sir Thomas's time in Antigua has provided a morally salubrious experience of adversity which allows for his redemption, citing examples from other Austen novels as evidence of this. However, this reading fails to take into account predominant Regency-era discourse around tropical climates as morally corrupting.

[28] Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). "Luxurious" is a word which shows up in the period in relation to tropical climates as well as modified flowers grown in the artificial climates of hothouses (commonly referred to as "luxuriants"), pointing to an additional ecological facet of the relationship between climatic warmth and luxury.

Without denying the validity of such arguments, I would contend that the significance of Mansfield Park's lone direct invocation of "climate" transforms when read as an extension of the novel's general investment in questions of what environments and climates are conducive to thriving, and how not all people or plants thrive under the same conditions.[29] Sir Thomas returning with a "burnt, fagged look" highlights how the Antiguan climate has proven inhospitable to his physical thriving, a detail that links him suggestively both to Fanny's wilting in Portsmouth's inhospitable climate and to the artificial climate that her geranium requires at Mansfield Park—the "favorable aspect" (106) of its East room situation—to thrive in the otherwise unsuitable climate of England. In a novel in which botanical and human thriving are often conflated, the novel's one direct reference to the potential harms that "climate" can produce thus helps bring to mind the extent to which Sir Thomas's well-being as a plantation owner depends, quite literally, on managing climatic conditions and mitigating or preventing climatic harms. In this sense, I want to argue, Austen's novel can be understood as engaging with Antigua, its climate, and the differentials of harm created by rendering that climate suitable for sugarcane cultivation, the financial basis for Mansfield Park's own climate and potentials for cultivation and thriving. In following Goode's argument that Austen's novel can best be understood as ecosystem in which she is playing with the possibilities engendered by different affordances, paying attention to the role of climate in the novel reinforces its connections to the Antiguan sugar plantation by raising questions of what makes a climate habitable, the labor required to produce those allowances, and the implications of any resulting inequity.

[29] This is not unrelated to the contemporaneous theories being worked out about climate and disease, as Bewell points out disease ecologies were "a major factor behind the development of the slave plantation economies of the West Indies, a unique kind of settlement achieved by the forced relocation of an entire population to a new region of the globe" (*Romanticism* 8), ostensibly because of African peoples' supposed superior immunity to diseases that routinely killed European settlers.

Antiguan Climates and Ecosystems

To see the plausibility that Austen could have been thinking in these terms about climate requires considering both what we know she read and also how some of *Mansfield Park*'s rhetoric connects the novel to period discourses about climate and the West Indies. Nearly every critic of the novel notes the metaphorical connection the novel establishes between personal "improvement" and "improving" land through redesign. Some also acknowledge how the novel's engagement with the idea of "improving" a person through transplantation or nurture is relevant to assessing its stance on cultural imperialism. As noted above, however, "improvement" crops up frequently in colonial contexts to refer to efforts to make foreign climates and ecosystems more suitable for British colonizers and agricultural practices. In these contexts, talk of land's capabilities for improvement are tightly linked with a sense that not all plants and not all people thrive equally under the same climatic conditions. In James Lind's 1768 *Essay on Diseases Incidental to Europeans in Hot Climates*, he stresses the idea that an environment might be reshaped, or "improved," to such an extent as to alter the quality of the air itself and thus make it more suitable for European habitation: "In the East Indies and in the southern parts of Asia in general, we find, that the countries which are well improved by human industry and culture…are blessed with a temperate and pure air, favourable to the European constitution."[30] This notion of the capabilities of climates for improvement, given the right set of agricultural practices, is closely linked to the idea of what climates are inhabitable and by whom: who thrives where, and why. As Europeans were exposed to foreign disease ecologies for which they had little or no immunity, they sickened and died with much greater frequency than the native inhabitants of the

[30] James Lind, *An Essay on Diseases Incidental to Europeans in Hot Climates* (London: T. Becket and P.A. de Hondt, 1768), 76. As Bewell further comments, "Colonialism was indeed structured by the notion of improving minds and cultures, but we should not forget that, under the banner of health, it also set out to improve colonial ecologies and the bodies (both foreign and indigenous) that inhabited them" (*Romanticism* 39).

places they sought to colonize did. Understanding this to be an aspect of climate, not one of germ theory, they attempted to "improve" such places and make them fit for European habitation by seeking to alter the climate itself. Lind calls attention to this; after commenting on the unhealthiness of tropical swamps and marshlands for European settlers, he claims that "if any tract of land in Guinea was as well improved as the island of Barbadoes [sic] and as perfectly freed from trees, shrubs, mashes, &c. the air would be rendered equally healthful there, as in that pleasant West Indian island."[31]

As one of the racial biases that propped up enslavement was the assumption that African peoples had greater immunity than other races to the disease ecologies they encountered in the West Indies, much attention was paid to their acclimatization. The process of adapting them to their new environment was referred to as "seasoning", which underscores the notion that certain transplanted people, like certain transplanted plants, would be able to survive within this particular climate, while others would not. Of course, countless enslaved women, men, and children died just the same, as eighteenth-century abolitionist Anthony Benezet grimly put it: "in Jamaica, if six in ten, of the new imported Negroes survive the seasoning, it is looked upon as a gaining purchase."[32] "Seasoning" was not just something forced upon enslaved Africans—colonizers, indentured servants, and all other immigrants underwent "seasoning". The idea that the affordances of certain climates permit—provided the appropriate allowances have been made—for the thriving of specific living beings, while being antithetical or harmful to others, is bound up with these colonial discourses of "improvement" and "seasoning". These discourses,

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[31] Lind, *Essay*, 51-52.

[32] Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies: In a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions. Collected from various Authors, and Submitted to the Serious Consideration of all, More especially of those in Power* (Philadelphia: Printed by Henry Miller, 1766), 9.

which played out violently for most and lucratively for a few within a colonial context, provide the off-stage backdrop for a novel interested in the affordances and habitability of various climates—emotional, artificial, seasonal, geographic—and the differing capabilities of places and people for improvement. Given the frequency and regularity with which British subjects experienced colonial disease, and the Austen family's connections to the imperial project, she would have been aware that not all people, as well as not all plants, flourish in all climates.

This would have been an understanding Austen shared with, or even acquired from, Thomas Clarkson, abolitionist author of *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade* (1808), whom she famously declared herself to have been in love with in a letter to Cassandra written while she was composing *Mansfield Park*: "I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson."[33] Clarkson's narrative repeatedly references the idea that West Indian climates are conducive to the physical well-being of African people, making the large death toll purely a result of mistreatment. His lengthy two volume account of the abolition of the British slave trade is composed of his personal narrative, along with testimonies and anecdotes by other supporters of abolition of the slave trade. These frequently return to the idea of the potential (in)hospitality of a climate as contingent on the environment's "improvement" and an individual's biological suitability to said climate, predicated on their climate of origin. For example, he cites an argument for the financially lucrative potential of amelioration, on the basis that in North America, "where, though the climate was less favourable to the constitution of the Africans, but their treatment better, they increased."[34] Protesting the cruel treatment of enslaved people, he lists the average number of

[33] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, January 24, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 207.
[34] Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), 68.

women, men, and children who died at various points in the course of the slave trade, noting that "one third more died in the seasoning: and this in a climate; exactly similar to their own."[35] He later cites an identical argument from a different source, phrased in such a way that it brings the relationship between the climatic affordances of the West Indies and the agricultural system that relied upon enslavement to the fore: "it was from ill-usage only that, in a climate; so natural to them, their numbers could diminish. The very ground, therefore, on which the planters rested the necessity of fresh importations, namely, the destruction of lives in the West Indies, was itself the strongest argument that could be given [for abolition of the slave trade]."[36] While "ground" is used metaphorically here, it suggestively points to the notion that despite the theoretical hospitality of a tropical climate to the African constitution, the problem of their ill-treatment rests in the ground of the West Indies itself, or the soil which is incompatible with large-scale cane agriculture of the type financially profitable to British enslavers without an input of cheap labor.

Clarkson additionally provides the testimony of one supporter of abolition who expounds upon the institution of slavery's violence in language which mirrors much of the argument I have been making about *Mansfield Park*'s interrogation of the way abundance is often generated by and generative of economies of scarcity relying on the labor of others:

> They are scarce permitted to pick up the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Not to mention what numbers have been given up to the inhuman usage of cruel taskmasters, who, by their unrelenting scourges have ploughed their backs, and made long furrows, and at length brought them even unto death. When passing along I have viewed your plantations cleared and cultivated, many spacious houses built, and the owners of them faring sumptuously every day, my blood has frequently almost run cold within me, to consider how many of your slaves had neither convenient food to eat, nor proper raiment to put on, notwithstanding most of the comforts you enjoy were solely owing to their indefatigable labours. (vol. 1 124)

[35] Clarkson, vol. 2, 53.
[36] Clarkson, vol. 3, 320.

This notion, of the backs of enslaved people being "ploughed" by the "cruel taskmaster['s]" whip, ties their physical abuse to the plowing of the land itself: the harvesting of cane and harvesting of violence are one and the same. The idea that enslaved people's backs can be plowed just as fields can also naturalizes enslaved people as part of the ecosystem and, thus, their subordination and abuse as just another necessary part of ecosystem maintenance. The second half of passage points up the extent to which the intertwined ecological and human toll of the sugar plantation generates abundance for some while producing scarcity, and thus inequity, for others. The abundance in the passage is located within the West Indian plantation but can be—and to any reader in Austen's day would have been—extrapolated out to the wealth generated by sugar plantations for the British government and British subjects living in "spacious houses" in England. Placed within the context of *Mansfield Park*, it suggestively pulls together the elements that I have been contending structure the novel's epistemological inquiry into the relationship between the British abundance made possible by heat and climatic warmth and the corresponding scarcity it produces through the unequal labor required to generate such abundance. Austen resituates these concerns within the English manor house, to a degree reversing the movement of Clarkson's passage which builds out from the actuality of plantation life in the West Indies to the comfort and luxury it sustains. *Mansfield Park* takes comfort and luxury as its starting place, with the Bertrams' Antiguan holdings shadowing the plot as the missing center upon which the novel's other concerns revolve.

To drive home the case that *Mansfield Park*'s exploration of the relationship between warmth, abundance, and labor is part of how the novel engages with the cultural "climate" of abolition requires examining in greater detail the actuality of climate in Antigua in the period and climate's connection to the institution of slavery. The extent to which plantations are climatically

dependent ecosystems, and to which their system of enslaved labor was itself oceanically and climatically contingent, has gone entirely unremarked within the robust critical conversation that tries to untangle *Mansfield Park*'s political stance on abolition and slavery.

Ecological fecundity and the climate of the tropics were inextricably linked in the minds of British subjects in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[37] Geographer David Watts notes that upon arriving at the shores of the New World, Columbus and his men were "virtually overwhelmed" by "the physical attractiveness and plentitude of the shores on which they landed…as well as their beneficial climate."[38] They described all the islands they visited as "green and fertile, and blest with a trade wind climate, a climate of 'perpetual spring'…The lushness of the vegetation, its scents which were carried many miles out to sea, and the profligacy of its fruits, were all recorded with enthusiasm."[39] Several centuries later, English colonizers in the tropics were likewise confronted with this verdant display of ecological diversity and abundance that bore little resemblance to the natures with which they were most familiar.[40] They assumed the geographic region itself was capable of producing ecological richness on a scale that vastly outweighed the capacities of the English climate. Sir Joseph Banks's account of breadfruit trees in Tahiti captures this sense of abundant fecundity without the necessity of labor as one of the affordances of tropical climates, an affordance that he places

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[37] I am indebted to Beth Fowkes Tobin's *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760–1820* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) for the arguments I am glossing here and in the following paragraphs about eighteenth and nineteenth century British attitudes toward the ecological abundance of the tropics, and their elision of the native labor required to produce this abundance. Further information about British ecological practices and assumptions is coming from and can be found in Bewell, *Natures*.

[38] David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture, and Environmental Changes since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

[39] Watts, 1.

[40] Tobin argues that using "cognitive categories learned at home, these Britons abroad negotiated the otherness presented by the tropical, denying or recognizing the disruptive qualities of difference in ways that assimilated or incorporated the strange and unfamiliar into existing categories of thought" (*Colonizing* 14), contending that literary genres such as the pastoral, the georgic, and the picturesque allowed colonizers to find their footing in the ecological otherness of tropical landscapes.

in direct contrast with those of English climates: "scarcely can it be said that [the Tahitians] earn their bread with the sweat of their brow when their cheifest [sic] sustenance Bread fruit is procurd with no more trouble than that of climbing a tree and pulling it down."[41] He clarifies that breadfruit trees do not grow spontaneously of themselves, but require an initial outlay of labor in their planting, while still maintaining that "if a man should in the course of his life time plant 10 such trees, which if well done might take the labour of an hour or thereabouts, he would as compleatly fulfull [sic] his duty to his own as well as future generations."[42] This is in marked contrast the work required by "we natives of less temperate climates…toiling in the cold of winter to sew [sic] and in the heat of summer to reap the annual produce of our soil, which once gathered into the barn must be again resowd and re-reapd as often as the Colds of winter or the heats of Summer return to make such labour disagreeable."[43] Banks's belief in the labor-free abundance of breadfruit led to his infamous scheme to establish breadfruit in the West Indies as a cheap, plentiful means of feeding enslaved populations laboring on plantations. As Beth Fowkes Tobin suggests, this notion stems in part from classical notions of the climatic affordances of the tropics; Banks is responding to a pastoral myth that "those who dwell in the tropics have nothing more to do than gather nature's bounty," and his "inability to see labor in a landscape that looked lush and green can be explained, in part, by the European belief that tropical landscapes, given their warmth and moisture, are naturally bountiful."[44]

Such an assumption was predicated on and helped reinforce racial biases. The British were unable to see native labor within the environment because they believed that tropical

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[41] Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks: 1768–1771*, ed. J.C. Beaglehole (Sydney: The Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales in Association with Angus and Robertson, 1963), 341.
[42] Banks, 341.
[43] Banks, 341.
[44] Tobin, *Colonizing*, 4–5.

ecosystems were inherently bountiful and overabundant. This allowed for the convenient erasure of the native practices and labor that were necessary to the production of that abundance, as can be seen in Banks's account of the paradisical ease with which the Tahitians procure their sustenance. Tobin persuasively argues that in order for the British to maintain a racialized sense of their intellectual and moral superiority they willfully elided the amount of knowledge and skilled labor required for that agricultural abundance by both indigenous inhabitants and enslaved Africans. British colonizers insisted instead that "like those living in the golden age, [enslaved peoples] do not labor in their gardens but merely reap what nature generously bestows."[45] The British perception that tropical climates in the West Indies were capable of generating ecological bounty with no effort or expertise from their inhabitants fueled a commitment to keeping the territory in British hands and exploiting and even increasing its abundance for profit through British agricultural and labor practices. British planters perceived the West Indies essentially as large-scale "industrial gardens to be planted with useful or economically valuable plants."[46]

That *Mansfield Park* dramatizes the manor house's erasure of the non-English labor and agriculture required to sustain it is hardly an original critical claim. What I am suggesting is that this erasure mirrors the historical erasure of native agricultural labor in British representations and understandings of the tropics. The Bertram family's comfort is dependent upon their turning a blind eye to the bodily harm and discomfort on which their luxury is predicated. The "dead silence" in the novel after Fanny poses a question about the slave trade—a question that is never specified for the novel's reader—momentarily brings that erasure to the fore by calling the reader's attention to the absence of any discussion of the institution of slavery amongst the

[45] Tobin, *Colonizing*, 75.
[46] Bewell, *Natures* 101.

inhabitants of Mansfield Park despite its overwhelming financial importance to them. The questions that Austen critics have wrestled with ever since are whether or not the novel's formal reenactment of this silence amounts to critical commentary on it or complicity with it, and what degree of authorial self-awareness informs that complicity or critique.[47]

The Antiguan climate did prove conducive to the establishment of profitable sugar plantations that relied upon enslaved labor. But, as we shall see, it proved profitable only for a limited time for reasons that were more ecological than political: soil depletion and its exacerbation by weather events resulted in diminishing agricultural and thus financial returns, and this only heightened the brutality of the institution of slavery. In the intervening years between the beginning of sugar production in Antigua around 1665 and abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 (and the publication of *Mansfield Park* in 1814), the soil of the island had become so depleted that continuing sugar production on such a scale while extracting the same profits from it became existentially dependent on increasingly harsh and cruel treatment of enslaved peoples.[48] To maintain previous crop yields and profits, planters expanded the scale of production or upped their demanding and inhuman treatment of the enslaved women, men, and children upon whose labor they relied. Enslaved labor was relatively cheap, and most planters found it more conducive to their profit margins to replace people whom they literally worked to

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[47] Ever since Said's watershed reading of the novel in *Culture and Imperialism*, there has been a lively critical debate around this moment. I am suggesting that it turns less on a question of novel's position toward abolition and more that it calls our attention to what is missing in the novel. Sir Thomas and Fanny seem to be the only characters in the novel who evince any awareness that their comfort and abundance is only possible through the labor and deprivation of others. Whether they feel morally conflicted by that or not is beyond the scope of my argument, which is less interested in untangling the novel's politics or morality and more interested in examining the way its depiction of structural inequity is closely tied to climatic warmth.

[48] In *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave* (1831), Prince, an enslaved woman who was born in Bermuda in the late 1780s, offers the following account of the condition of enslaved field workers in Antigua in the 1810s: "They are worked very hard and fed but scantily. They are called out to work before daybreak, and come home after dark; and then each has to heave his bundle of grass for the cattle in the pen." Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*, ed. Sarah Salih (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 30.

death than to provide adequate conditions and rest that might extend their workforce's average lifespans. One of the chief arguments made before 1807 for the abolition of the British slave trade was that preventing enslavers from replacing their enslaved laborers would require them to improve their treatment.[49] Even so, British demand for sugar soared throughout this period, despite the many abolitionist movements urging the public to abstain from sugar consumption. As Austen gushed in a letter to Cassandra: "the comfort of getting back into your own room will be great!—& then, the Tea & Sugar!—."[50] The letter, written while Austen was at work on *Mansfield Park*, underscores the extent to which Austen associated the practice of taking tea—and sugar—with domestic comfort. While abolition certainly put a dent in sugar plantation profits given the system's reliance on the expendability of enslaved labor, sugar plantations were so ecologically demanding as to make sustaining their initial level of agricultural output an impossibility.[51]

Antigua makes up one of the Leeward islands, a subgroup of the Lesser Antilles, and was only sparingly inhabited pre-European settlement. In part, this is because the island has always lacked a source of plentiful fresh water. When the Spanish began to colonize the West Indies in the sixteenth century, they used Antigua primarily as an outpost or supply station, which is more or less the way the Caribs who inhabited the region used it. Despite European misconceptions about the boundless fecundity of the tropics, Antigua is not well-suited for the large-scale semi-

[49] For more information on amelioration in *Mansfield Park*, see George E. Boulukos, "The Politics of Silence: *Mansfield Park* and the Amelioration of Slavery: a Forum on Fiction," *Novel* 39, no. 3 (2006): 361–383.
[50] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, May 24, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 222.
[51] Historians point to the start of the American Revolutionary War in 1775 as the moment when the profits of sugar plantations began to decline irrevocably. They were still profitable enterprises, but not nearly on the scale they had been, and not without a substantial outlay of funds. This had the effect of consolidating plantations in the hands of larger owners and squeezing out any smaller planters.

industrial agricultural production demanded by sugarcane plantations, which would not have been possible without the transportation and labor of enslaved women, men, and children.[52]

Sugarcane is not native to the West Indies; growing it there proved to be one of the region's affordances, provided planters could not only enslave their workforces but also deforest islands and manipulate the composition of the soil on the cleared land. The tall grass with its interior of sugary pulp was initially grown in Polynesia; it then spread eastward to China and India and was grown in a variety of places in the Mediterranean. Columbus was the first to introduce it to the West Indies, making its arrival in the region and subsequent spread to monoculture in some of the smaller, so-called "Sugar Islands," of which Antigua was one, a deliberate product of colonization. Antigua's fertility is primarily a result of its climate. The island's soil composition varies greatly from region to region, with the most fertile region being unsuited topographically for intensive farming and plantation development. In fact, much of the island's soil required extensive fertilization and tillage to make it suitable for agriculture.[53] In the 1600s when the English decided to build a settlement on the island, it was heavily wooded with forest reaching to the water's edge, all of which was cleared to create the necessary conditions for plantation farming. English settlers engaged in extensive deforestation of the island over the course of several centuries, a practice which, ecologically speaking, was a bit like robbing Peter to pay Paul. Every time they cleared out a new area of forest, they bought themselves some acres

[52] As Brian Dyde observes, in "the pre-industrial era the sugar planation was probably the nearest thing to an industry…Sugar, rum and molasses were all produced in the equivalent of a factory, and at the height of the harvest—with the mill and boiling-house working day and night—the amount of activity, heat, and noise could have borne little resemblance to that of any other farming activity." Brian Dyde, *A History of Antigua: The Unsuspected Isle* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 2000), 66.

[53] This fertilization and tillage was carried out by hand by enslaved laborers using antiquated tools. The agricultural labor performed by enslaved peoples on Antigua was made much harder by planters' refusal to upgrade to any labor-saving techniques or equipment. Enslaved peoples were not given plows, instead being forced to prepare the land for planting with hoes, making the process much longer and more labor-intensive. Manuring was an especially labor-intensive and unpleasant task; each piece of cane had to be individually fertilized with animal dung and cane waste and required enslaved men and women to carry baskets of manure weighing up to 80 pounds (Dyde 32).

of productive farmland that would soon be exhausted by extensive and exploitative farming practices, giving rise to a different set of problems down the line.

After felling trees, the process of preparing the land for sugarcane involved cutting down any undergrowth, then removing stumps, after which any leftover ecological matter was burnt, and canes were planted in the ashes. The ashes created by forest burning provided much needed nutrients to the growing cane, meaning the freshly cleared land initially produced exceptionally high yields that then sharply declined. This led some planters, especially in the early years, simply to repeat the process on a new plot of land rather than to try to revitalize previous fields. West Indian environments were far less conducive to cane agriculture than early planters realized, not living up to European fantasies of the inexhaustible fecundity of tropical climates. Sugarcane is nutritionally demanding, and yet West Indian planters removed the vegetation which provided the soil with its initial nutritional density when they cleared the land for planting. This rendered the soil vulnerable to depletion. The scale and speed with which sugar cultivation was undertaken by planters also meant that, as the island ran out of arable land, the same land came to be used over and over without respite, and with no concern for longevity or sustainable land use practices.[54] In order to maintain the sugar yields of prior years, planters also increased the number of enslaved persons upon whose labor they relied, as well as demanded more—and more intense—work from them.

Though clearcutting to create arable land was one of the allowances required to capitalize on Antigua's climatic affordances for cane agriculture, it produced a host of other ecological

[54] According to Watts, planters operated under the assumption that all West Indian soils would be fertile, largely because to them "the whole landscape *looked* rich in resources, particularly when compared with the relative sparseness of plant cover on agricultural land in the home countries" (*West Indies* 396), a misconception strengthened by the initially high yields on lands cleared by forest burning as the ash provided a one-time much-needed nutritional boost.

problems for sugar plantations. In addition to the soil depletion already discussed, it made the island increasingly vulnerable to erosion, a particular concern given the island's hurricane-prone climate. Hurricanes are dependent on a certain set of atmospheric conditions, rarely forming outside of specific geographical regions (at least prior to the recent acceleration of anthropogenic climate change, which has expanded their range, along with increasing their frequency and intensity). The Antiguan climate is conducive to hurricanes. However, the devasting effects of those hurricanes were intensified by the great environmental manipulations required for the functioning of sugarcane industry. To access the networks of shipping and irrigation necessary to import enslaved Africans, export muscovado sugar, and provide the cane with adequate water, most large population centers were formed by the coast or lowlands, next to rivers and streams. This contributed further to erosion and put populations at greater risk from the climatic hazards generated by hurricanes. Hurricanes and tropical cyclones were a regular feature of life in Antigua, but as the island became dominated by sugarcane monoculture at the expense of the cultivation of subsistence crops, not only were ecological balances altered creating additional vulnerabilities, but also the island's population was put at greater risk from starvation, since its maintenance depended more on food supply chains that could be climatically and politically disrupted. Banks's breadfruit transplantation scheme, alluded to earlier, was a response to food supply chains having been cut off as a result of the American Revolution: enslaved Africans were starving by the thousands as the bulk of arable land in the West Indies had been put to the production of plantation crops such as sugarcane, with little to no land set aside to meet subsistence needs. In other words, hurricanes tended to exacerbate pre-existing inequities and vulnerabilities within the sugar production process. As historian Matthew Mulcahy asserts: "Nothing contributed more to this climate of volatility and risk than hurricanes. Although

planters worried about the possibility of drought, war, and rebellion, hurricanes occupied a special place atop the planter's hierarchy of risk."[55]

Sugarcane takes fourteen to eighteen months to mature, and planters staggered cultivation so the cane did not ripen all at once but could be harvested over a period of several months. Planting took place in the rainy months of June to November, so the full-grown cane would be ready for harvest when its sugar content was at its peak, after it had ripened during the dry months of January to May. Hurricane season began in the late summer just as the sugar harvest ended. Hurricanes had the potential to lay waste to the sugarcane, damaging the mature cane. Even if the remaining cane could be crushed quickly, under- or overripe cane had little value. If not processed more or less immediately, it became next to worthless. Storms could also damage the elaborate infrastructure used to grow and process the cane. The human toll of hurricanes, especially on islands such as Antigua which relied overly on imports for food stuffs, was high and harrowing, although planters were primarily concerned with the impact hurricanes would have on their work force and their ability to process whatever cane could be salvaged and rebuild for the following year. For planters in the West Indies, there was always a risk that if the harvest were delayed or the island hit by an unseasonably early storm, a year-and-a-half's investment would be lost, along with the potential loss of seeds and infrastructure for the next year.

An unusually high number of storms hit Antigua from 1811–13: tropical cyclones in July 1811, July 1813, and August 1813, and a hurricane in September–October 1812.[56] The price of

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[55] Matthew Mulcahy, "Weathering the Storms: Hurricanes and Risk in the British Greater Caribbean," *Business History Review* 78, no. 4 (2004): 637.

[56] Meteorological information on tropical cyclones and hurricanes in Antigua during the period comes from studies complied by Michael Chenoweth, "A Reassessment of Historical Atlantic Basin Tropical Cyclone Activity, 1700–1855," *Climatic Change* 76, no. 1–2 (2006): 169–240; Alexander Berland, "Extreme Weather and Social Vulnerability in Colonial Antigua, Lesser Antilles, 1770-1890," PhD diss., (University of Nottingham, 2015); and Michael Chenoweth, and Ian Howard, "Hurricane Impacts on Land in the Central and Eastern Caribbean Since 1494 CE From Written Records," *Earth and Space Science* 10, no. 7 (July 2023): 1–13. Though meteorologists today distinguish between tropical cyclones and hurricanes, people in the 1810s did not make so fine a distinction, often

muscovado sugar sold on the London market shot up from £39 per pound weight in 1805–1809 to £54 *s*9 per pound weight in 1810–1814.[57] There are a variety of reasons for this increase, including the raising of import duties to generate revenue for the Napoleonic Wars. However, hurricanes were one of the biggest determinants of sugar prices in the period. As the Leeward Islands and Jamaica were the largest producers of muscovado sugar, news of a hurricane in the region caused major fluctuations in the London sugar market, leading prices to spike overnight. Correspondents in England eagerly and anxiously awaited weather reports from the region that would determine the prices and that might give merchants an edge on the competition, provided they had early access to such information.[58] *The Times* ran detailed reports on such occurrences, and *The London Gazette* routinely listed the current price of sugar. An issue of *The Times* from September 8, 1813, notes the damage caused to shipping by "severe gales" (these gales correspond with a documented hurricane), providing a list of the ships affected and their contents. For example, in Bridgetown, Barbados: "The ship *Bootle*, FORD, is on shore a little above the Fort at the Pier-head, and completely stranded; she had 70 tons of outward-bound freight from Liverpool, and 150 hogsheads of sugar on board for that port—all damaged," and so on.[59]

In a letter to Cassandra, Austen notes she "told Mr. Herington of the Currants; he seemed equally surprised & shocked, & means to talk to the Man who put them up. I wish you may find the Currants any better for it.—He does not expect Sugars to fall."[60] Austen's inquiry about and interest in the price of sugar indicates her likely awareness of the various causes leading to

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using words such as "hurricane," "gale," "storm," and "blast" interchangeably (for convenience, I will be following Regency practice in using the word "hurricane" to refer to both types of storms).

[57] Watts, *West Indies*, 269.

[58] Mulcahy, "Weathering," 645.

[59] "September 8, 1813," *The Times* (London), September 8, 1813, *The Times Digital Archive.*

[60] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, May 20, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 218.

fluctuations in the sugar market. The placement of her information about its current price immediately after a discussion of the currants further underscores the extent to which she understands sugar as an agricultural commodity, dependent upon a series of ecological and climatic factors for the quantity and quality of its growth and its price on the market. Similarly, in letter from late in 1815, Austen remarks, "M^{r} H. is reading Mansfield Park for the first time & prefers it to P&P.—A Hare & 4 Rabbits from G^{m} yesterday, so that we are stocked for nearly a week.—Poor Farmer Andrews! I am very sorry for him, & sincerely wish his recovery.—A better account of Sugar than I could have expected."[61] Once again, she lists sugar in relation to other agricultural commodities. Furthermore, her letter syntactically links Mr. Haden's response to *Mansfield Park*, their provisions for the week, Farmer Andrews' health, and the price of sugar, underscoring Austen's understanding of the relationship between agricultural labor (farmer Andrews) and agricultural production (the arrival of livestock), with both the price of sugar and her own literary labor and production suggestively positioned within that discursive network.

The high number of hurricanes in Antigua in 1813, when Austen was writing *Mansfield Park*, and the adverse effect they had on the sugarcane and plantation infrastructure had a major impact on the island's production. For at least a year after any hurricane, plantation output declined, frequently plummeting by fifty percent or more.[62] More destructive storms had the potential to delay production for a second year, and the frequency with which storms hit in 1811–1813 likely compounded the adverse effects of each storm as planters barely had enough

[61] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, December 2, 1815, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 314.
[62] According to Mulcahy, "plantation output fell, often by 50 percent or more for at least one year, while the impact of especially violent and destructive storms lingered for a second year" ("Weathering" 45) and in their statistical analysis of the economic impact of hurricanes in sugar colonies, Preeya Mohan and Eric Strobl note that on average, in the two years following a hurricane, sugar exportation in a colony/country in the region fell by 33.1 million pounds (12). Preeya Mohan and Eric Strobl, "The Economic Impact of Hurricanes in History: Evidence from Sugar Exports in the Caribbean from 1700 to 1960," *Weather, Climate & Society* 5, no. 1 (2013): 5–13.

time to get production back on its feet before the next hurricane hit. Ships making the voyage from the West Indies to Europe set sail in July so as to avoid the onset of hurricane season. The climatic precarity of such voyages and sugar plantations in general would have been well known to the public. In addition to the examples already provided, a June 1812 report on the Parliamentary Reform debate in the House of Commons records Mr. Elliott's comment that "To commence a parliamentary reform at the present moment, even were it necessary, would be to commence the repair of a house in the hurricane season," underscoring the extent to which an awareness of hurricane season and its potential effects was circulating within the public consciousness.[63]

Among the other risks that hurricanes posed to planters, especially on a "Sugar Island" like Antigua that had become nearly a monoculture, were rebellions of enslaved populations. Incidences of such rebellions rose as daily suffering increased, and hurricanes certainly intensified that suffering. As historian Stuart Schwartz puts it, "hurricanes were a natural phenomenon; what made them disasters [for enslaved populations] was the patterns of settlement, economic activity, and other human action."[64] *The Times* reported on the destruction caused by an 1812 hurricane in Jamaica, recounting the manifold damage caused to crops and infrastructure, including damage to the plots of land used by enslaved men and women to grow food they relied upon for survival, as enslavers provided inadequate rations.[65] The article goes on to provide a series of brief first-person accounts of the damage, including: "The mill-house, boiling-house, and overseer's house on Spring-garden are blown down," "All accounts from the

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[63] "Proceedings in the Sixth Session of the Fourth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland," *Historical Chronicle* (London), June 1812, *British Periodicals*.
[64] Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 74.
[65] "Hurricane at Jamaica, December 29, 1812," *The Times* (London), December 29, 1812, *The Times Digital Archive*.

country concur in the general destruction of canes, plantain, walks, buildings, negro-houses, and cattle…the roads are much injured," and "the canes through the parish suffered severely from the late storm."[66] Even through the historical bias of the article, a sense of the increased vulnerability of enslaved populations comes through, as the report registers the much greater negative impact the hurricane had on their housing than on the planters' dwelling. Notably, the only listed deaths from the hurricane are four enslaved Africans who were crushed to death when "A hill completely saturated with water from the violent rains, fell down and overwhelmed a negro-house."[67] The years of deforestation and soil erosion caused by plantation agriculture undoubtedly increased the likelihood of such landslides. Not only were enslaved Africans invariably the most vulnerable to and impacted by these environmental harms, but the island relied heavily upon imports for its subsistence, and hurricanes consistently disrupted supply chains. The abysmal conditions suffered by enslaved women, men, and children in the aftermath of hurricanes in the West Indies in 1780 brought attention to the amelioration cause in British parliamentary debates, increasing public and governmental criticism of their conditions and treatment.

More than just a labor-intensive process, muscovado sugar production was also a heat-intensive process. In addition to the climatic heat of the West Indies needed to grow the crop, and the burning of ecological debris to prepare the ground for its sowing, the process to refine harvested cane into sugar demanded boiling. Sugar works had mills equipped with great furnaces for this purpose.[68] In West Indian sugar refineries, the juice would be channeled to the boiling

[66] "Hurricane at Jamaica, December 29, 1812."
[67] "Hurricane at Jamaica, December 29, 1812."
[68] Though refineries were initially supplied with timber from the island, planters turned to *bagasse* for fuel as deforestation made wood scarcer. *Bagasse* is the semi-dry fibrous residue left behind after cane stalks have been run through mill rollers and their juice extracted.

house (evocatively termed the "hot house"), where it was heated and clarified in a series of large metal basins referred to as "coppers." As there was a short period of time in which cane could be harvested and processed before it began to depreciate, during harvesting season the enslaved laborers were kept working in the mill and boiling house twenty-four hours a day.[69] Both the excessive heat and technical operations of the boiling house made it incredibly dangerous and physically taxing for the women and men forced to perform the operations day and night, with no rest. The process required to produce muscovado sugar for export was heat and labor intensive, ecologically damaging, and financially risky for all but the biggest plantation owners, even with the institution of slavery. Within the climatic and ecological context of Regency-era Antigua, heat in theory provided the conditions for abundance, but in practice required great inequity in order to capitalize on it.

A 1791 political cartoon by James Gillray entitled "Barbarities in the West Indias" (See Figure 2) further underscores the close connection between heat and labor. Drawn in response to the abolition debate in Parliament, it features a white overseer forcibly submerging an enslaved African man within a stone boiling vat meant to resemble one of the coppers used for clarifying sugar. As the overseer stirs the African man—whose limbs only can be seen—in the vat, he upbraids him: "what you can't work because you're not well?—but I'll give you a warm bath, to cure your Ague, & a Curry-combing afterwards to put Spunk into you." The cartoon viscerally attempts to highlight the violent and inhumane system of West Indian sugar production, and in its depiction of this particular act of violence, it calls attention to the way heat creates the conditions for certain types of inequity. The cartoon also depicts the climatic heat of the West

[69] Cut cane could only be kept for forty-eight hours before a major reduction in the sugar content of the cane juice, and once it had been run through the mill, the juice itself only had an hour to be processed before it began to ferment.

Indies—alluded to through the brief slip of landscape seen through an open door behind the overseer with its lush greenery and palm fronds—as the background for the heat-intensive process required to refine sugar. The mocking reference to the African man's sickness and the boiling vat's potentiality as a cure brings the long-term and constant bodily harm caused by enslavement into the cartoon, with the copper in the center as the place where sugar production, enslavement, and their attendant physical harms meet. The presence of the boiling vat in the cartoon relies on a complex series of affordances and allowances: on the one hand, the climatic affordances of the West Indies which make it conducive to growing sugarcane in the first place, and, on the other, all of the socially and ecologically violent allowances necessary to actualize that affordance to meet the demands of West Indian planters and British sugar consumers.

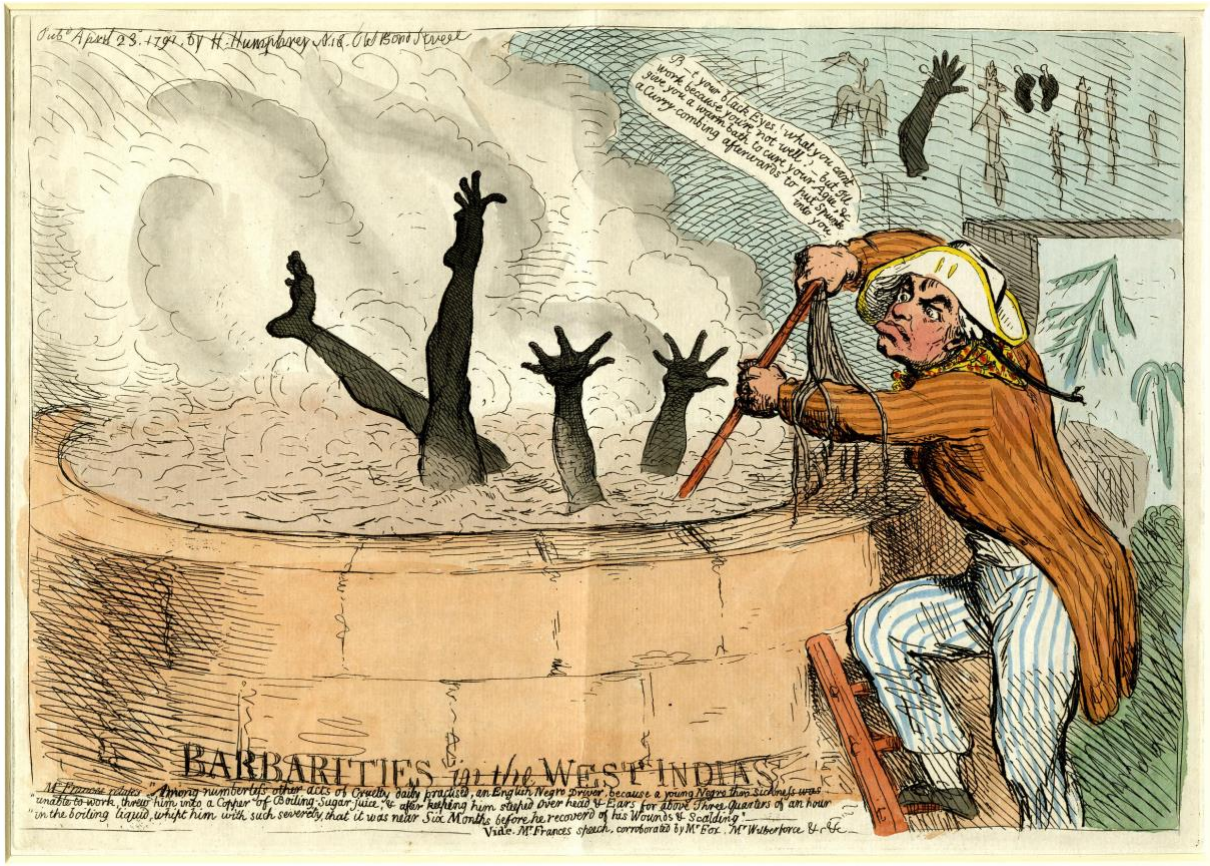

FIGURE 2. James Gillray, 1756–1815 *Barbarities in the West Indias*, April 23, 1791, Satirical print. 247 mm x 348 mm (9.7 in x 13.7 in). Printed by H. Humphrey, *The British Museum*. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

By depicting the man submerged in the vat, the cartoon drives home the way the climatic affordances of heat, in relation to the enforcement of allowances carried out by men such as the overseer and the long line of other white men whose authority he enacts—including the members of Parliament whose policies this cartoon is responding to—are structured so as to generate and rely upon immense inequity in order to produce abundance. The political critique in Gillray's cartoon turns on the relationship between the climatic heat needed to grow sugarcane, the heat used to refine sugar, and the bodily harm and inequity they produce, demonstrating that such a correlation existed within the public's consciousness.

To sum up, while sugarcane production was a latent potential of the West Indian climate that British colonization actualized, it could only be actualized once certain conditions were met, and enslaved labor was one of those key conditions in Austen's era. In Antigua, exploitative labor, scarcity, inequity, and climatic warmth were deeply entangled. It is unlikely that Austen possessed the degree of agricultural and ecological knowledge of West Indian sugarcane production I have been outlining here. However, as I pointed to earlier, she did understand the kind of labor required to produce abundance within certain climatic conditions. Awareness of sugar plantations and their various climatic difficulties and shifting profits were also public knowledge since hurricanes in the West Indies and the changing price and availability of sugar were both covered in the newspapers and even sometimes alluded to, as we have seen, in Austen's correspondence. Additionally, as several scholars before me have noted, the Austen family had closer connections to the region given Austen's brothers' naval professions, the family's connection by marriage to the Attorney General of Bermuda (who was the father of Austen's sister-in-law Frances [*née* Palmer]), and Austen's father's relationship with the Nibbs family. The Reverend George Austen served as a co-trustee in a marriage settlement which

included the dispersal of an Antiguan sugar plantation and its profits belonging to James Langford Nibbs. George Austen named Nibbs the godfather of his son, James Austen, and had a hand in educating both Nibbs, and Nibbs's son, George. The Austens were not profiting from the sugar plantation but would have been aware of its profits and potential difficulties—such as those occasioned by hurricanes—given their legal and familial ties. This ecological, climatic, and economic context of Antigua allows for the reframing of certain aspects of *Mansfield Park*, revealing the extent to which the novel's articulation of the relationship between warmth, labor, and scarcity can be understood as in dialogue with the island's climatic affordances for sugarcane plantations, and the manifold violences and inequities required for them to be actualized in a manner financially profitable to British plantation owners.

Hurricanes at Mansfield Park

Considerable scholarly debate about *Mansfield Park*'s relation to abolitionist discourse has focused on the novel's dating, with some critics arguing the main events take place from 1808–1809 and others contending it must be set from 1812–1813.[70] For the purposes of my argument, I am less interested in working out the internal dating of the novel and more interested in specifying the climatological context in which Austen wrote it and Austen's likely general awareness of climate events in the West Indies for all of the reasons just described. Sir Thomas's reasons for needing to visit his Antiguan estates are left unstated within the novel, which of course has prompted much discussion among scholars about the possible impetus for his voyage.

[70] R.W. Chapman ed., *The Novels of Jane Austen: The Text Based on Collation of the Early Editions*, 3rd ed., 5 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934); and J.A. Downie, "The Chronology of Mansfield Park," *Modern Philology* 112, no. 2 (2014): 427–434 argue for the main action of the novel taking place between 1808–1809, while Brian Southam, "The Silence of the Bertrams: Slavery and the Chronology of *Mansfield Park*," *Times Literary Supplement*, February 17 (1995): 13–14 contends 1812–1813 is the proper dating with critics divided as to which timeline is more plausible.

Most critics assume the problems must be political in nature, relating to the impact of abolition on the estate's returns and its enslaved population.[71] Yet a more likely scenario, given the timing of his departure and return, and given the novel's foregrounding of climate as a thematic concern, is that whatever events lie at the center of the estate's suddenly precarious finances, the ecology and climate of Antigua play a key role in them. The residents of Mansfield Park may respond to invocations of the slave trade with awkward silence, but *Mansfield Park* the novel is not at all silent about climates, their precarity, and the economies of scarcity and inequity they create.

Austen's letters demonstrate that the weather was on her mind while composing *Mansfield Park*. To provide a few examples, she complains about frequent thunderstorms in the spring of 1811: "I never knew such a Spring for Thunder storms as it has been!"; on one occasion writing to Cassandra that "Your Letter came to comfort me for [a storm]."[72] She notes the changeable weather that resulted in a thunderstorm, "excessively hot" weather, and then a steep drop in temperature, all in one day: "What a change in the weather!—We have a Fire again now."[73] She teases Cassandra in a letter from January 1813 by quoting from the weather report Austen received from her, before contributing one of her own: "'A very sloppy lane' last friday!—What an odd sort of country you must be in! I cannot at all understand it! It was just greasy here on friday, in consequence of the little snow that had fallen in the night—Perhaps it

[71] This is Said's assumption, although suggestively, he comments that "Sir Thomas is away tending his colonial garden" (*Culture* 86), a turn of phrase which puts the ecological aspects and concerns of sugar plantations front and center. It is also the assumption of Ferguson, "Mansfield Park" (1991); Southam, "Silence," (1995); Easton, "Political Economy," (1998); Carl Plasa, "What Was Done," (2000); Clara Tuite, "Domestic Retrenchment and Imperial Expansion," in *The Postcolonial Jane Austen*, eds. You-Me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (London: Routledge, 2004), 93–115; Boulukos, "Politics" (2006); Peter Knox-Shaw, *Jane Austen and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Downie, "Chronology," (2014); Fay, "Reformation," (2017); and Marsh, "Changes," (2020); among others.

[72] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, May 29, 1811, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 197; Austen to Cassandra Austen, May 31, 1811, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 198.

[73] Austen to Cassandra Austen, May 29, 1811, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 197.

was cold on Wednesday, yes, I beleive [sic] it certainly was."[74] To Martha Lloyd she writes, "I will not say anything of the weather we have lately had, for if you were not aware of its' being terrible, it would be cruel to put it in your head. My Mother slept through a good deal of Sunday, but still it was impossible not to be disordered by such a sky."[75] Later in the same letter she remarks of Manydown, "but that is a House, in which one is tolerably independent of weather."[76]

Given that, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the weather of 1810–1814 was unsettled, inclement, at times freezing, and prone to droughts and unseasonable weather patterns that negatively impacted crop yields across the country, this attentiveness to weather on the part of someone living in agricultural countryside should hardly come as a surprise. I suggested earlier in this chapter that Austen's awareness of the impact a delayed hay harvest might have on Mary Crawford's ability to hire a cart reveals how the novel's thinking about climate is not isolated to container gardening, ornamental landscaping, or artificial climates created for comfort, but also includes the climatically dependent day-to-day agricultural production that structured much of the country's labor and access to food. Critics have also foregrounded such climatic awareness in other texts. Amelia Dale has established Austen's interest in the unusual climates triggered by Tambora's 1816 explosion, arguing for climatic readings of two later novels: *Persuasion* and the unfinished *Sanditon*.[77] Euan Nisbet additionally suggests Austen was especially observant of the changing seasons and climatic conditions, declaring: "*Emma* is weather. Meteorology shapes the novel…Day by day the plot twists with the weather report."[78] Austen herself bemoans the unusually inclement post-Tambora weather in an 1816 letter to her nephew Edward: "It is really

[74] Austen to Cassandra Austen, January 29, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 209.
[75] Jane Austen to Martha Lloyd, February 16, 1813, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 216.
[76] Austen, February 16, 1813, 217.
[77] Amelia Dale, "*Sanditon* without a Summer," *Romanticism* 29, no. 2 (2023): 188–198.
[78] Euan Nisbet, "In Retrospect Chosen by Euan Nisbet," *Nature* 388, no. 6638 (1997): 137.

too bad, & has been too bad for a long time, much worse than anybody can bear, & I begin to think it will never be fine again."[79] Later in the letter, she mentions the weather again in connection with the year's dismal harvest: "Oh! it rains again; it beats against the window—Mary Jane & I have been wet through once already today, we set off in the Donkey carriage…we were obliged to turn back…but not soon enough to avoid a Pelter all the way home. We met Mr. Woolls—I talked of its' being bad weather for the Hay—& he returned me the comfort of its being much worse for the Wheat."[80] Austen's letter articulates an awareness of the impact of weather on everyday life, her affective response to the incessant rain (framed in part as a report of collective affective response from the community), its role in shaping daily activities, and of course the effect it has on agriculture. Her brief conversation with Mr. Woolls demonstrates the attention she paid to agricultural concerns, further supported by her reporting it back to Edward.

The language used around Sir Thomas's trip to the estate in the novel points toward a climatological reading. The first indication of any trouble is the mention of "some recent losses on his West India estate" (19), a phrase which evokes the potential losses faced by a planter whose crop or infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed by a hurricane, not to mention the potential decrease in enslaved populations caused by the environmental harms they suffered. Mrs. Norris's later comment that "Sir Thomas's means will be rather straitened if the Antigua estate is to make such poor returns" (23) similarly points to the potential decline in output caused by a hurricane, as does Sir Thomas's finding it "expedient to go to Antigua himself, for the better arrangement of his affairs" (25) a year later, and his initially proposed twelvemonth absence which corresponds with the timeline for post-hurricane recovery. The British West Indies were largely run on a model of absentee landlordism, which led to estate mismanagement and decline.

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[79] Jane Austen to James-Edward Austen, July 9, 1816, in Le Faye, *Letters*, 329.
[80] Austen, July 9, 1816, 330.

Absentee landlordism was prevalent whenever the prosperity of a plantation seemed assured, a prosperity which was frequently threatened by hurricanes. The large-scale operations of rebuilding and salvaging in the aftermath of a hurricane so as to remain financially solvent were more successfully undertaken by the plantation owners themselves. Hurricanes were often the breaking point for financially strapped planters, as those without significant access to capital or credit were unable to absorb the cost of recovery. The problems plaguing Sir Thomas's Antiguan estate seem to increase until he finds it necessary to attend to them himself, suggesting that the aftermath of one or more storms has caused more extensive damage than initially realized, indicative of hurricanes' snowballing effect on all aspects of the sugar production process. Such a timeline matches up with the hurricanes that hit Antigua in 1811–13, noted earlier. Sir Thomas's initial hope that he would be able to return before the end of the summer, only to be delayed in September, is consistent with the timing of hurricane season. A sudden storm would have undone his progress in rebuilding the plantation, leaving him in a very uncertain state of affairs. The narrator's report that: "Unfavourable circumstances had suddenly arisen," leading to "the very great uncertainty in which everything was then involved" (28), can likewise be read climatically, especially with the atmospheric slant of "suddenly arisen," and the expansive scope of "everything," which points to the pervasive effect hurricanes had on sugar plantations.

The necessity to harvest cane quickly before it became overripe finds a kind of analogue in the rose cutting scene in *Mansfield Park*, which has been read as especially suggestive in light of the Bertrams' financial dependence upon plantations in Antigua. Part of the reason Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris insist upon Fanny cutting the roses in the first place is due to the heat, which has both brought them to full bloom and made it necessary for them to picked before they spoil. As Lady Bertram responds to Edmund's inquiry as to whether Fanny has been cutting

roses in the heat: "Yes…but they were so full blown, that one could not wait" (52). The warm climate which has "full blown" the roses creates labor for Fanny by threatening to ruin the roses in the heat. It additionally makes the conditions of that labor more arduous than they might be otherwise, leading to her headache. Lady Bertram's oblivious "*She* found it hot enough" emphasizes the way the roses function as a luxury for her and Mrs. Norris while creating work for Fanny. Critics have pointed to Fanny as a figure of servitude in the novel, linking her to the enslaved labor that enables the Bertram family's comfort and luxury, on occasion using this same scene to make that argument. I do not want to suggest that Fanny's position as an educated, upper-class white woman with familial connections is at all analogous to one of the many enslaved Africans who suffered under such a system. However, I would suggest that the rose cutting scene points not just to the way that the exploitative labor required to produce bounty goes unseen but how the novel also ties the urgency of that labor to climatic conditions. And it does so, as we have seen, in the context of a novel that elsewhere emphasizes habitable climatic conditions as themselves a luxury that not all share and that require labor to maintain artificially. Fanny's aunts determinedly ignore the physical discomfort caused by the climatically prompted labor they have insisted upon Fanny performing, even in the face of Edmund attempting to get them to realize and admit to mistreatment.

I began my reading of "warmth" in the novel with Mrs. Norris's declaration of her own generosity: "could I bear to see [Fanny] want, while I had a bit of bread to give her? My dear Sir Thomas, with all my faults I have a warm heart: and, poor as I am, would rather deny myself the necessaries of life, than do an ungenerous thing" (8). Returning to this moment with a more detailed understanding of the Antiguan plantation and sugar industry helps tease out some further implications of Mrs. Norris's "bit of bread." While bread functions metaphorically here, the

working-class diet at this time primarily consisted of bread, as I noted in Chapter 2. Bread riots broke out repeatedly in Britain throughout the early nineteenth century as instances of particularly acute points of friction within a larger pattern of social distress and unrest occasioned by trade embargoes and blockades caused by the Napoleonic wars and reduced or delayed harvests from climatic causes, all of which caused bread prices to fluctuate. From 1808–1813, British Parliament passed an exclusion on grain, mandating a halt on its use in liquor production.[81] This was done to protect British food supplies in response to Napoleon's tightening of Atlantic blockades and Britain's overreliance on corn imports for national foodstuffs. While domestic planters opposed the action, fearing it would lead to a drop in corn prices, the West Indian lobby supported it in the hopes that colonial sugar would replace grain in British distilleries.

This debate was aired out in the newspapers, frequently accompanied by the threat of looming famine, with correspondents writing on both sides of the issue: those in favor of the exclusion argued it was for the good of the nation's economy; those against argued it was for the good of the West Indian planters' pockets. *The Times* printed a letter addressed to the editor in 1810, which, while praising the use of colonial sugar in the distilleries, also notes that the "crop of the present year has been unusually short, and in consequence of the abolition of the Slave-trade, that of every subsequent year must continue to decrease more and more; so that in all probability we shall shortly be obliged to admit the sugars of Martinique and Guadaloupe [sic] into some consumption, in order to supply the deficient growth of our own Colonies."[82] Despite

[81] I am drawing here on Marsh, "Changes," 217–218. She discusses the West Indian lobby's support of the grain exclusion in her argument about the novel's exploration of property law within a shifting social order no longer structured by land ownership but instead by commercial imperialism. I am pointing to it as indicative of wider pattern of national and public anxiety around the price and availability of bread in the era, related to turbulent global and political climates.

[82] "Decrees of Trianon and Fontainebleau. To the Editor of the Times," *The Times* (London), November 8, 1810, *The Times Digital Archive*.

the letter's blatantly nationalistic slant—it largely criticizes Napoleonic policies meant to "effect the downfall of this country"—its author cannot escape having to admit several times to a significant decrease in sugar production from the British West Indies. The example above confesses that it might soon be necessary to import sugar from French colonies, and the writer later attempts to turn what is clearly a subject of economic and political concern surrounding British sugar plantations into proof of English exceptionalism: "The bankruptcies that have lately taken place are owing, not to the decay, but to the exuberance of our commerce."[83]

The grain exclusion, coming, as it did, on the heels of the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, in addition to decreased agricultural productivity in the West Indies stemming from years of ecological mismanagement and disastrous climatic episodes, presented in the eyes of the West Indian lobby an opportunity to shore up declining returns. Ultimately, this proved not to be the case, and any additional earnings from the exclusion were unable to return profits to their earlier peak. The House of Commons heard a petition in January 1812 regarding the end of the grain exclusion which claims that "the distress of the West India planters have increased to an extent hitherto unexampled, and the effects which the disuse of Sugar in the distilleries has already produced are such…[that] nothing short of the speediest relief can enable them to preserve their capital from the most rapid deterioration."[84] Assuming, as other scholars have done, that Sir Thomas Bertram, as a Member of Parliament, belongs to the West Indian lobby, it is only a slight stretch to imagine that politically minded readers might have associated him with these debates, recognizing that the Bertram family income turned to a degree on the public's access to bread.[85] Right from the novel's start, *Mansfield Park* uses food to foreground the

[83] "Decrees of Trianon and Fontainebleau."
[84] "Petition Respecting the Sugar Trade," *House of Commons* (London), January 22, 1812, *Hansard*.
[85] This point has been made repeatedly in discussions of the novel. In addition to Marsh, examples include Brian Southam "Silence" (1995); Ferguson "Mansfield" (1991); Joseph Lew, "The Abominable Traffic": *Mansfield Park*

novel's larger global scope and the Bertrams' financial dependence on the climatic warmth of the West Indies by gesturing to the concept of warmth as something which has the potential to create scarcity, inequity, and labor for others.

The Cost of Warmth

I noted earlier that one of the many alternate names proposed for the Anthropocene is Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing's "Plantationocene," a term that seeks to center the ongoing legacy of the plantation in this current historical and climatic moment and, in so doing, to bring to the fore an aspect of anthropogenic climate change that "Anthropocene" has a tendency to elide—environmental harms are distributed unequally and are suffered the most by those who have historically consumed the fewest resources and contributed the least to climate crisis. This continued uneven relationship between the Global North and Global South means that despite the Global North's exponentially larger role in resource consumption and environmental degradation, those in the Global South feel the brunt of anthropogenic climate change. The injustice of this has been called attention to and debated in a variety of contexts, from academic debates—such as those over the term "Anthropocene"—, to environmental justice movements, to a multitude of cultural and artistic productions. I return to it here because in paying attention to the way Austen's novel seems to be grappling with these same concerns, we can begin to see the contours of this asymmetrical relationship appear in literature in a moment before humanity had any conception of its own geological agency—or to be more accurate, in the exact moment in which humanity gained geological agency. Throughout this chapter, I have been pointing to the ways that the types of environmental injustice created by the plantation system resurface in

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and the Dynamics of Slavery," in *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); and Gabrielle D.V. White, *Jane* (2006).

Mansfield Park's articulation of climatic warmth's capacity to create abundance for some through the creation of inequity for others. Obviously, the type of inequity this generates looks very different within the novel than it did in Antigua. However, this chapter has aimed to demonstrate the ways in which these two contexts, these two iterations of heat's affordances, inform each other—much like Smith's twinned islands from the introduction.

I want to turn, in closing, to Jamaica Kincaid, a writer whose ecological vision is rooted in her upbringing in Antigua in the mid-twentieth century, much as Austen's is rooted in her experience living in Regency-era England. Antigua continues to be shaped by the aftermath of the plantation system. To this day, the island has to import water as a result of the extensive deforestation, erosion, and ecological degradation necessary in order to create large-scale cane agriculture.[86] Kincaid emphasizes how much her experience of nature is structured by this history of British imperialism's rearrangement of the globe as the British sought to capitalize on the affordances of different climates for agricultural production and profit. She points to the stark distinction between the capacities of English and Antiguan climates for botanical flourishing: "The botanical garden that I knew as a child did not need a glass enclosure. The atmosphere in which it was situated, a hot, humid climate, provided that."[87] I have been suggesting that this is something Austen's novel is also aware of—that the capabilities for the growth of any living thing differ across climates, that even within a hospitable climate this growth is affected by the labor, or lack thereof, put toward its cultivation, and that within a geographically inhospitable climate, it is possible to create an artificial one, such as a greenhouse. Moreover, the resources

[86] Nixon calls attention to the long-lasting impact of ecologically abusive colonial practices in relation to the contemporary environment of Antigua: "the colonists turned what was a well-wooded island into a desert, clearing the forests to grow slave crops—sugar and cotton. As a result of this slave-era environmental degradation, the island has lost its ability to retain water and, to this day, is forced to import it." Rob Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism," in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, eds. Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Etsy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 241.
[87] Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 143.

that are put toward ensuring the flourishing of one thing within a climate often mean taking resources from something else, much as the leftover ash from forest burning provided sugarcane with a much-needed infusion of nutrients the soil lacked, or more broadly, how the ecology of the entire island was altered so as better to serve the production and profit of cane agriculture.

Within an Antiguan context, the economic growth of the British Empire has meant the complete erasure of an indigenous ecosystem. As Kincaid asks, "What did the botanical life of Antigua consist of at the time another famous adventurer (Christopher Columbus) first saw it? To see a garden in Antigua now will not supply a clue."[88] She returns to this theme later, emphasizing the way Columbus and other European colonizers emptied tropical landscapes of their inhabitants, flora, and fauna in order to rebuild them anew for profit, much like giant greenhouses:

> It is when the land is completely empty that I and the people who look like me begin to make an appearance, the food I eat begins to make an appearance, the trees I will see each day come from far away and begin to make an appearance; the sky is as it always was, the sun is as it always was, the water surrounding the land on which I am just making an appearance is as it always was, but these are the only things that are left from before (159)

In his discussion of Kincaid's writing, Bewell contends that she suggests that to "love Nature, you must first be able to afford to love it."[89] This notion of the price of abundance, of the expense necessary to actualize the affordances of warmth (geographic, artificial, emotional), what a person can "afford to love," and what warmth's capabilities for abundance will cost someone or something else structures both *Mansfield Park*'s depiction of climatic warmth and the Regency-era Antiguan sugar plantation. The argument I have been making throughout this chapter about Austen's novelistic experimentation with climatic warmth's affordances for

[88] Kincaid, 135.
[89] Alan Bewell, *Natures*, 91.

abundance and the way their actualization relies upon the production of labor and scarcity, is perhaps better put by Kincaid, who aptly underscores the contradiction I am suggesting *Mansfield Park*, although much more obliquely, also points to: "I do not mind the glasshouse; I do not mind the botanical garden…I only mind the absence of this admission, this contradiction: perhaps every good thing that stands before us comes at a great cost to someone else."[90]

[90] Kincaid, 152.

EPILOGUE: Extinction Weather

Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene has been situating Romantic literary texts in relation to the climate history of the period, arguing that doing so reveals an emergent discourse of climate justice within Romanticism. At least a few writers in the period—some canonical and some rarely ever written about—recognized that certain political, economic, and climate crises exacerbated and amplified each other, with the conjunction of preexisting structural inequities and irregular climatic conditions greatly increasing environmental harm and precarity for the most vulnerable members of society. This nascent climate justice consciousness differed from more prominent Enlightenment and Romantic models of rights-based environmental justice and, in this, it to some extent anticipated contemporary environmental justice thinking that emphasizes how environmental harms converge catastrophically with other systems of harm and structures of inequity.

The project therefore has primarily been concerned with instances of climate injustice that affect humanity, focusing on the environmental precarities created by the convergence of the political and climate histories of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In part, this focus stems from an attempt to locate in the period a version of environmental justice consciousness that critics have previously not identified there. As we have seen, the more prominent Romantic-era model of environmental justice thought concerns itself with asserting inherent natural rights for nonhuman others (mice, lice, plots of land). Given this well-known model, my effort to trace a differing environmental justice consciousness in the period has relied more on contemporary critical frameworks for thinking about environmental justice. As I alluded to in Chapter 3, environmental justice is sometimes referred to as "environmentalism of the poor" or "environmental racism." These epithets are meant to drive home how many Western

models of environmental justice revolve around conservation efforts that often have the dual effect of cordoning off nature in a manner that prohibits equal access and ignoring the types of environmental injustice that impact marginalized and socioeconomically vulnerable communities, especially communities of color. As a result, contemporary environmental justice frameworks typically focus on the types of environmental harm and precarity affecting different human populations as the result of industrial pollution, governmental policies, and the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. In correcting for some of the ways in which Westernized models of environmentalism reinforce instead of address preexisting inequities, "environmentalism of the poor" has pitched itself partly as pushing back against what it sometimes singles out pejoratively as a "Romantic" legacy of neglecting how ecological harms and responsibilities vary across human populations. That legacy can be glimpsed, for example, in William Wordsworth's description of the Lake District in his *Guide to the Lakes* as "a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy," a line that is often considered the first articulation of a national park.[1] Not only was the Lake District one of the earliest national parks established by the British government (largely because of the cultural impact of Wordsworth's poetry), but the first national parks within North America (Banff and Yellowstone) are examples of the type of sublime wilderness ecologically, aesthetically, and morally privileged by the Romantics. In order to create these Romantic versions of "wild" and "preserved" nature, however, the US and Canadian governments forcibly evicted the indigenous inhabitants of those regions. In practice, Wordsworth's articulation of every man's "right" to the Lakes turns out to place serious limitations on who exactly qualifies as rights-bearing when it comes to accessing certain natures.

[1] William Wordsworth, "Guide to the Lakes," in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. 1, eds. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 225.

This ideologically rears its head in his *Guide to the Lakes*, for example, when he repeatedly singles out various flora, fauna, buildings, and landscaping styles recently introduced into the Lake District as unwelcome "exotics."[2]

To a degree, in bringing contemporary anthropocentric environmental justice frameworks to bear on Romantic literary texts, the project is attempting to find greater complexity in the ecologically engaged cultural output of Romantic Britain than is reflected in these two well-known Romantic models of environmentalism: the model of animal and other nonhuman rights articulated within canonical Romantic verse, and the model of Western environmental conservationism that contemporary environmental justice frameworks challenge for thinking about "humanity" in ways that erase differential impacts of and responsibilities for varying kinds of ecological change. To do this, however, the project has itself privileged an anthropocentric mode of ecological thought.

In closing, I therefore want to acknowledge a Romantic British literary text that decenters humanity ecologically to a greater extent than other texts from the period as it considers the diverging impacts of ecological and climatic changes across different human and nonhuman populations (for, even Romantic animal rights poems ran into anthropocentrism too through their anthropomorphizing of nonhuman subjects [Or art thou / A man like me?]).[3] Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* (1826) is set at the end of the twenty-first century and revolves around a catastrophic plague which leads to humanity's extinction. It is also a climate disaster novel, as weather plays a crucial role in the spread of the plague. Warmer weather causes the plague to move more rapidly through communities, whereas colder weather holds it at bay. The novel opens with an unnamed narrator who recounts exploring the Cumaean Sibyl's cavern with a

[2] William Wordsworth, "Guide to the Lakes," 217, 219.
[3] William Blake, "The Fly," in *Songs of Innocence* (London, 1789), lines 7–8.

companion in 1818, a self-conscious dating of the frame narrative that places the novel in dialogue with 1816–1819's climate crisis. Disregarding the warnings of their guide, the pair venture into a narrow, flooded passage that eventually opens into a wide cavern where they discover a series of Sibylline leaves that contain the tale of Lionel Verney, a twenty-first-century Englishman who is the sole survivor of a catastrophic plague that has wiped out humanity. *The Last Man* offers a different version of climate injustice or climatically exacerbated suffering, asking what happens if a plague to which only humanity is vulnerable renders the species extinct while allowing other animal and plant species to flourish. This flourishing is partly a result of humanity's extinction but also created climatically; the same climate that furthers humanity's extinction by allowing the disease to spread more rapidly creates the right conditions for nonhuman natures to thrive.

Much like the newspaper reports and weather diaries examined throughout the course of this project, Lionel's narrative registers extreme anxiety about the weather as the various communities within the novel struggle with the heightened role that an unpredictable climate plays in their survival. *The Last Man* features a year without a winter instead of a year without a summer, but the effect on the populace is no less detrimental, ultimately turning the protagonists into climate refugees. In one of the early plague years, winter lasts mere days before unseasonably warm weather brings it to a close:

> It was not until February that the desired signs of winter appeared. For three days the snow fell, ice stopped the current of the rivers, and the birds flew out from crackling branches of the frost-whitened trees. On the fourth morning all vanished. A south-west wind brought up rain—the sun came out, and mocking the usual laws of nature, seemed even at this early season to burn with solsticial force. It was no consolation, that with the first winds of March the lanes were filled with violets, the fruit trees covered with blossoms, that the corn sprung up, and the leaves came out, forced by the unseasonable heat. We feared the balmy air—we feared the cloudless sky, the flower-covered earth, and delightful woods, for we looked on the fabric of the universe no longer as our

> dwelling, but our tomb, and the fragrant land smelled to the apprehension of fear like a wide church-yard. (270)

Lionel repeatedly draws attention to the disruption of the "usual laws of nature," and the plague itself undercuts any sense that humanity has claims on nature's benevolence. Weather takes on paramount importance as humanity attempts to ward off extinction, and the possibility of climatic instability or variation becomes a source of great concern. With the plague comes a sense that nature itself has stopped behaving in a predictable pattern, that it too has become unknowable and dangerous. Rebecca Richardson argues that the novel offers uncanny parallels to our current environmental crisis—an uncanniness that has surely only intensified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. She points to how the characters' anxieties about warm days because they mean increased spread of the plague mirror our anxieties about warm days as they signal the markers of anthropogenic climate change which are similarly hastening us toward our own extinction.[4] However, markedly different from the warm days of our current climate crisis, nonhuman life within the novel is not harmed by the "year without a winter." The crops spring up in the fields as usual—even if they remain unharvested—the violets bloom, and the fruit trees blossom.

Shelley's novelistic experiment is itself conceptually hampered by the narrowness of its anthropocentric viewpoint. Although the novel tries to conceive of a planet that continues to thrive in humanity's absence, its use of first-person and a frame narrative prevent it from being able to fully think beyond the human to the nonhuman. As the novel remains firmly embedded within either Lionel's perspective or the frame narrator's, it consistently privileges the human.

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[4] Rebecca Richardson, "The Environmental Uncanny: Imagining the Anthropocene in Mary Shelley's the Last Man," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 26, no. 4 (2019): 1062-1083.

Even Lionel, "the LAST MAN," is unable to fully imagine humanity's extinction.[5] The narrative is repeatedly interrupted by asides to a reader whom he insists will encounter his manuscript in the future, a reader who will represent the resurgence of humanity—never quite extinct, or by some miracle reborn: "Patience, oh reader! whoever thou art…thy nature will be human, thy habitation the earth; thou wilt here read of the acts of the extinct race, and wilt ask wonderingly, if they, who suffered what thou findest recorded, were of frail flesh and soft organization like thyself. Most true, they were—."[6] Lionel continually asserts that if humanity does go extinct, another race will inhabit the future earth. In all things that matter they will be human: their nature, their habitation, their "frail flesh and soft organization," their sympathy for his tale. The novel's temporal constellating is intensified by Lionel's constant interpolation of this reader who both is and is not us—which only becomes more unsettling the closer we get to the novel's predicted last year of the world: 2100. Lionel's decision at the end of the novel to carve "2100, last year of the world!" on the topmost stone of St. Peter's instead of "last year of humanity" underscores how his conception of "the world" and his conception of "humanity" are one and the same.[7] Despite this, nonhuman nature consistently—and, for Lionel, frustratingly—flourishes throughout the novel, completely unaffected by humanity's extinction.

The narrator of the prologue calls attention to how the work she has done to translate the Sibylline leaves and form them into a narrative has altered their meaning: "Scattered and unconnected as they were, I have been obliged to add links, and model the work into a consistent form…Doubtless the leaves of the Cumaean Sibyl have suffered distortion and diminution of interest and excellence in my hands. My only excuse for thus transforming them, is that they

[5] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Morton D. Paley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 470.
[6] Shelley, 399.
[7] Shelley, 467.

were unintelligible in their pristine condition."[8] When *The Last Man* was published it was met with critical derision. Shelley had missed the craze of the last man narrative by several years, and her grief-filled novel about the extinction of humanity was described by reviewers as a derivative "sickening repetition of horrors," "the offspring of a diseased imagination, and of a most polluted taste."[9] Today, critics remark instead on the novel's eerily prescient depiction of disease and climatic disruption. It seems much like the leaves of the Cumaean Sibyl, that the novel was "unintelligible in [its] pristine condition." It is the temporal translation of the novel into our current moment that adds links, models "the work into a consistent form," and makes it impossible to read without thinking of the horrors of anthropogenic climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. While the novel was written in the shadow of the climate crisis of 1816–1819 and the ensuing typhus and cholera epidemics, it has now become legible in a new way. Though the twenty-first-century narrative of Lionel Verney is only decipherable by a nineteenth-century translator, the revelatory resonances of Shelley's nineteenth-century novel are made clearer the closer it inches to its stated final year of the world, 2100.

[8] Shelley, 6–7.
[9] Morton D Paley, "*The Last Man*: Apocalypse Without Millennium," in *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, eds. Audrey A. Fisch, Anne K. Mellor and Esther H. Schor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 108.

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LAUREN COOPER
PhD Candidate, Department of English, Syracuse University
401 Hall of Languages, Syracuse, New York 13244
Cell: 610/812-8003 • lacooper@syr.edu

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Postdoctoral Fellow — 2024–2026
Humanities Center/Engaged Humanities Network — Syracuse University

EDUCATION

PhD Candidate — English, Syracuse University — 2017–Present
Bachelor of Arts — English, Reed College — 2012–2016

Dissertation: *Climate Justice Before the Anthropocene: How Inclement Weather Shaped British and Irish Romanticism*

PUBLICATIONS

"On Seeing the Price of Keats's Bread; or John Bull Buying the Elgin Marbles in a Time of Climate Crisis, 1816." *Romanticism*, 30th Anniversary John Keats Special Issue, vol. 30, no. 2, Summer 2024 (forthcoming)

"John Clare's 'Lament of Swordy Well' as Wasteland." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2021, pp. 401–414.

PRESENTATIONS

"Hurricane Season at *Mansfield Park*: Rereading Jane Austen on Slavery through the Lens of Climate," conference paper, North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Annual Conference/International Conference on Romanticism, August 15–18, 2024 (Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.)

'Incessant rain from morning till night': Climate Injustice in Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals," conference paper, British Women Writers Annual Conference, May 28–30, 2024 (Boulder, CO)

"Catastrophic Climates: Irish Romantic Women's Poetry in the Shadow of Tambora," conference paper, Transdisciplinary Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities Forum, Modern Language Association Annual Convention, January 5, 2024 (Philadelphia, PA)

"The Storms Before the Famine: Irish Romanticism and Environmental Justice After Tambora", conference paper, International Conference on Romanticism, October 20, 2023 (Detroit, MI)

"Ecologies of Writing: Building a Youth-Focused Public Environmental Humanities Program", invited talk, Humanities New York and Columbia University

Society of Fellows/Heyman Center for the Humanities, September 29, 2023 (virtual)

"On Seeing the Price of Keats's Bread: Ruinous Stones, Broken Feet, and 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles"', conference paper, Keats Annual Conference, The Keats Foundation, May 21, 2023 (London, England)

"The Wordsworths' Little Ice Age: Climatic Instability and Climate Injustice in the Lake District", conference paper, North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Annual Conference, Sam Houston State University, March 31, 2023 (Huntsville, TX)

"John Clare's 'Lament of Swordy Well' as Wasteland", conference paper, John Clare Society of North America Annual Session, Modern Language Association Annual Convention, January 8, 2021 (virtual, initially planned for Toronto)

"Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecological Poetry", conference paper, Stony Brook University 32nd Annual English Graduate Conference, Stony Brook University, February 28, 2020 (Stony Brook, NY)

"'I advance toward destiny in chains': Rewriting Matrilineal Inheritances in the Work of Rosario Castellanos, conference paper, UMass Graduate History Association Conference: University of Massachusetts Amherst, March 24, 2018 (Amherst, MA)

AWARDS & GRANTS

2024 All-University Doctoral Prize for Superior Achievement in Completed Dissertations (Graduate School, Syracuse University)

2023–2024 Research Excellence Doctoral Funding Graduate Fellowship (Syracuse University)

2023 Lore Metzger Prize for Best Graduate Student Paper (International Conference on Romanticism)

2022–2023 Humanities NY Public Humanities Grant (Humanities NY)

2022–2023 University Fellowship (Syracuse University)

2023 NASSR Travel Grant (North American Society for the Study of Romanticism)

2023 English Department Travel Grant (Syracuse University)

2022 Graduate Student Grant (Moynihan Center for European Studies)

2022 Summer Dissertation Fellowship (Graduate School, Syracuse University)

2021 Leonard Brown Prize in Poetry (Syracuse University)

2021 English Department Summer Dissertation Fellowship (Syracuse University)

2020 Arts and Sciences Summer Fellowship for Graduate Assistants (Syracuse University)

2019 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award (Graduate School, Syracuse University)

2018 Arts and Sciences Summer Fellowship for Graduate Assistants (Syracuse University)

2015-2016 Commendation for Excellence in Academics (Reed College)

TEACHING

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

ENG 122: Introduction to the Novel, English Department (Fall 2021)
ENG/WGS 192: Gender & Literary Texts, English Department/Department of Women & Gender Studies (Spring 2021)
ENG/WGS 192: Gender & Literary Texts, English Department/Department of Women & Gender Studies (Fall 2020)

TEACHING ASSISTANT

ENG 151: Interpretation of Poetry, English Department (Spring 2022, Spring 2020, Fall 2019)
ENG 107: Living Writers, English Department, (Spring 2019)
ENG 121: Introduction to Shakespeare, English Department, (Fall 2018)
ENG 154: Interpretation of Film, English Department, (Spring 2018)
ENG 114: Survey of British Literature 1789 to Present, English Department (Fall 2017)

TEACHING MENTOR

Graduate School TA Orientation Program (2021, 2022, 2023)

STUDY ABROAD, TEACHING ASSISTANT

ENG 400: The Mysteries of London (Spring 2023)

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPAIN

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ASSISTANT

English, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, Kindergarten–Fifth; CIEP Severo Ochoa Torrejón de Ardoz, Madrid, Spain: (Academic Year, 2016–2017)

PUBLICLY ENGAGED HUMANITIES

ECOLOGIES OF WRITING

Program Director and Grantee, 2022–2023
Year-long Public Environmental Humanities Project funded by a Humanities NY Public Humanities Grant at the Syracuse Museum of Science and Technology (MOST)

WRITE OUT

Community writing project partnering SU students with after-school programs that work primarily with first-generation immigrants, New Americans, and other students from traditionally underrepresented groups, especially young girls of color.

Community Program Director, 2023–present

- Girls Inc., at the YWCA (Syracuse, NY)

Publications Manager, 2022–2023:

- *Write Out: A Collection of Creative Writing* (chapbook of student writing)
- *Words on the Move* (art installation of student writing)

Writing Mentor, 2021–2023

- Girls Inc, at the YWCA (Syracuse, NY)
- North Side Learning Center (Syracuse, NY)
- La Casita (Syracuse, NY)

ENVIRONMENTAL STORYTELLING SERIES (https://envirostorycny.com/)

Annual series of linked events, programs, workshops, and courses engaging the impact of the climate crisis on Central New York and interconnected ecosystems around the world.

Curriculum Lead & Coordinator, 2022–present

Uniting the Community in the Pursuit of Environmental Justice (SU news article)

FRANKENREADS

Co-coordinator and reader for a marathon 10.5-hour public reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the novel's publication, October 31, 2018

PUBLICLY ENGAGED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & PUBLICATIONS

Lead Writer and Organizer
Vievee Francis: Ecopoetry and Environmental Hauntings Learning Guide (2022)

Write Out Vievee Francis Lesson and Student Responses (2022)

Co-Writer and Co-Organizer
Oregon Chapter Sierra Club: 50 Hikes in the Tillamook and Clatsop Forests (2015–2016) ISBN: 1932010963

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs CES (Center for European Studies)
MLA (Modern Language Association)
BARS (British Society for Romantic Studies)
NASSR (North American Society for the Study of Romanticism)
AESCS (American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies)
NCSA (Nineteenth-Century Studies Association)
BWWA (British Women Writers Association)
JCSA (John Clare Society of North America)
Keats Foundation
ICR (International Conference of Romanticism)

REFERENCES

Mike Goode
William P. Tolley
Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Humanities
Professor of English
Syracuse University
401 Hall of Languages
mgoode@syr.edu

Crystal Bartolovich
Associate Professor of English
Syracuse University
401 Hall of Languages
clbartol@syr.edu

Brice Nordquist
Dean's Professor of Community Engagement
Associate Professor of Writing Studies,
Rhetoric, and Composition
Syracuse University
316 Tolley Humanities Building
banordqu@syr.edu

Dympna Callaghan
William Safire Professor of Modern Letters
University Professor
Professor of English
Syracuse University
401 Hall of Languages
dccallag@syr.edu

Coran Klaver
Chair, English Department
Associate Professor of English

Syracuse University
401 Hall of Languages
cclaver@syr.edu

Adam Capitanio
Director of Programs
Humanities New York
150 Broadway, New York NY
acapitanio@humanitiesny.org