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# "Rank Corpuscles": Soil and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Representations

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Graduate Program in English

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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“RANK CORPUSCLES”: SOIL AND IDENTITY  
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY REPRESENTATIONS

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Nina Budabin McQuown

Graduate Program in English

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, I analyze scenes of encounter between human beings and human dust in eighteenth-century texts. Ploughmen exhume bones and armor in the arable, consumers taste other people's excrement in their vegetables, and improvers lime the soil to break down ancient corpses. In process, I find that eighteenth-century British authors recognized the soil as an agent of continuity, with the capacity to preserve, mobilize, and disseminate the material constituents of identity from one body into another. At times, the soil's powerful co-operative agency is threatening to the integrity of the human self, but I argue that authors negotiate between the threat posed by dirt's unknowing agency, and the opportunities that such a mediator affords for bridging the devastating aporia wrought by death, partition, and forgetfulness. This dissertation engages with new-materialist perspectives on literary history, arguing that eighteenth-century authors saw in soil not just a symbol for regeneration or fragmentation, but a material agent in the production of identity. At the same time, it offers historically focused readings of each text, showing how authors rely on the agency of soil to resolve particular challenges to continuity.

In my introductory chapter, I discuss the controversy between Locke's metaphysics of matter and late seventeenth-century theologians who wanted to defend the identity of human bodies with the dust into which they decay. Sometimes poets and ploughmen alike greet the agency of dirt with pleasure. My second chapter looks at how early eighteenth-century authors imagine the British earth fertilized with the corpses of British and Saxon ancestors in order to create an alternative physical relation to the national past. What harmonizes competing historical claims in the early eighteenth century, however, endangers the integrity of personal identity as mid-century authors

imagine consumers who fail to distinguish between soil, and the undigested matter of others. In chapter three, I look at how mid-eighteenth-century authors used the traffic in urban nightsoil to delineate both the dangers and joys of the economic interdependence of urban consumption and rural production. Finally, in chapter four, I argue that treatises advocating for agricultural improvement of British wastes describe a literal unearthing of the relics that constitute identity, in order to seize control of the agency of soil and render wastelands into pristine fields for the projection of future value.

#### Keywords

Soil, Dirt, Earth, Georgic, Agricultural Improvement, Materialism, Long Eighteenth Century, George Powell, John Philips, Daniel Defoe, Jethro Tull, Robert Dodsley, William Ellis, Tobias Smollett, Arthur Young, William Godwin, Charlotte Smith.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction: Disclosing Soil, Digestive Soil

“the chief matter . . . being now not the fruits of the earth, and the beasts that subsist on it, but the earth itself; as that which takes in, and carries with it all the rest.”

—John Locke, *Two Treatises*

In his 1694 treatise *The Resurrection of the Same Body Asserted*, Humphrey Hody describes a universe in which every atom of dirt, plant, and flesh, is materially identified with an individual human being:

we are all in some sense *Canibals* and *Man-eaters*, we *devour* one another, we eat our dead Neighbours, our Brothers, our Fathers, the succeeding Generation *swallows down* the former, though we prey not upon 'em, in the same manner, as some other *Canibals* do, yet, by a subtle *Cookery* of *Nature*, we eat 'em at *Second Hand* . . . . From the Bodies of the Dead springs up *Grass*, this when eaten by the Ox, is turn'd into *Flesh*; this we eat, and the *Flesh* of the *Ox* becomes *ours*.<sup>1</sup>

Soil for Hody never loses its identity with the human body it constituted before it decomposed. Even when it becomes “*ours*” through ingestion, all matter is a mode of what the Baptist minister Benjamin Francis would call “human dust” (*Conflagration* 50).

After death this subject-identified dust moves via an agency that Hody names “the subtle

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<sup>1</sup> Lucia Dacome discusses Hody’s treatise in “Resurrecting by Numbers” 85-100. Lloyd Strickland, in “The Doctrine of ‘the resurrection of the same body’ in Early Modern Thought,” points out Hody’s “subtle *Cookery* of Nature” as a “felicitous phrase” (165). See also discussions of Hody in Vidal, esp. 947-8; and Thiel 92-3. On the “chain consumption argument” and its centrality to Christian metaphysical thought, see Walker’s celebrated study of classical and medieval imagery and the Resurrection of the Body, esp. 27-34.

*Cookery of Nature*”—imagined by him as the cycles of erosion, ingestion, excretion, decay, and regeneration—into other material forms, carrying with it not only the mere material of its being but an excess of identity that cannot be assimilated into the “own” identity of an eater, and so continues on from mode to mode. This is what Thomas Browne meant, forty years earlier, when he wrote that “we are . . . devourers not only of men but of ourselves, and that not in an allegory but a positive truth” (*Religio Medici* 47). Soil is the matrix for the redistribution of “*our*” particles within new forms, including the forms of other people’s bodies. Dirt is the “Repositor[y] of God” through which, “though all my flesh shall be consumed by fire, yet the World contains the evaporated Matter” (Hody 142).

In the seventeenth century, a Christianized version of materialism supported the concept of each person’s permanent identity with the matter of their body even after death, decay, and dispersal as dust. For John Donne, as for Thomas Browne, and later for Robert Boyle, “the atomi of the world, physical relics . . . as emaciated or skeletal remains or even immutable atomic elements, will survive *with* the soul despite death’s disassembly” (Hirsch 76, author’s emphasis). Enlightenment, according to the twentieth-century critique, destroys the coherence of this worldview. The empiricist exploration of nature may begin with profound attention to the complexity and variety of the world’s phenomena, but it depends on a differentiation between active, speaking subject and mute, passive object that effaces the agency of things. Bruno Latour argues that the “separation of powers” between seventeenth-century science and politics “offer[s] us the resources we have used up to now: on the one hand, social force and power; on the other, natural force and mechanism. On the one hand, the subject of law; on the other, the object

of science” (29).<sup>2</sup> Seventeen-century science labors to differentiate the human subject from a natural world that is transparent to human rationality in order to justify humankind’s dominion over matter.<sup>3</sup> Even in defenses of the sameness of the Resurrection Body, Fernando Vidal suggests a “disincarnating trend” over the course of the century, where bodily identity gradually transforms into psychosomatic identity in order to differentiate the self from the matter that surrounds it (969), while Thomas Laqueur describes the efforts of British cremationists in the nineteenth century to make the dead “natural—and not cultural—artifacts” by describing the body as “just a species of dirt” (61, 59). Soil and people both learn to specialize in the Enlightenment; nature and culture are rendered into separate systems of production. The body is made of passive dirt, the active self is elsewhere, and just as scholars of the Romantic period have emphasized the flattening out of nature into a mirror to reflect the human ego, soil, and in particular agricultural soil, over the course of the eighteenth century also becomes the sole province and property of a single person through the privatization and enclosure of land.<sup>4</sup> Women, laborers, and regional customs—to say nothing of the corpuscles of other people’s flesh—are divested from earth that has come to represent not a repository of material identities but a fund of capital in the form of soil fertility, and this divestment

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<sup>2</sup> See Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* 13-48; See also Jonathan Lamb’s discussion of experimental science as a species of ownership in *The Things Things Say* 129-150.

<sup>3</sup> For the argument that the Royal Society “developed a metaphysics of God and matter that authorized a conservative interpretation of the social hierarchy,” see James R. Jacob and Margaret C. Jacob, “The Anglican Origins of Modern Science” 534. Wolfram Schmidgen offers a counter narrative, suggesting that seventeenth-century science valued mixture as generative. See *Exquisite Mixture*, 24-58.

<sup>4</sup> On the eighteenth-century’s divestment of science from culture specifically with relation to agriculture, see Merchant; and Schaffer. Both readings might be contextualized under the auspices of the broader critique of enlightenment stemming from Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which begins with a critique of empiricism’s exploitative relationship to nature, and as related to Marxist critiques of enlightenment progress, which focused explicitly on the eighteenth-century agricultural revolution as the precondition for exploitative wage labor and extreme class-inequality. See *Capital* 1: 873-930. I am indebted to Wolfram Schmidgen’s account of this tradition of critique in *Exquisite Mixture* 146-158.

shows up in literary representations in the georgic and rural poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the conspicuous obfuscation of labor, and the willful burial of conflicting agencies or fragmented histories in landscape paintings and poems.<sup>5</sup>

Among the agencies buried or denied by enlightenment science is the agency of matter itself. Recent studies of the construction of subjectivity in the eighteenth-century have attended to the counter-narratives of material “things” in eighteenth-century fiction, resulting in what Jonathan Lamb terms a “forking model of identity” (130), where human subjects, who can only conceive of themselves within the fictional unities of history, polity, marketplace, or personal identity (131), diverge from agents that have no representatives to speak for them, and that therefore threaten the coherence of these unifying fictions.<sup>6</sup> Through formal studies of the novel, the it-narrative or novel of circulation, and of georgic and rural poetry, new work has shown eighteenth-century readers to have been attentive to the capacity of material agents to disrupt and undermine unities of representation as atoms, dogs, coins, and couches reveal the fractured and self-contradictory chaos subtending the categories of nation, estate, or self.<sup>7</sup> Kevis Goodman has located scenes of recognition in georgic, where the labor of the poet/ploughman discloses the repressed variety and ambiguity of materials stored beneath the smooth

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<sup>5</sup> On the obfuscation of labor in British rural poetry, see for example Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* 13-34; James G. Turner, *The Politics of Landscape* 153-187; and John Barrell, *The Dark Side of Landscape*. For georgic as the poetry that buries history in order to reflect the self, see Alan Liu, *Wordsworth* 18-20.

<sup>6</sup> Lamb quotes William Blackstone on the human desire to “to appropriate to individuals not the immediate use only, but the very substance of the thing to be used.” See Blackstone 2: 4; and Lamb 5.

<sup>7</sup> On “things” in the eighteenth century there is a wealth of excellent scholarship. In addition to Lamb, see Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*; Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England*; Mark Blackwell ed. *The Secret Lives of Things*. For sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century things, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*; for a general overview, see Bill Brown, “Thing Theory”; and for things in the context of anthropology, a useful collection is Daniel Miller, *Stuff*.

surface of the landscape.<sup>8</sup> Turned up in georgic furrows—both the lines of literary culture and the lines made by the cultivation of a plough—fragments of history detached from narratives of ideological closure shock, disgust, distress, and are rejected, isolated, ignored or covered up again so that the earth can seem to reflect only one narrative of human interest and agency.<sup>9</sup> Depending on the text in question, this may be the agency of the poet whose authorial unity is threatened by the fragmentation of his self-reflection in nature, as in Alan Liu’s reading of Wordsworth’s georgic burial of French history at Mont Blanc (21); or it may be the agency of the scientist or metaphysician who sublimates the secret textures and qualities of matter into unified categories that facilitate its objectification for human use, as in Goodman’s and Lamb’s readings of a passage in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1790), where Locke imagines with horror the idea of a fragmented and unrepresentable “real” world seen through vision “100000 times more acute than it is now by the best Microscope” (*Essay* 2.27.12, 303).<sup>10</sup> In each of these cases, scholars have tended to focus on the labor of burial, rejection, isolation, or divestment that such painful encounters call forth from the human subjects whose identities have been challenged by fragmented things. Humans have to work to repress the hidden agency of non-human actors, because the fictional unities of human identity are irreconcilable with “the reality and truth” of the thing’s irreducible materiality (Lamb 131), against which fictional human constructions of selfhood are necessarily “revealed and humiliated” (150).

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<sup>8</sup> These studies will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two. See Liu 18-20; and Goodman, *Georgic Modernity* 1-8.

<sup>9</sup> These formulations of the georgic “versus” and the action of “turning up” that goes with it belong to Goodman, who deploys them in her discussion of the pun on “versus” in Virgil’s original Latin, which encompasses both the lines in a field and the lines on a page. See Goodman 1-2. See also Heinzelman, “Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age” 192, for his reading of the “versus” of both furrow and poem.

<sup>10</sup> See Goodman 46-7 and Lamb 135-6.

This dissertation draws on the work of both cultural materialists and new materialists in order to locate a third tradition in eighteenth-century representations of the soil, one in which human beings encounter the soil not as a transparent container for things buried or disclosed by human actors, but as an agent of continuity in its own right. In texts across multiple genres—Restoration drama, georgic poetry, “tour” literature, novels, sermons, and agricultural treatises—I locate moments in which human beings encounter the relics of other human bodies in the soil. In each of these scenes soil acts as it does in Hody’s quote above, as an agent for the digestion, retention, and redistribution of matter that maintains its irreducible identity with human subjects: human dust. The soil as “human dust,” potentially presents a problem of representation to the human being. As Latour explains, the modern subject is invented as a spokesperson:

political spokespersons come to represent the quarrelsome and calculating multitude of citizens; the scientific spokespersons come to represent the mute and material multitude of objects. The former translate their principals, who cannot speak all at once; the latter translate their constituents, who are mute from birth. (29)

How can a person speak for what he does not know is there? Because the ploughman or consumer encounters evidence that the soil has already performed the work of digestion necessary to redistribute human dust into new forms as food and flesh, a decayed corpse in a field of arable land, or a whiff of human excrement in a mouthful of cabbage, indicates the insufficiency of representation—the subject’s own self-conscious labor of representation is not enough to account for the constituent parts of the self. At the point of recognition, soil has manifestly already assimilated portions of the fragmented

remnants that the ploughman is faced with and passed them on, without his agency or consent, through his face and into his flesh. In these scenes, eighteenth-century authors display moments of recognition that soil, because it participates in the material processes of consumption and decay, acts as an agent of continuity, carrying other-identified matter into the bodies of consumers who find that through the “subtle *Cookery* of nature,” they are also non-volitional participants in the continuous circulation of human dust. As non-consensual assimilations in a period that has traditionally been held to place paramount importance on the boundaries of identity, this recognition might logically be seen as a profound violation of the separation between the human subject and the natural world. In practice, we find authors representing the agency of soil in at least three ways. One articulation finds in agential soil a reason for negative affect—abjection and disgust. In the philosophy of Locke, the agricultural treatises of Jethro Tull or the novels of Tobias Smollett, human bodies sometimes break down into things that must be isolated, evacuated, buried, or repressed in order to protect the integrity of the body and the individual’s ownership over the property he has in his own person.<sup>11</sup> At least as often, however, we will find the recognition of the soil’s agency is inflected with positive affect—joy, or a sense of power and relief as cultivators recognize that there is other than human agency at work in participating the continuity of identity. Indeed, we find in many of these eighteenth-century texts an acknowledgement that representation itself may be inadequate to the multiplicity of histories that human bodies do, by their involution in a cycle of digestion, generation, and decay, materially own. Finally, authors including Daniel Defoe, Arthur Young, and William Godwin recognize the agency of the soil, but find the bodies it builds chaotic, incomprehensible, and impossible to use. In order to

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<sup>11</sup> See especially Douglas, *Uneasy Sensations* 138; and Lamb, *Things* 131.

maintain the utility of the identities that are built from its foundation, Defoe, Young, and Godwin usurp the agency of soil, acting as its representatives and speaking for it. Their ventriloquism is founded, however, not in the position that soil is a mute and passive object of human agency, but in the awareness that soil says and does too much to serve specific human purposes without intervention. I argue, then, that eighteenth-century authors sometimes represent soil as a form of “vital matter” in Jane Bennett’s sense of matter “figured as a vitality at work both inside and outside of selves . . . a force to be reckoned with without being purposive in any strong sense” (Bennett 62). In looking at eighteenth-century representations of soil, we see that repression was not the only tool available to eighteenth-century authors for the formation of identity out of variety. Assimilation, cooperation, and hybridization are also powerful effects, and this dissertation recognizes eighteenth-century representations of the work of continuity as a joint effort of human agents and the non-human agent that is soil.

In the second half of chapter one, we will examine two competing accounts of soil that are based on differing conceptualizations of matter. The discourse traditionally attributed to eighteenth-century accounts of natural law and natural religion presumes that earth is God’s gift to human beings, and imagines all matter as the inert object of human agency. We will look at how, in both John Locke’s metaphysics of matter and his influential defense of property, Locke’s denial of human beings’ capacity to “own” the essential qualities of matter means that for Locke, matter can have no essential qualities that are relevant to human knowledge. There is therefore no way, in Locke’s system, to see matter as a medium for continuity. Locke’s idea of matter as necessarily empty and passive not only turns all earth into an object of human agency, it also denies an



important tenet of seventeenth-century Anglican Christian belief in the Resurrection of the Body—which requires that all bodies break down into self-identified “human dust” that preserves and remediates a material human self for reassembly at the day of judgment.<sup>12</sup> We close by acknowledging, even at the dawn of Enlightenment, a counter-discourse to Locke’s theory that conceives of dust as an agent for the perpetuation of self-identified particles. In Resurrection apologies, dust and matter circulate identity as agents, yet do not “own” their agency as volition. These treatises provide a culturally sanctioned model for a non-human agency that can act without striving for self-possession or coherence, already extant in the early eighteenth century.

In chapter two, I begin to explore the imaginative possibilities that eighteenth-century authors saw in soil that could mediate identity in the body without coherent ownership by examining the trope of the blood-fatted fields. The trope of the blood-fatted fields was familiar to eighteenth-century British readers through Virgil’s *Georgics* (29 BC), and, to a lesser extent, through Plutarch’s *Life of Caius Marius* (c.100 AD). An image of regeneration in agricultural soil after the violent fragmentation of national identity in civil war and wars of conquest, the blood-fatted fields are a particularly potent trope for the 1690s and the early eighteenth century, a period marked by repeated reorganizations of government and remediations of national identity in the Glorious Revolution, the age of party, and the Act of Union.<sup>13</sup> At stake in these texts is the question of whether continuity is possible in a nation where sovereign authority is interrupted, and the narratives of history are lost. Soil that mediates the matter of dead

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<sup>12</sup> My use of mediate and “remediate” is indebted to Mann 360-1, and to Goodman, *Georgic Modernity* 17-37. Mann cites both Goodman and Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s 1999 monograph, *Remediation*.

<sup>13</sup> Though they continue to show up in poetry and antiquarian texts throughout the century and on into the next. David Fairer’s and Kevis Goodman’s books both discuss Romantic instances of the trope.

forefathers into the bodies of present nationals allows for the body's ownership of an incoherent or illegible history. This chapter will begin with George Powell's 1695 operatic adaptation of John Fletcher's early seventeenth-century play, *Bonduca*, which offered a grim picture of the consequences of invasion, genocide, and illiteracy for the historical continuity of national identity. Powell's rewriting of the play introduces the trope of soil that absorbs both Roman and British corpses as a means of imagining how a continuous national identity might persist in the soil of a place despite a lack of written record or a broken genealogical line. In the second and third sections of chapter two, we turn specifically to Virgil's ploughman as he resurfaces in self-consciously georgic texts. In John Philips' poem *Cyder*, the poet/ploughman's work with the plough or pen is a poor alternative to the soil's work of assimilation, since the poet's remediation of the past necessarily distorts it. Authors misconstrue what they uncover to fit resistant relics to an ideologically motivated narrative. In contrast, the blood-fatted fields offer an alternative means of owning history through ingestion, a process that is presented in *Cyder* as paradoxically less invasive and fragmenting than the alternative incorporation of Whig histories into the linear narrative of monarchic succession that Philips, as a royalist, wishes to affirm. Daniel Defoe's *Tour Thro' The Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-6), is the subject of the second chapter's final section. Here, Defoe represents himself as standing on fields of civil war battle. Pointing to the speechlessness of soil and the invisibility of relics at two battlefields, Defoe points up the incapacity of the soil to act as the coherent representative of its own history. He takes up the office of interpreter himself. Defoe anticipates later discussions in this dissertation when he refuses to accept the agency of the speechless and fragmented in the construction of British history without

interposing a representative to order and assimilate these fragments. In the *Tour*, Defoe resolves the fragmentation of national history into a unified body that is also a book.

In chapter three, we examine the response to soil's agency when the identity it preserves and remediates is of contested value. Chapter three looks at the various and complicated responses of mid-eighteenth-century authors to soil's agency in the work of redeeming the rank excess of urban excrement as productive soil. So loaded was nightsoil with rank stench and symbolic associations with the vulgar bodies of urban consumers, that only the most arduous process of composting was considered adequate to turn it into soil. As a result, historians of all stripes have insisted that eighteenth century farmers did not use nightsoil as a fertilizer. I argue first that their conclusions reflect the impression that eighteenth-century agricultural authors gave, but re-examine the evidence for eighteenth-century use of nightsoil in the fields in order to explore the mechanism of, and the reasons for, its suppression. In my first section, Jethro Tull, one of the "pioneers" of eighteenth-century agriculture (Ernle 149), creates the first system explicitly designed to meet the privatizing goals of agrarian capitalism by denying any connection between decay and soil fertility. For Tull, nightsoil, or "such Dung as is made in Great Towns," (Tull 1733: 18), is the carrier of the physical traces of others. Tull proclaims his knowledge of the secret textures of urban matter, but his theories of plant physiology work to isolate rural individuals from violation by the subjectivities of urban others that qualify such matter. He theorizes a soil system that requires no input other than the labor of its owner, leaving the landlord free to lay absolute claim to the agency of producing growth from the soil. In the georgic poem "Agriculture," by Robert Dodsley, and in William Ellis' mid-century husbandry manuals, however, dunghills appear as a response

to Tull that presents soil constituted from urban-identified dirt as a medium for the making of sociable and sympathetic bonds between rural and urban subjects. For Dodsley and Ellis, the labor of assimilation is performed cooperatively and recurrently by urban eater, dunghill, and farmer. Their readings of nightsoil make visible the degree to which gentlemen improvers saw agriculture as a means to materially knit urban and rural subjects together by creating a network of abundance reverberating between urban consumers and rural producers, starting at the level of the soil. In the final section of this chapter we will turn to the works of Tobias Smollett, who attends to the presence of human ordure in the soil in his book reviews, travel narratives, satires, and novels. If his early representations of nightsoil tend, surprisingly, to side with those who focused on its capacity to connect individuals in mutually beneficial commerce, his later and better-known fictions see the soil's agency in carrying nightsoil into human bodies as a violation, even as forms of waste that are symbolically coded as nightsoil—people, money, and estates—are redeemable as “retrenched” superfluity. Smollett accepts the metaphorical value of waste, but in practice will not accept human waste as redeemable because he does not trust those who are tasked with redeeming it. Ignoring the toxic agencies of nightsoil, both gardeners and consumers in Smollett's last two novels treat nightsoil as if its agency were imaginary—a matter of taste or judgment rather than a matter of fact, and so fail to distinguish between excrement, dirt, and food. We close by showing how Smollett was basically correct in his perceptions of how agricultural improvers would try to sell nightsoil as “perfectly decent, and admirably efficient” through appeals not to its capacities as a co-operative in the creation of soil and sociability (Young, *Annals* 33: 602), but to its abstract value as a collection of nutrients.

In the fourth and final chapter, I explore the ways that human representation effaces the agency of soil. I begin with waste soils in the early works of Arthur Young. Between 1768 and 1815, Young became the most important propagandist for agricultural improvement and enclosure in Britain. I find that Young's program of agricultural improvement, meant to recreate England's wastelands as the Lockean ideal of "some inland, vacant places in America" (*Two Treatises* 115), does not repress the agency of soil in retaining and remediating historical relics in the forms of food and bodies, so much as it delves underground to usurp and direct this agency. Young's program is to stave off imperial decline by remaking Britain in the image of her colonies. Toward this end, he advocates for the farmer to act as a faster, more efficient earth, in breaking down and redistributing the materials that soil has preserved from the past, and thereby making them available for the production of the future. In section two we see this program at work in Young's paradigm of British wasteland, the moor or bog, and find that Young's program of exhumation and dissipation is different from the program of burial and obfuscation with which previous generations of improvers had encountered the soil of the bogs. Young's texts are not so much blind to the agency of soil as they are critical of that agency's capacity to create a specific kind of flourishing and future-oriented nation. Finally, to conclude both chronologically and thematically, we turn to William Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchers* (1809). Early in his career, Godwin hoped that technological advances in cultivation might extend the capacity of the earth's fertility to support successively larger and longer-lived populations of people until the time when human beings could conquer desires of every kind and live rationally and peacefully, without sleep or sex, forever. His *Essay* is the artifact of a later period in Godwin's life, after he

had come to see the catastrophic power of death as a limiting factor on human perfectability. In the *Essay*, he looks to the materiality of dirt as the connective tissue mediating the continuity of human progress, but because Godwin's speechless, passive dead require the agency and representation of living interlocutors in order to speak their truth, human dust, even the dust of the most virtuous, is useless without the interpretive agency of living persons. Godwin proposes sepulchers—a plain wooden cross—to mark the locations of the illustrious dead and draw the living to them. This section analyses the failure of Godwin's vision of a material continuity that can be owned through representation in the same way as a subjective self. Godwin's sepulchers, like Defoe's book, can never keep up with the presence of the present. We conclude by looking forward to Romantic responses to this conundrum of continuity and representation, already extant and influential by the end of the century in the work of Charlotte Smith.

Each author I treat looks to soil to solve specific and historically constituted discontinuities in identity. My readings are organized chronologically as well as thematically in order to allow for the recognition of similarities between the responses of contemporaneous authors across discursive fields. A chronological organization also allows us to notice a difference between earlier articulations of the soil's power to mediate history in order to produce a present that is connected to—because it is made out of—the past, and later models that recognize the soil's agency, but seek to own it through representation, and thus direct it into specific channels towards the creation of a new and more perfect future. In addition to chronological parameters, I have also limited my inquiry to British authors' encounters with British soils. In most of the texts I examine, the boundaries of the island of Britain are naturalized as the limits of the circulation of its

soils even as “foreign muck” in the form of Roman corpses or Dutch kings also modifies that soil. Studies including Linda Colley’s *Britons* (1992) and Rachel Crawford’s *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape* (2002) help to explain why so many of these articulations of soil’s agency consider the recirculation of only local matter in the domestic earth when they argue for a correlation between the expanding reach of the British empire and a tendency to imagine England as contained and delimited within “a small nation, defined on all sides by the sea which formed a vital core of centrifugal power” (Crawford 4).<sup>14</sup> Drawing on these ideas, and especially from Richard Helgerson’s work on early modern nationalist discourse, *Forms of Nationhood* (1992), I suggest that these boundaries serve as a frame to direct the agency of soil towards the resolving of domestic discontinuities, whether these are in the history of English identity, or in the approaching chasm of imperial decline. At the same time, the boundaries of the British isles as islands are as imaginary as the boundaries of the embodied self. As Heather Sullivan points out, dirt is mobile, moving with us in the dust on our coats and the pebbles in our shoes (516). In fact, the global mobility of soil is highly visible in eighteenth-century texts. Jill Casid represents the hybridization of British soils through practices like botanical collecting and the creation of colonial-themed gardens on British estates. Evelyn confirms the practice: “in . . . transplanting *Spices*, and other exotic rarities from either *Indies*; the curious should be studious to procure the natural Mould in which they grow (and this might be effected to good proportion, by the balasting of Ships)” (sic 27). Britain also exported soil—according the early nineteenth-century traveler James Hall, Edinburgh had “the manure of the streets . . . shipped and carried many miles by sea, after having been bought at Edinburgh at a high price” (2: 581).

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<sup>14</sup> See also Linda Colley, *Britons* 101-145.

While these points are beyond the scope of this current project, it is my hope that this study can add to a field of enquiry within which such circumstances might be fruitfully considered.

In focusing on soil as an agent of continuity, I am able to draw on recent theoretical developments in several areas within and without our historical period. The growing body of work produced on the georgic has offered a field in which agricultural texts are taken seriously as cultural production.<sup>15</sup> Among the wealth of works I have learned from on this subject, I am especially indebted to David Fairer's *Organising Poetry* (2009); Kevis Goodman's *Georgic Modernity* (2004); and the graduate work of Laura Brown Sayre, whose 2002 dissertation, *Farming by the Book* is a deeply thoughtful and exhaustively researched study on the dissemination of the georgic mode through other developing forms. I have drawn on these three texts in particular for sources, concepts, and inspiration, and I see this study as an extension of their work.<sup>16</sup> As texts that acknowledge a place for mixture, hybridity, and discontinuous practices of historical memory in eighteenth-century Britain and England, Fairer's *Organising Poetry*, Jill Casid's *Sowing Empire* (2005), and Wolfram Schmidgen's *Exquisite Mixture* (2013) have also been fundamental. Likewise, particularly as framed by Jonathan Lamb's *The Things Things Say* (2010), the essays in Mark Blackwell's edited collection *The Secret*

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<sup>15</sup> In addition the specialized articles cited throughout, and the text cited above, general studies on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English georgic consulted towards this dissertation include Durling, *The Georgic Tradition in English Poetry*; Chalker, *The English Georgic*; Fowler, "The Beginnings of English Georgic" and "Georgic and Pastoral: Laws of Genre in the Seventeenth Century"; Low, *The Georgic Revolution*; Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century Poetry*; O'Brien, "Imperial Georgic"; Crawford "English Georgic and British Nationhood"; Williams, *The Country and the City*; Turner, *Politics of Landscape*; Mclean, ed. *The Country and the City Revisited*; Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*; Heinzelman, "Roman Georgic"; Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*. Frans De Bruyn's many articles on georgic have also been indispensable.

<sup>16</sup> On her way to addressing questions about the function and proliferation of georgic form in eighteenth-century agricultural treatise, novels, and tours, Sayre notices some of the issues related to the work of soil—especially nightsoil—that I address directly in the pages that follow. It is my hope that this dissertation answers some of the questions that Sayre's dissertation has raised.



*Lives of Things* (2007), and Schmidgen's *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property* (2002), thing theory has allowed me to articulate the agency of material objects and understand its relation to developments in eighteenth-century metaphysics as well as eighteenth-century consumer culture. Like thing-theorists, I seek to recognize eighteenth-century authors' attentiveness to the agency of things. My intervention is to suggest here that when authors admit the agency of the soil, it is not always to reject the disturbing evidence of non-human agency. Empiricism is sensual, and as Goodman points out, it is also affective. The confidence of Young or Defoe, Dodsley's celebratory delight, and Godwin's anguish, each tell us a great deal about what these authors want from non-human actors, and how it is that they think soil operates to connect human bodies through past, present, and future. Ecocritic Heather Sullivan, attending to the special capacities of soil as a medium in her essay on "Dirt Theory" for *ISLE* in 2012, calls for a dirt theory that can "encompass the full range of life-sustaining and toxic agencies in the soil without flinching" (516). I hope that this project can contribute to a dirt theory that attends to all of the agential capacities of soil. Still, I wish to acknowledge that the intensity of my own responses to dirt, and those of the authors I discuss here, is what makes this study possible. Without the sometimes violent, sometimes ecstatic flinching of readers, critics, and ploughmen as we recognize soil's agency in the satiation and violation of our desires, the fragmented continuity of experience would be difficult to see.

## II. Dirt as the Instrument of Ownership

In recognizing soil as agential matter in eighteenth-century representations, this dissertation accords to authors a perspective that would have been in tension with a dominant point of view. Natural law theorists and practitioners of natural religion alike saw the legitimacy of property ownership as founded in God's gift of the earth to humankind. That dominion suggests a notion of ownership of "the very *substance* of the thing to be used" that precludes any agency or self-ownership in non-human things like soil (Blackstone 2: 4).<sup>17</sup> In the following two sections, I will offer a brief summary of this perspective, primarily as it is proposed and adumbrated by Locke. As many contemporaries experienced it, however, Locke's theory fails to address essential points in both the human experience of matter as an agent with properties of its own, and in a Christian doctrinal requirement for the continuity of personal identity in matter. In the closing section, we find that these failings initiate a discourse in the field of theology that recognizes earth and other matter as "unknowing" agents in the continuous remediation of human dust.

"[A]ll things were in some sense made for us, we are thereby obliged to make use of them for those purposes for which they serve us, else we frustrate this End of their Creation," wrote the naturalist John Ray in 1691 (129). In early eighteenth-century interpretations, the justification for the human ownership of soil comes from the grant of God. Earth is given by God to human beings as something to be used: in his Boyle

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<sup>17</sup> See also Blackstone 2: 3: "The earth . . . and all things therein, are the general property of all mankind, exclusive of other beings, from the immediate gift of the creator," writes Blackstone, and "[t]his is the only true and solid foundation of man's dominion over external things, whatever airy metaphysical notions may have been started by fanciful writers upon this subject." Both Lamb *Things*, and Schmidgen, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, discuss Blackstone in their examinations of the relationship between thing-theory and eighteenth-century property law. Likewise, both posit Locke as the major early eighteenth-century theorist of the concept of ownership. See esp. Lamb 3-34, and Schmidgen, 7-31.

lectures one year later, Richard Bentley affirmed Ray's remarks: "the Earth was principally designed for the Being and Service and Contemplation of Men" (6). From the same premise—that God "has given [the earth] to mankind in common" for "meat and drink, and such other things as nature affords for their subsistence" (111), Locke argues in his influential defense of the right to private property in the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), that ownership is a condition of use. Locke writes that "being given for the use of men, there must necessarily be a means to appropriate [the fruits of the earth] some way. The fruit, or venison, which nourishes the wild Indian . . . must be so his, i.e. a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it, before it can do him any good for the support of his life" (111). For Locke, the means by which a person comes to own and so use the earth is the labor he performs: "God and his reason commanded [man] to subdue the earth, *i.e.* improve it for the benefit of life. He that in obedience to this command . . . subdued, tilled, and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed to it something that was his property" and therefore owns it (113-4).<sup>18</sup> The fertility of the earth exists in Locke not as a process within the soil itself but as a property to be extracted through human labor. Earth in itself furnishes "only the almost worthless materials" for the exercise of human agency (119).

In these accounts of the soil, it is a passive, inert substance, totally subjected to the agency of human beings. Its passivity is founded, likewise, on a general belief in the inertia of matter—at least as far as human perceptions of matter can reach. As John Yolton explains, corpiscularian atomism saw matter as "nothing but extended bulk"

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<sup>18</sup> For discussions of Locke's theory of Property that are attentive to the material processes of labor and digestion that Locke leans on to create his theory, see Kramer, *John Locke and the Origins of Private Property*, 127-150; Olivecrona, "Locke's Theory of Appropriation"; Schmidgen, "The Politics and Philosophy of Mixture"; *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 53-63; and *Exquisite Mixture* 101-145.

without properties or qualities of its own (5). Bentley claimed to reach the conclusion that earth was made for human use based on this premise, because “Matter hath no life nor perception, is not conscious of its own existence, nor capable of happiness, nor gives the Sacrifice of Praise and Worship to the Author of its Being” (6). In other words, we know that the earth is under our dominion because earth needs people to use it in order to fulfill, as Ray put it, “this End of [its] Creation.” Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* asserts that matter could have any properties or qualities—up to and including the capacity to think—but our knowledge of the properties of material substances is in any case cut off by our lack of experience: “the Active and Passive Powers of Bodies, and their ways of operating, consist[] in a Texture and Motion of Parts, which we cannot by any means come to discover” (4.3.16, 547).<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere in the *Essay*, Locke affirms that this ignorance is manifestly the will of God in order to facilitate our use of matter, “[w]e are furnished with Faculties (dull and weak as they are) to discover enough in the Creatures, to lead us to the Knowledge of the Creator, and the Knowledge of our Duty; and we are fitted well enough with our Abilities, to provide for the Conveniences of living. These are our business in this World” (*Essay* 2.23.12, 302). Our experience of nature and matter as inert and subject to our use, Locke suggests, is a condition of our ability to use God’s creation. As Latour observed, matter’s inability to own, in the sense of representing, its own properties, enables the idea of our ownership of the natural world. Locke illustrates this when he suggests that if, in sudden breach of the limits God has placed on human experience, a person had “[s]enses acute enough to

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<sup>19</sup> On the possibility that matter might think as another thing that is “impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own *Ideas*, without revelation, to discover” (540), see the *Essay* 4.3.6, 539-543 and Yolton 14-28. In “Of Identity and Diversity,” 2.27 of the second edition of the *Essay*, Locke affirms that his suppositions in regard to personal identity are “such, as are pardonable in this ignorance we are in of the Nature of that thinking thing, that is in us, and which we look on as our *selves*” (2.27:27, 347).

discern the minute particle of Bodies, and the real Constitution on which their sensible qualities depend” (2.23.11, 301), the experience would be impossible to represent to other human beings:

the visible *Ideas* of everything would be different. So that I doubt, Whether he, and the rest of Men, could discourse concerning the Objects of Sight; or have any Communication about Colours . . . . And if by the help of such Microscopical Eyes, (if I may so call them,) a Man could penetrate farther than ordinary into the secret Composition, and radical Texture of Bodies, he would not make any great advantage by the change, if such an acute Sight would not serve to conduct him to the Market and Exchange; If he could not . . . distinguish things he had to do with, by those sensible Qualities others do. (3.23.12, 303)

For Locke, then, the knowledge of “the secret Composition, and radical Texture of Bodies” is hidden in order to enable ownership in both senses of the word.<sup>20</sup> We can only own things ourselves, that is, “do with” them, or alienate and appropriate them at “the Market and Exchange,” if we can represent or communicate them, i.e. own them to “the rest of Men.”<sup>21</sup> Reading the same passage, Jonathan Lamb suggests that Locke presents

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<sup>20</sup> The point that this ownership has multiple valences is made by Jonathan Lamb, Mark Blackwell, and David Fairer. See Lamb, who writes that the word ownership, “extends itself to comprehend both the means of self-preservation, what one *owns*, and the account of the experience of preservation, what one also *owns*” (10). See also Fairer, *Organising Poetry*: “the fundamental point is to have ownership of oneself and simultaneously, it is implied, to ‘own up’ to what one does” (36); and Blackwell, who writes in “The People Things Make” that “‘Ownes’ . . . seems to mean ‘acknowledges’ in the sense of both ‘recognizes’ and ‘takes responsibility for.’ But it also connotes property ownership, hinting that persons must take possession of themselves and thus that they are both subjects and objects of self-making actions” (83).

<sup>21</sup> As an example of Locke’s language of ownership in the *Essay*, he writes in “Of Identity and Diversity” that “[t]hat with which the consciousness of this present thinking thing can join it self, makes the same *Person*, and is one *self* with it, and with nothing else; and so attributes to it *self*, and owns all the Actions of that thing, as its own” (*Essay* 2.27.17, 341). In *Two Treatises*, Locke also stresses self ownership: “every man has a property in his own person: this no body has any right to but himself....Whatsoever then he

in it his awareness of the fictive nature of coherent identity, “Locke's real position is not as real as one might have expected; and what we mistake for reality is what is not in fact there, or what we cannot know is there. The world we move in is . . . filled with phantom qualities . . . hinting at forces we know nothing about” (136). Like Goodman, who notes that Locke seems to respond to the fantasy of the microscopic eye with “no little horror” (46), Lamb sees that Locke’s response to this recognition of reality is displeasure. Lamb argues that Locke’s answer to “controlling such anarchy and limiting the damage it d[oes] to human identity [i]s to have a firm grasp upon . . . an agent of the self he called the person, a figure capable of organizing the irregular products of experience into a credible semblance of identity and reality” (130).

In both “Of Property” and the *Essay*, material things—including earth—must be owned before they can be used, in the sense that we must be able to represent them with and through our experience in order to organize them within the unifying forms of identity and reality. Anything that cannot be owned through a representation of our own experience is outside of the material universe that God made for human use and contemplation, and is therefore irrelevant to human knowledge. In this context, the experience of the world becomes knowable only as an effect of human agencies—acting and counter acting deployments of human power. It is in a world structured through such a materialism that the cultural materialist James Turner, for example, limits his critique of rural poetry in the seventeenth century to the way that poets represent the tensions between those people who own the landscape through its representation in the form of painting, poem, or freehold, and those people who “mould the landscape” (116), through

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removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath . . . joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property” (111-2).

the things that they do—“land-clearance, tree-felling, pruning, chopping, digging, hoeing, weeding, branding, gelding, slaughtering, salting, tanning, brewing, boiling, smelting, gorging, milling, thatching, fencing and hurdle-making, hedging, road-mending and haulage” (165).

But as Robert Markley has pointed out in his reading of “Of Property,” there is a profound inadequacy in any description of the experience of life on earth as an effect of human agencies. Locke’s chapter, Markley argues, represents “the natural world [as] an *effect* of humankind’s use” (827). In “Of Property,” land is a homogeneous substance that, like matter in the *Essay*, has “no internal structure, no qualities that escape or resist abstract calculations of productivity” (Markley 831). Locke’s soil is merely a container for labor: “it is labour indeed that put[s] the difference of value on every thing; and let anyone consider what the difference is between an acre of land . . . sown with wheat or barley, and an acre of the same land lying in common, without any husbandry upon it, and he will find, that the improvement of labor makes the far greater part of the value” (*Two Treatises* 117). Human agency translates directly into soil fertility for Locke, but this representation of the soil does not account for diminishing returns, soil exhaustion, the differences of climate or topography, changing weather patterns, or the intensification of resource use (Markley 834).<sup>22</sup> Nor does it account for Hody’s subtle cookery—the way that nature takes back and redistributes every particle of matter that a person has accrued through labor and assimilation via the processes of excretion, perspiration, respiration,

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<sup>22</sup> For Locke’s link to agrarian capitalism, see Wood, *John Locke and Agrarian Capitalism*; See also McPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*; and Kieth Tribe, *Land, Labour, and Economic Discourse* 35-79. In his chapter on land ownership in *Robinson Crusoe* (“*Terra nullius*, cannibalism, and the natural law of appropriation”), Schmidgen also attends to the ways that Locke’s labor-theory of appropriation informs Defoe’s rendering of the agricultural enclosure as an extended self. See *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 32-63.

and finally death. This is an elision that stands out even more when we consider, with Schmidgen, that Locke's ownership-by-appropriation is based on the idea that by "mixing" one's labor with things, one comes to own them. As Schmidgen observes in several of his essays, this mixture extends the properties of the self (self-identity) into things, physically changing them (*Eighteenth* 54), and making owned-ness into an essential property of matter as "things become human-material hybrids through appropriation"(55). Schmidgen argues that according to Locke's model, any substantive indication of ownership should nullify later claims.<sup>23</sup> Yet such an essential ownership in matter would make its alienation and recirculation impossible. Once marked, a thing should always be marked with the labor of the original worker forever. In fact, however, Locke does provide a means for the alienability of property in spite of the literal change wrought by mixture: ignorance. Mark Blackwell notes that eighteenth-century commentators drew out this implication by suggesting that Locke's self is a kind of plagiarist, "the capacity of a grasping consciousness to 'join itself' to actions, thoughts, and memories without regard to the physical bodies that experience them, is equivalent to the unacknowledged assimilation of others' ideas" ("People" 87). Only if matter has no sensible properties of its own can it be appropriated to human use—it is in order to allow for the continuous appropriation of matter, then, that Locke denies the capacity of matter to retain any substantive qualities at all. It is no wonder he is horrified by the idea that with a microscope, a person might encounter, in a way that he could neither deny nor represent, the "secret Composition, and radical Texture of Bodies" (3.23.12, 303).

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<sup>23</sup>Schmidgen's example here is Robinson Crusoe's panic over the footprint on his island: "Crusoe's constant fear of being devoured . . . is a specific response to the pressures exerted by the emergence of what European eyes were eager to view as the 'vacant' spaces of America" (58). His fear, in other words, is that what he takes to be appropriable land has already been appropriated (devoured) by someone else.



### III. “every day unknowingly”: the Agency of Soil

Locke’s and Bentley’s view of earth and all its matter as wholly deficient in essential qualities that can be known, and therefore totally open to human use and ownership, is only one contemporary perspective on the properties of matter. Another perspective, one attested by Locke’s mentor in corpuscularianism, Robert Boyle, held that matter might withhold some of its properties from human use.<sup>24</sup> In 1675, Boyle, a co-founder and architect of the Royal Society, describes the corpuscles of a weed growing in a field in France that in spite of digestion and other “Elaborate Alterations” persists in flavoring butter with a distinctly rank taste:

I remember, that when I once passed a Spring in Savoy, I observed, that all the Butter that was made in some places, tasted so rank of a certain weed, that at that time of the year abounds there in the Fields, that it made strangers much nauseate the Butter, which otherwise was very good. If it be consider’d , how many, if I may so call them, Elaborate Alterations the rank Corpuscles of this weed must have undergone in the various digestions of the Cow's Stomach, Heart, Breasts, &c. and that afterwards two Separations at least were superadded, the one of the Cream from the rest of the Milk, and the other of the unctuous parts of the Cream from the Serum or Butter-milk; it will scarce be deny’d, but that the vegetable Corpuscles may by association pass through divers disguises, without

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<sup>24</sup> On Boyle’s Resurrection Physico-Theology, see Vidal 952-956; and Thiel 93-4. Some materialists argued that other creatures, though made for human use, might also be made to “enjoy their own being”; see Ray 129, where he quotes Henry More for corroboration. As Anstey has recently observed, not all materialists are mechanists, Boyle is among those who presumed that immaterial forces exist beyond human ken (18). See Anstey also for a summary of argument related to Boyle’s corpuscularianism, especially in its relation to Locke (15-18). See also Schmidgen, *Exquisite Mixture* 41-58.

losing their Nature; especially considering, that the essential attributes of such Corpuscles may remain undestroyed, though no sensible quality survive to make proof of it; as in our newly mentioned Example, the offensive Taste did. (*Works* 8: 306)

Here Boyle describes what Kevis Goodman has named “the noise of living” (*Georgic* 3), a “historical presentness” that turns up “as sensory discomfort, as disturbance in affect” (4). Certainly Boyle’s rankness seems to turn up a disturbing presence in the butter, a quality that can “survive” digestion, that can pass through the cow’s body without being broken down and used by that body. Its rankness is even more disturbing, perhaps, when one understands that Boyle is using “the offensive Taste” that retains its “sensible quality” in butter as an analogue for the persistence of human identity in bodily matter even after the body has undergone a similar series of concoctions into soil, vegetation, meat, and other people after death: Boyle is writing this essay, *Some Physico-Theological Considerations Concerning the Resurrection of the Body* (1675), to affirm that his metaphysics of matter as a corpuscularian chemist comports with the doctrines of Christianity. Among the most central of these is the doctrine of the Resurrection of the same body, which holds that on the day of judgment, every human being ever to have lived on earth will be raised from the grave and held accountable for the actions he committed in a body numerically identical to the body in which he lived and sinned on earth.<sup>25</sup> Boyle’s rank butter, as an instance where “essential attributes of such Corpuscles

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<sup>25</sup> On the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century controversies surrounding the Resurrection of the Same Body, especially in response to Locke, see especially Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*; See also Dacome 95; and Vidal 935. Strickland offers a lucid précis of the competing theories around Resurrection; Udo Thiel offers another useful summary, attentive to seventeenth-century background and later eighteenth-century developments of the concept in British thought, in “Religion and Materialist Metaphysics.”

may remain undestroyed” despite concoction, confirms for the chemist that the possibility of a Resurrection does not violate the rules of nature. “Since,” Boyle writes,

these things are so, why should it be impossible, that a most intelligent Agent, whose Omnipotency extends to all that is not truly contradictory to the nature of things, or to his own, should be able so to order and watch the Particles of a Humane Body, as that . . . stripping them of their disguises, or extricating them from other parts of Matter, to which they may happen to be conjoined, he may reunite them betwixt themselves . . . and thereby restore or reproduce a Body, which being united with the former Soul, may, in a sense consonant to the expressions of Scripture, recompose the same Man, whose Soul and Body were formerly disjoined by Death. (311)

Here soil traced through with the rank evidence of other identities does have properties that resist appropriation, and while those qualities may be sensible, like an offensive taste, Boyle suggests that human properties may survive with no indication at all that they have done so. Boyle, like Hody, describes a universe in which the “Particles of a Humane Body” can move through the material world, contributing to the bodies of others, to cows, butter, and people, without ever being truly their own. At the last day they will be stripped of their disguises. What we think belongs to us, what we own within the “factitious unity” of our selves (Lamb 131), our flesh, accrued to us by the butter we milked and made from our cow, might in fact belong—and be redeemed—to some former soul. Boyle’s affirmation of the self’s identity with its bodily matter means that

we have to admit to owning in matter properties we cannot own in words, and to owning in words properties we cannot own through experience.

Precisely because the body is open to constant change through the processes of digestion, respiration, perspiration, and excretion, in his own interpretation of the Resurrection doctrine, Locke located the “sameness” of self-identity not in flesh but in consciousness. Matter, Locke insists, is only a property of a person’s self as long as it is vitally united to that self, otherwise, “upon separation from the vital union by which that consciousness is communicated, that, which a moment since was part of *ourselves*, is now no more so, than a part of another Man’s *self* is a part of me: and ’tis not impossible, but in a little time may become a real part of another Person” (2.27.25, 346). In other words, what we eat and excrete is in no way identified with our selfhood, as Locke affirms again in a later chapter, “that, which was Grass to Day, is to Morrow the Flesh of a Sheep; and within a few days after, becomes part of a Man: in all which, and the like Changes, ’tis evident, their real *Essence*, *i.e.* that Constitution, whereon the Properties of these several things depended, is destroyed, and perished with them” (3.3.19, 419). Locke’s claim here is, again, that we can only own as part of our selves, what we know is attached to our selves. The body is only attached to the self during life. After death, matter is severed from identity because we no longer know our bodies to be our own. The essential properties on which identity in matter depends are “destroyed and perished,” and the self, “that conscious thinking thing” (2.27.17, 341), is left the only locus of identity. As Mark Blackwell observes, the whole point of Locke’s disassociation of self-identity from substance in the *Essay*, is “to make bodies just another property to be exchanged, appropriated, or lost, without consequences for our core selfhood” (“People” 82), and in

this it is consistent with “Of Property,” wherein Locke “imply[s] a potential equivalence between the body and those things it appropriates, all of which may be considered the properties of the self” (82). For Locke’s self, all that a person can own, that is, “be made to answer” and speak for on the day of judgment (*Essay* 2.27.24, 345), is his conscious memory of selfhood, “the secrets of the heart” (345). Matter is completely alienable from identity, and Locke divests soil of the capacity to mediate the continuity of human identity over time. A man cannot “own” his dissolved and convolved particles any more than he can be made to own responsibility for the hat he has sold, or for the actions done with a different person’s body that happens to contain some particles from the little finger he lost in a war.

The characterization of self-identity as immaterial in Locke’s *Essay* raised a response from orthodox Anglicans that began immediately after the publication of the second edition in 1694, and continued long after Locke’s own death and dissolution into dust.<sup>26</sup> In their responses, apologists for the Resurrection of the same body conceived of the matter of the body as in an essential way inalienable “[b]ecause,” as Henry Felton puts it in 1725, a man’s “*Body* may be something more concern’d than his *Coat*, and his *Head* not altogether so innocent as his *Hat*” (21).<sup>27</sup> After death the body breaks down into atoms, but those atoms retain their identity with the human being they had helped to body forth—they are still properties of her self. The self cannot renounce or forget its claim on

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Blackwell also makes this point, citing both Michael Ayers and Christopher Fox: “Locke’s theory of personal identity, despite its effort to put paid to that theological controversy, instead inspired heated debate” (79). In fact, every decade sees new responses to Locke’s view of the Resurrection, but to give an idea of the longevity of the resistance to Locke’s unqualified matter, Strickland and Thiel both point out that Samuel Drew, in his *An Essay on the Identity and General Resurrection of the Human Body* (1809), is still wrangling with Locke’s identity and the question of who owns the particle eaten by a cannibal in the early nineteenth-century (Strickland 167; Thiel 111). It is notable that Drew treats questions of particle ownership as a species of property law. See Drew’s assertion, for example, that in a given “case, the body eaten will have a right to those particles to form its future identity” (225).

<sup>27</sup> See Felton, *The Resurrection of the Same Numerical Body* (1725).

the corpuscles of the body, but although bodies were not, analogically speaking, coats and hats, literally speaking they were still soil, and grass, and sheep. Despite the threat that nutrition presents to the integrity of self-ownership, the theologians retained their identification of the self with particles of soil. “[T]he most direct Method to assert the identity of the rising Body,” As Thomas Beconsall writes in 1697,

is to resolve it into its first Principle, *Dust, for dust we are, and unto dust must we return*, and certainly *Dust* must be the Materials of the rising Body; If there are sufficient materials of this kind left in the chambers of Nature for each respective Body, it’s the special business of omnipotence, to form ’em into the integral Parts of a human body. (20)

The fact that we have shifted, now, from the business of man emphasized by Locke and Bentley, to the business of God, indicates what is in general true: that the Resurrection apologists of the late seventeenth century usually resolved the problem presented by the body’s millions of personate particles by making them all properties of God’s representative agency. Whenever the gap between the self and the body it owns is blasted open by death or any other type of dissolution, God, the apologists assert, will step in to represent us so that our self-identified particles are not lodged in the bodies of others to the confusion of the ownership of all. Hody, for example, went so far in restraining the capacities of matter to represent itself that he made all digestion, excretion, and assimilation of food into acts directly under the intervention of God, who “will take care so to order all things relating to our *Nourishment*, as that . . . the Particles of One Man’s Body shall never so become the parts of another man’s Body as that the Resurrection of either should be render’d impossible” (185-6).

Although many Resurrection apologies restrain the circulation of matter through God's omnipotent agency, others shift the metaphysics of matter in order to accept the aid of soil and other matter in retaining, redistributing, and reconstituting identity through an "unknowing" agency of its own. One popular way of conceiving of a material body that could retain self-identity without succumbing to assimilation within other people's flesh was the stamen—often conceived of as a minute, hollow organ that represents a quorum of self-identified flesh.<sup>28</sup> Samuel Clarke and David Humphreys both endorse the idea of the stamen as a means by which the body can recirculate through matter unharmed without requiring that "God by a miraculous Providence always interposes to prevent the Parts of one human Body from incorporating with and becoming the Nourishment of another" (Clarke 205).<sup>29</sup> In the words of David Humphreys, who cites Antonie Van Leeuwenhoek as his source:

Every Humane body hath an original and immutable *Stamen*, which is only swelled up, and fill'd by a quantity of extraneous fluids and fleshy substance, and the Blood, the flesh and all the grosser parts, be only considered as clothing to the finer *Stamina*, which only are the real human body. It is plain then, a nation of Cannibals could not occasion any perplexity or confusion in a resurrection . . . and tho after death a humane body, that is the true original *stamina*, should be eat, it would only act like

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<sup>28</sup> See Vidal 962, on the popularity of the stamen as a solution to the problem of bodily continuity. Vidal argues that the stamen represents a move towards conflating physical and psychosomatic identity, yet, as Strickland points out, that stamen was still material, therefore vulnerable to material disintegration by both natural processes and the invasions of scientific inquiry: "contrary to all such theories . . . is the problem of maintaining the indestructibility of whatever part of the body is identified as being the seat of the soul in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary" (176).

<sup>29</sup> On the stamen theory, see Vidal 257-265; and Strickland 172-6. See also Vidal, 962 n.96 for Antonie van Leeuwenhoek's theory of animalcules in relation to the stamen. Particularly on Leibnitz's formulation of the stamen as "the flower of substance," see Christina Mercer, "Material Difficulties: Matter and the Metaphysics of Resurrection in Early Modern Natural Philosophy."

some other extraneous food, and . . . never become a part of the [original body]. (Humphreys 101-2)

A portion of matter like a heart or a kidney, the stamen is also, like an atom, “immutable,” a representative, that is, of only itself. This singularity enables the stamen to “act” both in its capacity to pass, like extraneous food, through the assembled bodies of soil, grass, beasts, and men alike, and in its capacity to “fill up” with, without assimilating, other matter. The stamen, without volition, attends to our nourishment, operating in our bodies as “the real human body,” and so defending identity from a nation of Cannibals.

For Philip Stubs, immutability is not necessary for the body’s particles to retain not only an inalienable, but an active property in human self-identity. Giving a funeral oration for one Thomas Wright in 1700 London, Stubs affirms that bodily matter has a special kind of property in the soul. It should not be conceived of “only as the bare Instrument of her pleasure” (15), but as “an active Partner” in the commission of sin and virtuous acts (16). Stubs assigns an “unknowing” agency to matter second only to “the operative fingers of God”: that at the end of days will “be deem’d sufficient to joyn those Particles which bare Mechanism by its appointment continually shapes and fastens to one another” (11-12). Stubs insists that “Matter by its motion every day unknowingly secretes” the particles of our bodies (11). The “unknowing” operation of matter not only “secretes” but also returns those parts to us as “Foods collected from *East and West*,” circulating both through our bodies and throughout the world in a global trade in goods:

a Man repairs this Body by Food collected from *East and West*, and all the Quarters of the World, as we know he often doth when his Luxury bids



him purvey thro' Sea, and Air, and the utmost limits of his Dominion:  
 Nay, if he sometimes enjoys a partial Resurrection while he lives, when he  
 physically feeds on that which has once been a part of himself, and fills up  
 the Ruines of this Machine with what was formerly separated from it,  
 whence the soul is again united to that very same matter which it here to  
 for informed: Shall it be thought too puzzling a task for Omnipotence at  
 the general Scrutiny and Rendezvous of *all Flesh*, to gather up those  
 things which Man's own, or his friend's Industry, have brought together?

(11)

Stubs uses the language of dominion as if to call up humans as the image of God, running a trade in circulating matter that purveys through sea, air, and all quarters of the world. If human searching can find the particles that were once “a part of himself” why would such a task be difficult for the impeccable scrutiny of God? But Stubs is also faithful to the fact that human agency and intention have no conscious part in filling up “the Ruines of this Machine with what was formerly separated from it.” The figure of “a Man” here vacillates between the individual who owns the limited number of particles that make up “the Ruines of this Machine,” and mankind as a collective—both bodies own a dominion for the full content of which they cannot account. Stubs displaces the industry responsible for the reunion between any given body and its own itinerate flesh onto an “own” man or that man's own “friend,” reaching for human representatives whose industry can seem to direct the returns and rendezvous of prodigal particles. Yet it is Luxury, not God, that bids man purvey, and neither man nor friend trades for the purposes of arranging these reunions. Stubs emphasizes the degree to which the agency

by which particular matter, rather than just various commodities, returns to us is unknowing and dispersed, more “bare Mechanism by its appointment” than the appointment of anyone’s conscious industry. Coherent physical identity is not a self-conscious construction but a serendipitous accident arranged through the constant circulation of matter in a trading nation. Yet what should be displeasure-provoking disorder according to the logic of property—self-owned particles somehow severed from the self and returned to it in the midst of life only through accident and without intention—is described with the language of enjoyment and of satiety. It is as if there is some food out there in the world that fills the body more truly than any other, and a person has no means to collect it other than by answering the bidding of Luxury to take a part in the global circulation of matter by which all—man, friend, luxury, food, earth, sea, and air—have a part in the procurement of serendipitous rendezvous. Stubbs’ sermon on the Resurrection, with its images of selves recirculated through the cooperative agency of men and matter in global trade, reflects an awareness of the unknowing and unknowable mobility of matter brought on by life in a trading city.<sup>30</sup>

Robert D’Oyly’s dissertation *Of the Resurrection of the Same Body*, published in 1729, offers an example of natural resurrection in which we can account for an identity based on national sameness in the same physical way that we account for an identity based on personal sameness. He suggests that we should credit the possibility of resurrection because “we find a *natural Aptitude* in the Parts of some Bodies to be thus restored” (457). His example is the capacity of the soldier’s body to be restored to his national community as dirt when that body’s particles dissolve into soil, grow food that is

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<sup>30</sup> On global circulation in trade as a mechanism for the coherence of hybrid thing-human identities, see Schmidgen, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property* 104-149; and James H. Bunn, “The Aesthetics of British Mercantalism.”

then eaten by his co-nationals, and so are dispersed through the bodies of individual members of that community through digestion. D'Oyly uses the example of a civil war battle described in the second book of Chronicles, where

the corrupted Bodies, as of all other Creature, so of Men, contributing to enrich the earth, and thereby drawn into the Nourishment of those Fruits, Plants and Animals, on which we live, are by a natural Resurrection, renew'd into the Substance of our Bodies. To which purpose, it may easily be imagin'd, that the wreaking Blood of five hundred thousand slain in one battle, between Judah and Israel, drenching the Soil on which it was spilt, became shortly after, I mean some parts of it, the incorporated Nourishment of the surviving Inhabitants. (457)<sup>31</sup>

By suggesting that the soldiers are “by a natural Resurrection renewed” in the bodies of the “surviving inhabitants” when those inhabitants eat the fruits of the soil that ate the soldiers, D'Oyly fundamentally alters the concept of the “same body” that he set out to defend in his dissertation. “Sameness” here refers to a corporate national identity that is renewed within each individual through the incorporation of the nation’s dead by its “surviving Inhabitants.” Like Thomas Browne’s, this is incorporation “not in an allegory, but a positive truth” (47). The only difference is that the sameness of the “same body” here is national rather than personal, so that the soldier bears no individuated ownership of his human dust, which is a collection, instead, of nationally owned particles. It is this national identity that is “by a natural Resurrection, renew’d” in the soil and carried forth through its fertility into “the incorporated Nourishment of the surviving Inhabitants.”

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<sup>31</sup> See 2 Chronicles 13.17. D'Oyly’s reference for the passage, reads “And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men” (King James).

D'Oyly's example allows the idea of soil as a mediator of identity to resolve two sets of fears over partition and death, both the partition of the self from the body it owns, and wants to own forever, and of the nation torn apart by a civil war. Once again, we find positive affect where we might expect to find horror and disgust. D'Oyly's is the renewal in individual bodies of a collective identity, and as such it is a powerful image of the soil's agency in creating continuity through processes that look like fragmentation and decay. D'Oyly's culinary monuments to civil war bear something, physically, forward through history, providing nutrition to the growing corn, and reproducing and immortalizing a certain human stock by mixing particles toward the generation of new parts of human beings. Just as Humphrey and Clarke relied on the stamen to "act" as an agent of waste management for the true original body, and Stubbs imagined the commercial mobility of matter as an agent of personal continuity, these lines on the blood-fertilized fields of Judah offer an example of the joy with which a reader might greet the soil's capacity to connect her materially to a violently dissevered past.

Within their dissertations on Anglican orthodoxy, the divines offer an insight that will be of importance to this dissertation—just as, at the start of the eighteenth century, there is already extant a logic of materialism that divides inert, unrepresentative matter from an active and self-owning mind, there is also extant, as part of a central doctrine of Anglican faith, a logic of material circulation and incorporation, and consequently of the relation between subjectivity and the properties of matter that answers to another agency than human beings'. Matter in these treatises is not totally malleable to the representative self—instead it retains qualities, sometimes, indeed, sensibly offensive ones, while at other times these qualities cannot be sensed at all, and mobilizes them in its passage

through the vicissitudes of form. The agent that does this mobilizing is important.

Ultimately, both Locke and the divines who responded to his concept of a disembodied self affirm a world in which human dust may be mobilized safely only under the attention of conscientious representatives who own the knowledge of all qualities they circulate, whether those agents are the conscious thinking things of human persons, or the consciousness of God himself. Yet even within these self-consciously orthodox responses to Locke's philosophy, the divines sometimes leave behind a representational model of identity and reach for consummations only matter can perform. In the pages that follow, my concern will be with the work that authors across genres imagine the soil to do when it preserves the sensible traces of other people's bodies, work of both disintegration and integration. Sometimes in total violation of the ordered boundaries of the body, soil acts to mediate the passage of identity into what a person calls most her own.

## Chapter Two

## Blood-Fatted Fields: Soil as Matter of the National Past

Among the most widely referenced passages in eighteenth-century English georgic is an eight-line passage taken from the end of Virgil's *Georgics*, book one. In it, the poet describes the fields at Philippi in the aftermath of a civil war battle fought there following Caesar's death:

Therefore, again Philippi saw Roman armies engage in battle with equal weapons. Nor did Heaven think it unworthy that our blood should twice fertilize Emathia and the wide fields of Haemus. Certainly, a time will come when the farmer labouring at this earth with his curved plow will find javelins eaten up with scabby rot, or smash empty helmets with his heavy drag-hoe, amazed at huge bones gouged out of the grave.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ergo inter sese paribus concurrere telis / Romanas acies iterum uidere Philippi; / nec fuit indignum superis bis sanguine nostro / Emathiam et latos Haemi pinguescere campos. / scilicet et tempus ueniet, cum finibus illis / Agricola incuruo terram molitus aratro / exesa inueniet scabra robigine pila, / aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanis / grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris. (I: 489-96)

My translation is similar to that published by Abraham Fleming in his 1589 English crib of Virgil's Latin, which I give here for comparison, and for Fleming's notes on meaning and word choice. His brackets indicate implied information in the poem. Fleming's "percing darts" for example, are the specific weapon that Virgil names, but virtually all translators offer instead the generic term "weapon" as more accurate to Virgil's meaning:

Therefore [the feelds of *Thessalie*] [named] *Philippie* saw  
The Romane armies yet againe among themselves to fight,  
And skirmish all with equall we-pons: [as with persing darts  
Or javelins, of the Romans old th'invading furniture]  
Ne was it of the gods unwor-thie [thought] that *Emathie*  
[Or Macedonie] and the feelds so large of Hyemus [hill]  
Should twice wax fat with [Roman bloud], our bloud [in battell shed]  
And know you this, the time will come when as the husbandman  
Having turnd up the ground with croo-ked plow in those same quarters,  
Shall find darts eaten [soze and gnawne] with rough and rugged rusts  
Or with his heavie harrow he shall emptie helmets hit  
And at the bones so great in graves digd up [found out, or hurt]  
He shall much marvell [seeing them so big, and ours so small.] (Fleming 17)

In Virgil, farming enacts the furrowed temporality of physical existence as objects from the past physically impinge upon the sensory, intellectual, and digestive faculties of a ploughman who experiences an encounter with the past unmediated by any representational form.<sup>2</sup> Virgil the poet describes a history of conflict that fertilizes or “fattens” the soil, which eats up spears as well as blood, and produces both life and waste: the invisible fertility that pushes up the farmer’s corn, and the gnawed-on, only partially digested remnants of bones and armor which the work of farming uncovers. In the process, Virgil offers a potent image for the interplay between temporalities within the material of the earth that is simultaneously a representation of the poet or historian’s violent work of narrative reconstruction. The furrows of the field become points of contact between the future/present wherein the farmer will “certainly . . . find javelins,” and the past-time of the javelins themselves—the historical moment of a civil war that Virgil describes immediately following the passage quoted above, when “crooked Scythes are straightened into Swords” (*Georgics*, trans. Dryden I: 684).<sup>3</sup> In the image of the ploughman, we find the violence of narrative-making acknowledged. The ploughman-poet must gouge, burn, and crush the soil in order to make it produce coherence. Still, Virgil’s setting: a productive farm “fatted” with the blood and flesh of civil war, offers

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<sup>2</sup> I offer “furrowed temporality” as a Georgic response to Michael Serres’ and Bruno Latour’s *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, and Jonathan Gil Harris’, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*. Serres describes time as a handkerchief: “If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed. If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant . . . . As we experience time . . . it resembles this crumpled version much more than the flat, overly simplified one” (60). Harris then takes Othello’s handkerchief as a materialization of “crumpled time” (169-187). I suggest that Virgil’s image of the soil riddled with relics and fattened with digested blood bears comparison with Serres’ handkerchief as an even more potent image of non-linear time.

<sup>3</sup> “curvae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem” (Virgil I: 507)

the certainty that the labor of the poet will generate a stable narrative and a productive future from the gory and heterogeneous materials of the past.<sup>4</sup>

For the authors who participated in the century-long vogue for English georgic poetry, the image of the amazed ploughman in the blood-fatted fields of *Georgics* I: 489-497 was “[o]ne of the most compelling images in Virgil’s poem . . . and one which particularly impressed the imagination of later writers” (Chalker 2).<sup>5</sup> The image is central to the British deployment of the georgic form, yet since Dryden’s 1697 translation of Virgil, readers and poets have struggled over the particular quality of the ploughman’s amazement. Does his silence come from disgust, surprise, distress? For twentieth-century critics of georgic, the blood and bones have typically been read as a scene of negative affect. For Monica Gale, they show “war as a perversion of agricultural labour” (Gale 245). John Chalker finds of the image, in Pope and Virgil, Philips and Jago, that, “there is a marked contrast between Man’s ability to subdue Nature to his purposes in so many directions and his inability to combat death” (201). Pat Rogers takes Defoe’s deployment of this trope in his *Tour* as an example of the largely celebratory book’s sometimes elegiac tone (Rogers, introduction 31), and Paul Hammond also sees a morbid finality and a grotesque irony to the soldier’s bones in Dryden’s *Georgics*: “a grim, unnatural crop from a ground that has been unnaturally sown and fertilized” (*Dryden*, 122). Alan Liu

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<sup>4</sup> The soil at Philippi might be usefully described by its “poly-chronicity” and “multi-temporality,” words that come to me via Harris from Serres and Latour. Harris distinguishes between multi-temporal and polychronic things in material culture: “the polychronic draws on the first, chronological meaning of time in asserting that objects collate many different moments . . . by contrast, Serres’ notion of the multitemporal evokes the second meaning of time. In its polychronicity, an object can prompt many different understandings and experiences of temporality—that is, of the relations between now and then, old and new, before and after” (4).

<sup>5</sup> Among the writers who used it, John Chalker numbers John Philips, Alexander Pope, Richard Jago and Christopher Smart; Kevis Goodman notes the trope in Charlotte Smith’s 1806 loco-descriptive masterpiece, *Beachy Head*, and we can add to Chalker’s list several authors not usually thought to write in the georgic mode at all: the actor and playwright George Powell, Daniel Defoe, Tobias Smollett, and William Blake.



finds in a “snapshot” of this image from the georgics an apt figure for the effacing work that literary representations perform on the difficult and fragmentary relics of history. Georgic, for Liu, is “the supreme mediational form by which to bury history in nature” (18). But ploughing, of course, is about both turning up and turning under, and for Kevis Goodman, the focus in some works that engage the georgic mode is on the capacity for mediational forms like georgic to disclose the fragmented understratum beneath the apparently smooth surface of representation. In georgic “versus”—both the lines of poetry and the lines made by the plough—authors encounter “*unpleasurable* feeling . . . sensory discomfort . . . the noise of living” (3-4). Goodman argues that georgic is an instrument, a kind of prosthesis like a microscope for viewing truth, a “work of verbal mediation” that delivers “quotidian things in soaring words” (43).<sup>6</sup> To find the quotidian things still there, half rotten and ragged underground, Goodman suggests, is a cause for discomfort, unpleasure, even pain.

Yet for contemporary authors, the quality of the ploughman’s amazement was not clear. William Benson, in his 1724 translation, preferred the word “astonish’d” (49), while John Philips, when he deployed the trope in his celebrated poem *Cyder* (1708), made his ploughman “appall’d” (1:242). The difficulty of determining the quality of the ploughman’s amazement is exacerbated by the number of things he might be looking at. Bones, armour, or the shock of recognition that blood and corpses caused the richness of his soil? The problem was so apparent to John Dryden that he tried to fix it. In his 1697 translation of the *Georgics*, the ploughman is, “Amaz’d at Antick Titles on the Stones, /

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<sup>6</sup> See especially Goodman’s chapter on Thomson’s *The Seasons*, in *Georgic Modernity* 38-58.

And mighty Relicks of Gygantick Bones” (I: 666-7).<sup>7</sup> Writing a critique of Dryden’s translation in 1698, Luke Milbourne notices the addition, and derides it: “As if there had been *Tombs* or *Monuments*, *Stone henges* set up in the *Pharasalian* and *Philippic* Fields, which is a very fine fancy. But why should an antique Title amaze any body? Curious Men will go far to see ’em and generally return from ’em sober enough” (137).

Why should an antique title amaze anybody? Milbourne’s point—that people encounter relics of the past all the time and place them easily within the context of received historical representations is a comment on the efficacy of forms like georgic, which create coherent narratives of historical succession from the scattered and broken materials of the past. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this work of producing a coherent national historical narrative for the British past was especially prominent in both political and intellectual life. Antiquarianism supported a narrative of British racial purity that posited the inheritance of a mixed form of government based in an “immemorial constitution” from the ancient Saxons, and it also supported the counter-claims of Royalists, who argued for the derivation of British institutions from the Normans instead of the Saxons.<sup>8</sup> Edmund Gibson engaged a network of antiquaries across the island to produce a new and updated edition of Camden’s *Britannia* in 1695 that recognized the civilizing influence of Roman culture on Britain, and Augustan aristocrats like the Earl of Pembroke (1656-1733) and Lord Burlington (1694-1753)

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<sup>7</sup> Tanya Caldwell notes the addition and Milbourne’s comment on it, but has a different reading: “To Virgil’s evocative list of war relics and giant bones that farmers in later ages shall dig up in their daily labors and wonder at, Dryden adds, “Antick Titles on the Stones” [] . . . Milbourne effuses scorn” (*Time to Begin Anew* 75).

<sup>8</sup> See Levine, Joseph M. “Moderns” in *The Battle of the Books* 327-373; and J.G.A Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law*.

searched for evidence of ancient British and Roman ancestors on their estates.<sup>9</sup> Some of this research involved documents and genealogies, but some of it also involved digging in the dirt for coins, urns, pavements, armor, and bones. Dirt, in fact, became a source of authority in the support of privileged narratives that could challenge or even surmount the evidence contained in genealogies and written records. Francis Drake, for example, searched for evidence of the location of the ancient Romano-British city of Delgovitia under Lord Burlington's estate at Londesborough. Burlington's gardener showed Drake coins and funerary repositories as well as proof that a Roman road had once run through Burlington's park (Ayers 110). Because of the evidence of Roman coins and bones uncovered while digging through the park, and Drake's analysis of soil strata that revealed wheel-ruts, Drake came to believe that "Burlington was literally living above the graves of his Roman predecessors" (110). It is Burlington's ownership and inhabitation of the ground in which these bones are buried that makes him heir to the Roman predecessors inhumed there, a virtual hereditary connection that Drake confirms in his dedication to Lord Burlington of *Eboracum*, Drake's book on the antiquities of York, where he notes that Burlington is "almost . . . of Roman extraction" (Drake "Dedication"). Drake has confirmed his patron's physical derivation from the Roman conquerors of ancient Britain not by digging through chronicles in search of a direct hereditary lineage linking him to the rulers of Delgovitia, but by digging through the literal soil of a garden for coins and bones—now not signs of grim death but of Augustan England's continued connection to its Roman provincial history.

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<sup>9</sup> See Ayers, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome*. Ayers writes that William Stukeley convinced Pembroke that the barrow found at his Wilton estate was the burial place of Carvilius, an ancient Briton whose attack on Julius Caesar's naval camp is recorded in Caesar's *Gallic War* (Ayers 98).

This chapter will examine texts in which the work that georgic poets do to plough under or exhume history is shown to happen alongside the work that the soil does in assimilating and redistributing the material remnants of the past. Georgic labor, as Anthony Low and Goodman have both shown, is the labor of remediation.<sup>10</sup> Ploughmen and poets alike transform their contingent materials into useful forms. Ploughmen turn soil, dung, rain, and seed into food, and poets make the fragmented history of civil war into a narrative of national unity. But what the poet/ploughman faces when he looks at the bones in his fields is not only his labor—the visible history he has to assimilate through his words and agricultural work, but the invisible work already in process by the soil itself. Virgil’s armor is “gnawed” by dirt, and the fields are, in contemporary translations like Dryden’s or William Benson’s, “fatted” with blood. These words point to the digestive agencies of the soil, its ability to assimilate history without the help of the ploughman. Indeed fat, in the burgeoning field of early eighteenth-century soil sciences is descriptive of both fertility and texture. The best soils, in John Evelyn’s *Philosophical Discourse of the Earth* (1675), are “the rich and fatter Mould” (39), while for William Benson, lands can be “too *fat*, and by that means heavy and dull” (*First Book* vi). Fat is the tenacious organic matter in the soil, and as such it is both the evidence and the agency of fertility in the ploughman’s fields. It marks the battle, as the bones and armor do, through the physical presence of its texture, but unlike the bones and armor it does not

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<sup>10</sup> See Anthony Low’s introduction to *The Georgic Revolution*. Low writes that “at some point a historian must subordinate . . . masses of facts to an interpretive theory, if he is to make them comprehensible . . . It so happens that Virgilian georgic, with its stress on obscure private individuals who perform small tasks the cumulative effect of which is to transform society, is an especially apt mode for a poetry that reflects on the making of history” (6). Low’s definition of georgic as a “mode” rather than a form, that is “an informing spirit, an attitude toward life, and a set of themes and images rather than anything so definite, say, as a four-book, didactic poem of two-thousand lines on the subject of agriculture” (7), is the definition that I also use.

require poets or historians to remediate it into form. Soil does not need texts and monuments; it makes ploughmen.

What follows looks at three deployments of blood-fatted fields in texts that announce their participation in the creation of a national narrative. These will not always necessarily be Virgilian in their derivation—George Powell’s use of a trope of richly rotting corpses in British soil has no specifically Virgilian tags such as large bones or ploughmen.<sup>11</sup> What they have in common, besides putrefied and fertile blood, is an engagement with the cultural work of constructing national identity, and an image of soil as a medium for direct material encounter between the present and the past. Importantly, in all three of these works, as well, the blood-fatted fields produce emotions that range from complacency to pleasure to triumph and desire. These encounters with buried martial corpses are not painful. In Defoe’s case—the last of the three—this is because he refuses to accept an unmediated relation to the past. He can be complacent about the dead in British fields because, like Dryden, he replaces their material immediacy with written representations. For John Philips and George Powell, soil acts as an agent, bringing history into the body directly, and so circumventing the need to reconcile discontinuities and contradictions between dominant historical narrative and the evidence of the past. Blood rotted into the arable can connect the present to a historically disconnected past through the soil’s ability to regenerate old matter as new flesh.

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<sup>11</sup> The source for Powell’s *Bonduca* might be one of the Roman historical accounts of Boadicea’s rebellion in Dio Cassius’ *Historia Romana*. In his *Historia*, Dio has the Roman Captain Paulinus give a speech in which he urges his beleaguered soldiers to “either conquer them or die on the spot. Britain will be a noble monument for us, even though we should be driven out; for in any case our bodies shall forever possess this land” (8: 101). Paulinus’ speech seems to inform Powell’s lines, given to his Seutonius, urging his soldiers to earn “A Conquest or a Grave in Britain” (III, 24). The adaptor of *Bonduca*, however, extends this line, and a similar one in Fletcher, to make bodies rotting into land as a form of possession or assimilation, into the central image of his opera.

What is at stake then, is both the interpretation of these three specific texts, and their relation to the larger, ongoing work of building British national identity over the early decades of the eighteenth century. The three texts we will look at in the following sections come from the years between the Glorious Revolution and the beginning of the Hanoverian regime—thirty years that witnessed both the emergence of a new kind of English nation after the Glorious Revolution, the birth of political party, and the Act of Union, and, not incidentally, the simultaneous popularization of English georgic, a form that glorifies the building of a nation through the ploughman's labor in the earth. Our first text, George Powell's 1695 revision of the Jacobean play *Bonduca*, is written in celebration of William III's victory at the siege of Namur. Like other Williamite literature, it celebrates mixture as a fundamental attribute of British national identity in order to overcome the rifts generated by a Dutch king's succession to the English throne. Yet where other Williamite texts, such as Defoe's *True-born Englishman* (1700), offered Britain's mixed sexual inheritance as the basis of its greatness, Powell offers mixture within the soil. For him, British bodies do not have to prove their inheritance from ancient Britons by means of chronicle or heritable line, their bodies, walking over and fed on English earth, are enough.

Our second text is John Philips' 1708 poem *Cyder*, which is widely credited with setting the formal parameters of English georgic poetry for the rest of the century. For Philips, the blood-fatted fields operate within the context of the poem's pervasive political agenda. Philips aims to link the soil of Herefordshire's apple-growing counties to an interpretation of English history in which a monarchy that is natural to the land itself has always been the major force of unification and peace in Great Britain. He faces

competing claims as to the meaning and value of the English earth from Whig interpretations of history, but through the Saxon blood that fertilizes Herefordshire's apples, Philips offers an image of direct material connection to the "forefathers" of Britain's national past, even as he simultaneously undercuts rival Whig historians, who claim to prove the existence of an immemorial common law through Saxon artifacts uncovered in the soil.

Finally, for Defoe, whose *Tour Thro' The Whole Island of Great Britain* is published at the beginning of the Hanoverian regime, seventeen years after the Act of Union under Anne that it both celebrates and enacts, the blood-fatted fields become a scene of the narrator's encounter with the material of *present* Britain, which becomes a "Whole Island," as the title claims, only when the island, geography, history, and all, is processed through the narrator's unifying intelligence. Defoe's allusions to the blood-fatted fields are direct echoes of Virgil, lifting the Latin poem's context of civil war, its list of rusted weapons, and the notion of a ploughman who has uncovered them when he has had "occasion to dig, or trench, or plough up the ground" (2: 206). Yet in Defoe's scenes, the narrator's vision of British ground mediates the reader's encounter with it in every way. The discovery of weapons and fertility by a ploughman is replaced with Defoe's third-person report of that discovery. Likewise, unmediated physical encounters such as digging in the soil, touching the weapons, and ingesting the earth's produce are each replaced in the *Tour* by more mediated narrative forms: the textual processes of recording and assimilating information, the narrator's verbal assertion that he stands "here" (3: 94), and his transition away, which declines to resolve the matter of history by imagining its decay and recirculation in the soil, and chooses instead to simply "move

forward” with the text (3: 94). The land’s history of war is knowable not through the “marks” of the soil’s fertility but through “the story in speculation,” and the weapons are recognizable as relics only because of what “they [the country people] said” (3: 94).

Ultimately it is not the soil of Great Britain, but the text of Great Britain, the *Tour* itself, that provides a direct encounter with the nation. Defoe’s *Tour* suggests that an encounter with the matter of the past is too fragmented, too ambivalent, to form any part of a coherent national identity. To dig and uncover evidence is to have just speculative fragments of a truth that can be made whole only in the unifying narrative of a book.

### I. “Britain-gulf”: *Bonduca* and the British Earth

We begin by examining the Restoration adaptation of a Jacobean history play: *Bonduca*, written by John Fletcher between 1610 and 1614, and adapted by George Powell as an opera with music by Henry Purcell “in one Fortnight” in 1695 (Powell, “To the Reader”).<sup>12</sup> Though Fletcher’s original *Bonduca* has often been read as a play concerned

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<sup>12</sup> The 1695 *Bonduca* is an anonymously authored text, attributed to Powell in *The London Stage*, and in several subsequent critical references to the play. The *London Stage* attribution is made on the strength of Powell’s authorship of all of the paratexts surrounding the published version of the play, including the dedication, preface to the reader, and prologue, as well as the conventional nature of the claim to an anonymous author: Powell writes that the play is authored by “a Friend of mine, a much abler Hand than my own . . . not that his Leisure, Attendance, or Inclinations, would permit him to make any long Toil of it” (“to the Reader”). Eric Walter White suggests John Verbruggen as a possible author, since Verbruggen collaborated with Powell on his other opera, *Brutus of Alba* (1697), but offers no other argument in favor of this choice (126 n.4). Additionally, I offer that there is some potential overlap in the methods by which the two operas are adapted: the most specific claim that Curtis Price makes as to the method of *Brutus*’s adaptation (from Dryden’s *Albion and Albanus*) is that typically “the reworked verses are fitted into radically different contexts or their meaning inverted” (18). See Curtis Price, “Political Allegory.” The same can certainly be said of the anonymous adaptor of *Bonduca*, who, for example, takes Penusus’ sad words on the seemingly inevitable loss of Rome during the third battle in the play (in which Rome is finally victorious) and removes them to Venutius’ prophecy of Britain’s eventual subjection of Rome far in the future, or, in an example of an inverted statement, the *Bonduca* adaptor transform’s Caratach’s 1610-14 assertion that “a couple of cramm’d Romans” are worth twenty British soldiers (II.iii.75) into the starving Roman Cannibal Macer’s 1695 “A good fat corpulent well-cramm’d Britain is Provision for a Prince.” (II, 17). In spite of this interesting coincidence of style, and of the common attribution to Powell, I will place no analytical weight on his authorship. I choose to use Powell’s name primarily in place of the cumbersome epithets that are my alternative.



with the transmission of national historical narrative, and as one particularly embedded within the historical discourses of early seventeenth-century England, it contains just a single, oblique, and early reference to the blood-fatted fields.<sup>13</sup> *Bonduca*'s Restoration adaptor, however, makes the image central to his revision, interpolating more than a dozen additional references from the first scene to the last. In the hands of Powell, the continuity of national matter through the soil, in spite of military defeat, becomes the central theme of the 1695 Drury Lane opera *Bonduca*, which includes the expanded notion of physical inheritance that the blood-fatted fields allow as part of its celebration of the recent military victories of Britain's Dutch King William III.

Because *Bonduca* is not one of Fletcher's more well-known plays, we should start with a brief summary of the action in the original: *Bonduca* is set in AD 61, during the historical rebellion of Boadicea, queen of the British Iceni tribe, against Nero's Roman forces, led by General Suetonius. The play opens after the Iceni have twice defeated the Roman infantry, with Bonduca deriding the Romans in a display of immoderate pride, while Caratach, her cousin and the general of her army, remonstrates in the Romans' favor. Caratach insists that the Romans are worthy enemies, and even more importantly, they are the means by which Britain has entered written history, for "there's not a blowe we gave since *Julius* landed, / That was of strength and worth, but like Records, / They file to after-ages" (Fletcher I.i.140-42), and "though.../...come to make us slaves/.../Our Registers, / The *Romanes*, are for noble deeds of honour" (Fletcher I.i.142-3). The

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<sup>13</sup> The primary text linking *Bonduca* to the historical revolution is John E. Curran's *Roman Invasions 179-224*. See also Curran, "Royalty Unlearned, Honor Untaught: British Savages and Historiographical Change in *Cymbeline*." Julie Crawford, too, makes an argument about *Bonduca*'s negotiation of historical narrative. Crawford's argument, like Simon Shepherd's in his *Amazons and Warrior Queens*, places Fletcher's *Bonduca* within James' well-documented struggle to overcome the cult of Elizabeth with his own royal mythology (Crawford 358; Shepherd 133-151).

importance of Fletcher's presentation of the Roman "Records" and "Registers" as the ultimate good outcome of *Bonduca's* rebellion cannot be overstated. Fletcher's play begins and ends with assertions that the ultimate outcome of the Roman invasion is the entry of ancient Britain into written history and therefore out of barbarism.<sup>14</sup> Yet if written history is an important link to the past (or the future, as the case may be) so is lineage: the importance of Hengo, described in the *dramatis personae* as "a brave boy, Nephew to Caratach," who is the heir to Bonduca's throne, is also established in the play's opening scene, where Caratach reports the boy's near death during battle, and the Roman act of valor that allowed Hengo to live.<sup>15</sup> The action then shifts to the Roman camp, where most of the play takes place—a choice that has puzzled commentators who weigh the imbalance of time spent in the Roman camp against Fletcher's apparently patriotic subject matter.<sup>16</sup> The Roman soldiers are starving, as the island is barren of food to forage or water to drink, and supplies from Rome are running low (I.ii.162-180). One Roman soldier is in love with Bonduca's daughter (I.ii.270), another sneaks into the British camp to forage for food (II.iii.12). A third, the captain of a Roman battalion, refuses to fight, believing that Bonduca is unbeatable (II.i.110-5). Throughout, Caratach, though he is the general of the Britons, nevertheless displays a taste for Roman ideals of masculine virtue that exceeds his thirst for victory and opposes him to the power of his female sovereign and her daughters.<sup>17</sup> When Bonduca's daughters catch the Roman foragers and plan to hang them, he feeds the enemy instead, gives them wine, and sets

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<sup>14</sup> For extensive analysis of this point, see Curran, *Roman Invasions* 179-224, and "Royalty Unlearned, Honor Untaught." It should also be noted that this view of Rome was highly conventional well into the eighteenth century. See Sweet, *Antiquaries* 155.

<sup>15</sup> Alone among named British characters in this play, Hengo is an invention of Fletcher's, present in neither Tacitus nor Dio.

<sup>16</sup> For this discussion, see Green; Boling; Hickman; and Mikalachki. See also Curran and Crawford.

<sup>17</sup> The homoeroticism of Caratach's appreciation for his Roman foes is difficult to ignore. For arguments that analyze Caratach's homoerotic appreciation of Roman arms, see Crawford and Stanivukovic.

them free (II.iii). When the daughters trick the lovesick Roman soldiers in order to kill them in revenge for their rapes, Caratach again frees the captives, telling the princesses “you should’ve kept your legs closed, then” (III.v.71). Finally, Bonduca’s army is defeated through a foolish tactical error on the part of the queen, and the Romans slaughter all of the Britons except for Caratach and Hengo, who hide in a cave. Bonduca and her daughters commit suicide, and the last act of the play is mainly taken up by the starvation death of Hengo. In the end, Caratach bespeaks a burial for Britain’s heir, and then goes back to Rome with Swetonius (sic). The play closes with Caratach, the last of the Britons, being actively enshrined in Roman history by Swetonius, as the general gives orders to his soldiers: “March on, and through the Camp in every tongue, / The Vertues of great *Caratach* be sung” (V.iii.202-3).

As John E. Curran has pointed out, *Bonduca* negotiates the problem of dramatizing a story of ancient British heroism and resistance whose only sources are located in the historical records of the very Roman colonizers that Boadicea was resisting. I would argue that the importance of Curran’s point is magnified in the context of the play’s moment of authorship. *Bonduca* was written during the height of the early seventeenth century’s “historical revolution,” and Fletcher’s play registers not simply the difficulty of telling a patriotic story with the enemy’s materials, but also the struggle between this period’s two dominant legitimizing narratives of British nationalist identity.<sup>18</sup> The first, the narrative on which James I and VI based his claims to rule England, Scotland and Wales as a united kingdom, identifies the nation with the body of the king and founds its legitimacy in the sexual continuity of a royal line that can be

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<sup>18</sup> For the “historical revolution” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel* 65-89; and Mayer 1-33.

traced back to the nation's origin—connecting through King Arthur to Britain's Trojan forefather, Brute.<sup>19</sup> The second is antiquarian, and founds the continuity of the nation on the persistence of the British island itself, despite a rotating cast of kings and conquerors over time.<sup>20</sup> These two versions of British historical narrative relied on different evidence. Royalist narratives depended especially on medieval chronicles that traced the generations of royal families, while antiquarian narratives, founding their principles of inquiry on Baconian empiricism, instead privileged “eye-witness” accounts.<sup>21</sup> The eyewitness accounts included those of Britain's ancient Roman invaders, and antiquarians often supported the claims made in these sources with reference to the material evidence of antiquities dug out of the British landscape itself, such as the remnants of Roman roads, buildings, burial urns, and coins.<sup>22</sup> For antiquarians, the source of the nation's legitimacy was not the continuous reign of a single dynastic line. Rather, the land itself exists as a stable entity within which the fragments of narrative and evidence privileged by antiquaries can be resolved into the history of “a” place. For the cartographer and chorographer John Speed, for example, Britain itself was his “most beautiful Nurse, whose wombe was my conception, whose breasts were my nourishment,

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<sup>19</sup> In Galfridian mythology, the mythopoetic history of King Arthur, whose pan-British kingship, the legend of which was popularized in Monmouth's twelfth-century chronicle *Historia Regum Britanniae*, proceeds from an unbroken line of kings stretching forward to the Saxon invasion and ending with the promise of a future heir prophesied by Merlin, who will reunite the three kingdoms under the throne of Great Britain. Juliette Wood argues that James I attached his claim to the unified throne of Great Britain to Arthurian mythology to an extent unparalleled among previous British monarchs (22).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Helgerson argues for this split between national narratives in the early seventeenth century in his seminal work, *Forms of Nationhood*. See his chapter three (“The Land Speaks”) 105-147.

<sup>21</sup> For James I and VI, for example, the matter of England was his own matter. In his 1603 accession speech, King James bases his claim to the throne on his own physical embodiment of British unity over time “by my descent lineally out of the loynes of *Henry* the seventh” (B1).

<sup>22</sup> See especially the discussion of the place of material evidence in antiquarian studies in Pearce. See also Ayres 84-114; Levine, *Battle* 327-373; and Mayer 18-33.

whose bosome my cradle, and lap (I doubt not) shall be my bed of sweete rest, till Christ by his trumpet raise me thence” (“To the Reader”).<sup>23</sup>

Rather than connecting Britons to Romans through the soil they share, as Francis Drake would later do for Lord Burlington, Fletcher stages the problem of discontinuity at the heart of the antiquarian view of English history by using the same Roman historical sources on which antiquarians like Camden relied.<sup>24</sup> Fletcher, following Tacitus, represents the Roman victory over Bonduca as a genocide.<sup>25</sup> “It is done, sir,” says a

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<sup>23</sup> On Speed see Helgerson 124, see also Helgerson’s reading of Drayton’s *Poly Olbion* (1612-1622), where Helgerson argues that Drayton, like Speed, participates in a “cult of Britan” that shifts the foundations of national legitimacy “[f]rom universal Christendom, to dynastic state, to land-centered nation” (Helgerson 120).

<sup>24</sup> Although it draws its characters from a variety of Roman sources, *Bonduca*’s action is based primarily on the *Annals* of Tacitus, with significant support from the *Historia Romana* of Cassius Dio. Tacitus reports that in A.D. 61, Boadicea, Queen of the British Iceni tribe, led a rebellion against Rome, twice beating the Roman ninth legion under general Suetonius, but finally losing in battle and committing suicide as the Romans slaughtered every last Briton in an orgy of violence where “[t]he soldiers did not spare the lives even of the women, and stabbed the very beasts; thus adding them to the heaps of slain” (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.37). To explain Bonduca’s reasons for rebellion, Tacitus claims that her husband, the Iceni king Prasutagus, had been an ally of Rome. In order to protect his kingdom from violent invasion after his death, he appointed the Roman empire as his legal heir, along with his own two daughters. The plan backfired, however, and “his kingdom was pillaged by centurions, his house by slaves, as if both had been the prize of war. And his first wife Boadicea was scourged and his daughters ravished” (*Annals* 14:31). Thus Tacitus gives the impression of a lawful rebellion, since Suetonius violates the terms of Prasutagus’ will, and suggests that the Roman response—genocide—is excessive. Cassius Dio, on the other hand, tells quite a different story. He attributes Bonduca’s rebellion to the economic burdens of high-interest loans and taxes on the Britons (8: 89 [62.61.2]). Exempting the Romans from any unlawful behavior, he saves his descriptions of war crimes and brutality for the Britons, who “hung up naked the noblest and most distinguished women and then cut off their breasts and sewed them to their mouths, in order to make the victims appear to be eating them; afterwards they impaled the women on sharp skewers run lengthwise through the entire body. All this they did to the accompaniment of sacrifices, banquets, and wanton behavior, not only in all their other sacred places, but particularly in the grove of Andate” (8: 95 [62.61.7]). Despite such provocations, Dio’s Romans do not destroy the Britons entirely, but instead they “slew many in battle beside the wagons and in the forest, and captured many alike... not a few made their escape and were preparing to fight again” (8: 103 [62.61.12]). His Iceni rebellion only ends when Bonduca herself dies, not of suicide by poison, as in Tacitus (14:37), but by sickness (Dio 8:105 [62.61.12]). Cassius Dio gives the impression of a brutal, hypersexualized pagan hoard committing atrocities on a Roman army that responds with restraint. Fletcher had clearly read both histories. His Bonduca, for example, kills herself as in Tacitus, but prays to a druid goddess named “Andante” as in Dio (Fletcher III.i.59). Fletcher takes language from Bonduca’s long speech recorded in Dio, but he selects the more compelling reasons for rebellion and the bloody genocide that ends it from Tacitus. Ultimately, his play is a dramatization less of either historical source than of the ambivalence engendered within a national historical narrative that must take both accounts as evidence of the nation’s origins, so that ambivalence—towards the Roman conquerors and towards the savage British forebears, is built into the national narrative of Britain.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore Fletcher is also following Camden, since in *Britannia*, Camden simply quotes the relevant passages from Tacitus to narrate ancient British history. Given that Cassius Dio is also an important source

Roman messenger to his general, “and the Britons all are put to the sword” (IV.iv.154-5). Beyond simply stating that all of the Britons have been slaughtered, as Julia Crawford has observed, Fletcher also makes the death of ancient Britain into a single, personal death (371). When Bonduca’s heir, Prince Hengo, is starved and murdered by Roman soldiers, his death is eulogized as the death of Britain as Caratach speaks over his corpse:

Farewell the hopes of *Britain*,  
 Thou Royal graft, Farewell for ever, ...  
 .... Fortune .....  
 .....view thy triumph: Look,  
 Look what thou hast brought this land to. (V.iii.160-164)

The Land dies with Hengo, but we never see him buried in the soil. For just as Fletcher’s play dramatizes the impossibility of legitimizing a hereditary connection to the ancient Britons based on a Roman account of rebellion and genocide, he equally undermines the antiquarian claims to a national continuity founded in the British island. Britain, in Fletcher’s *Bonduca*, is an island virtually barren of life. Both Caratach and the Romans view the island itself as culturally, sexually and gustatorially bereft. The Romans disdain British food: “The British waters are grown dull and muddy, / The fruit disgustful” (I.ii.171-2), and the play assigns little more worth to specifically British land, since the Romans “where they march, but measure out more ground / To adde to *Rome*” (I.i.166-

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for Fletcher’s play, however, and the fact that Tacitus was readily available in other formats, I do not feel that there is any evidence to suggest that Fletcher used Camden solely, or in place of the *Annals* themselves. In either case, the text is identical; Camden leaves nothing out of Tacitus’ account of either the Boadicea or the Caratacus narratives. What makes Fletcher’s use of Camden significant, however, is its political implication: the use of Camden is a subtly antiroyalist move in the context of James I and VI’s reign (Helgerson 127).

7). Penusus, the Roman soldier most admired by Caratach, goes so far as to compare the island of Britain to one giant, ignoble grave, asking,

.....Who but fools,  
 That make no difference betwixt certain dying,  
 And dying well, would fling their frames and fortunes  
 Into this Britain-gulf, this quicksand-ruine,  
 That sinking, swallows us? What noble hand  
 Can finde a subject fit for blood there? or what sword  
 Room for his execution? What air to cool us,  
 But poison'd with their blasting breaths and curses,  
 Where we lie buried quick above the ground? (II.i.46-54)

British soil is no womb, but a gulf into which history pours names and bodies that produces nothing: no good death, no posterity, no future to speak of. Certainly Fletcher's Romans do not seem to anticipate that the bodies swallowed in this Briton-gulf might resurface in the furrows of any fields. And it is not only Romans who disdain British matter. Caratach, too, values Romans over Britons not just culturally, but physically. He admires the "handsome Body" of the Roman General Seutonius' tightly marching troops (Fletcher, *Bonduca*, III.iii.4), and he imagines that the very meat of a Roman is more nutritive than British muscle, asserting during a feasting scene that the price of "a couple of cramm'd Romans" is equal to that of twenty British soldiers (II.iii.76-7).<sup>26</sup> Fletcher thus implies that though Roman history is the only legitimate source for accounts of ancient Britain, to rely on it is, paradoxically, to cut off the British present from that past

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<sup>26</sup>"Cramming" in the seventeenth century as now, is the term for rapid artificial fattening of livestock for market. See Short 19.

in every possible way: hereditary connection is severed by acts of genocide, while the land as well as the bodies of the Britons, from a Roman and a native point of view, is so barren as to generate nothing that might connect the ancient dead to posterity. If Caratach initially offers the possibility that dead, mixed Roman and British corpses might hybridize, asserting with an image of grafting and manuring that “That hardy Romane / That hopes to graft himself into my stock, / Must first begin his kindred under ground, / And be allied in ashes” (I.i.171-4), his image of generative grafting, too, is undone at Hengo’s death, when Caratach pronounces, “Thou Royal graft, Farewell for ever” (V.iii.161).<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, Fletcher offers the pessimistic perspective that, although the Roman conquest is indeed the beginning of Britain’s written history, neither antiquarianism, with its reliance on Roman eye-witness accounts, nor royalist mythologies with their basis in medieval English chronicles of sexual legacy, offer a legitimate connection to an ancient past that is cut off by genocide, barrenness, silence, and death. National identity, for Fletcher, confronts an insurmountable problem of representation. Fletcher’s *Bonduca* is less an origin story for British national history, than it is a play about the end of the ancient British line.

In his introductory comments to the reader of the Restoration *Bonduca*, Powell reflects on the previous failure of Restoration England’s considerable number of Beaumont and Fletcher revivalists to bring this particular work before the public in terms that foreshadow the opera’s focus on the generativity of inhumation and decay.<sup>28</sup> Powell

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<sup>27</sup> See a discussion of Fletcher’s reversal of the trope of grafting in J. Crawford 371-73.

<sup>28</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher experienced a renaissance in late seventeenth-century England. Famously, John Dryden in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* classed Fletcher with Shakespeare and Jonson as an English dramatist, and especially as the source of English theatre’s “variety and greatness of characters” (*Essays* 1:78). However, Fletcher in fact outdid both of them. John Harold Wilson notes three hundred and forty two revivals of 39 Beaumont and Fletcher plays between 1660 and 1720—more than either Shakespeare or Jonson in the same period (6).



writes that “the whole Brotherhood of the Quill have for many Years been blamed for letting so Ingenious a Relick of the Last Age, as *Bonduca*, lie dormant, when so inconsiderable a Touch of the Pen was wanting to make it fit for an Honourable Reception in This.”<sup>29</sup> This is a literal revival, Powell tells us, for his opera will bring us Fletcher’s “proud *Bonduca*, in this fighting Age, / That English Heroine wakes to tread our Stage” (“Prologue”). Powell frames the play in double time. It is the past revived, but altered so as to be “fit” for “this fighting age”. The opera presents *Bonduca*, awakened from her grave, but the players themselves have “bus’ness with the Living, not the Dead” (“Prologue”). What is *Bonduca*’s business with the living in 1695? Powell states explicitly in the prologue that it is “a War” between the two theatrical houses.<sup>30</sup> However, because the opera was written and staged “in one Fortnight” during late September of 1695 (Powell, “To the Reader”), the “War” and “fighting age” of the prologue are also likely references to King William’s very recent—and long-awaited—victory against France in the siege at Namur.<sup>31</sup> With the victory at Namur accomplished around August

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<sup>29</sup> See Marsden. The goal of “fitness” for the age, according to Marsden’s observations, encompasses an array of alterations, from the inclusion of operatic stage machinery, pathetic romance, and song, to the reduction of textual and thematic ambiguity, and the introduction of themes with highly topical application. Marsden also notes that Restoration adaptations of Jacobean plays regularly reduced the ambiguity present in language, character, and plot (14).

<sup>30</sup> When Christopher Rich’s parsimonious management forced a split in the United Company in 1694-5, Powell sided with the management and became lead actor at Drury Lane, taking over many of Thomas Betterton’s roles. In an era of ever-growing exception to the manners of the theater, the two playhouses were in close competition for falling audiences, and, as Powell puts it, “all, but knocking out of Brains, is fair” (*Bonduca* “Prologue”). See for contemporary and near-contemporary accounts of the war between the houses: Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*; and Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*. For critical histories, see Hughes, *English Drama*; Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century*; and Emmett L. Avery and Arthur H. Scouten’s introduction to *The London Stage*.

<sup>31</sup> It would, admittedly, be useful to claim a certain attribution to Powell from one perspective: the argument for *Bonduca* as a Williamite text is stronger in light of Hughes’ reading of Powell’s other opera, *Brutus of Alba*, as a Williamite propaganda piece, which is based on, if contradictory to, Curtis Price’s reading of *Brutus* as a political allegory making fun of William III. Price’s reading in “Political Allegory” is also important to this argument because it establishes that Powell was an at least marginally subtle political allegorist: “While blunt in its execution,” he writes, “*Brutus of Alba* is subtle in its underhandedness” (19). Price analyses *Brutus*’s flagrant repurposing of Dryden’s pro-Stuart text and

30, and *Bonduca* written, and staged in September, or, at the latest, early October of the same year, it is quite possible that the opera is even offered in part as a celebration of the King's victory by connecting him and his British subjects to their nation's original resistors of empire.

As if to counteract Caratach's misery over Hengo's failed "royal graft," Powell confidently claims *Bonduca* as "all our own Native Growth" ("Dedication"). But if the original Fletcher *Bonduca* is a play primarily about the inability of the present to connect physically to the past through either the media of body, history, or land, what are we to make of Powell's claims to solve the problem of death and disjunction that Fletcher has left his readers? Critics have universally deflated Powell's assertions: Derek Hughes calls the opera "a crudely patriotic attempt to shift sympathy from the Romans to the British, which fails because the adapter does not sufficiently alter Fletcher to remove the Briton's flaws" (Hughes 429). Curtis Price echoes Arthur Sprague's appraisal of "Powell's hasty friend" (Sprague 151), writing that "Powell's scribbling friend attempted to shift the favourable light from Swetonius and the Romans to Bonduca and the Britons, but failed" (Price, *Henry Purcell* 118). I suggest that Powell is supported in his confidence, that through his multiplication of blood-fatted fields, his use of prophecy, and his motifs of ingestion, consumption, and inhumation as weapons of war and tools of historical record,

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machinery for the production of a Williamite play as productive of an "irony" that subverts its apparent Williamite bias (19) And although Robert D. Hume and Hughes take exception to the subversiveness of Powell's appropriation, all three critics admit that *Brutus* is undoubtedly that rare creature of the 1690s: an English opera with a timely political message (Hughes 429, Hume, *Politics* 38, Price "Political Allegory" 17-20), and one that uses the new context of old text to call forth complex, contemporary responses from the audience in spite of its poor writing. In this regard *Brutus* is unusual—it is one of only two late-century English operas, in fact, that Hume accepts as certainly the bearer of a political allegorical dimension (Hume, *Politics* 38). To my knowledge no critic has ever considered that *Bonduca*, though on the usually patriotic theme of ancient English resistance to Rome and written at a time of national military celebration just two years before *Brutus*, might likewise hold political content, and might likewise be subverting the original meanings of its source material in order to force its audience to identify as patriotic members of the English national community and to admit William III as an Englishman alongside them.

the adaptor of *Bonduca* turns war itself into a georgic labor of nation-building. Death and burial become forms of soil cultivation. Ultimately, Powell offers an image of soil as an agent cooperating with human bodies to assure the continuity of the national past. He thus alters Fletcher's play successfully, especially because his goal is not merely to place the Britons in a more favorable light than the Romans, but to prove the nativity of Bonduca's growth to England's soil, and thereby to realize the "fabrick of antiquitie" in the bodies of "this [age]."

Powell's is not the only effort to reconnect Boadicea to the English nation as it developed over the course of the early modern period. Sixteenth-century masques had made Boadicea one of England's "female worthies" (Shepherd 133). As she was an important archetype for the cult of the warrior queen Elizabeth, so Boadicea was a figure of derision for her un-feminine savagery in the masculinist court of James I and VI (Shepherd 146-7).<sup>32</sup> In the late seventeenth century she experienced another vogue, as poets and playwrights offered her as an embodiment of Britain's inheritance from its ancient indigenous forebears, whose defeat at the hands of the Romans represented both the demeaning savagery of ancient British culture before Rome conquered and civilized it, and the beginning of a long arc to triumph, a promise of revenge that the seventeenth-century English imagined themselves to be fulfilling through the establishment of a bigger and better empire than even Rome had ruled. But a cultural or rhetorical connection was insufficient to the seventeenth-century poets and playwrights whose invocations of Boadicea's legacy always involved the establishment of a hereditary line that could physically link the massacred Britons of Tacitus' tale to the triumphant people of the burgeoning empire through sexual inheritance. Abraham Cowley, for example,

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<sup>32</sup> See also J. Crawford 358-9.

mixes the Galfridean prophecies of Merlin and the Roman histories of Tacitus into an eclectic and mock-heroic vision of British national triumph in his “To the Most Excellently Accomplish’d Mrs. K.P. upon her Poems” (1663), when he suggests that the poet Katherine Philips is Boadicea’s direct descendent, and her vehicle for Britain’s long-deferred supersession of Roman cultural authority:

*Merlin* the Prophet (and sure he’ll not lie  
 In such an awful Company)  
 Does prophecies of learn’d *Orinda* show  
 What he had darkly spoke so long ago.  
 Even *Boadicea*’s angry Ghost  
 Forgets her own misfortune and disgrace,  
 And to her injur’d Daughters now does boast  
 That *Rome*’s o’ercome at last, by a Woman of her race. (71-8)

Charles Hopkins’ 1696 play *Boadicea, Queen of Britain*, written for Drury Lane’s rival company at Lincoln’s Inn Field as a direct answer to Powell’s opera, is another effort to bring Boadicea into the English bloodline.<sup>33</sup> Hopkins’ play resolves its action with marriage and a promise of progeny as one of Boadicea’s daughters, in defiance of the accounts in both Tacitus and Dio Cassius, survives the Iceni uprising and marries a Roman commander. Bridget Orr analyses *Boadicea*’s connubial conclusion as a sop to

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<sup>33</sup> Likely as an answering volley in the “war of the theatres” to Powell’s operatic adaptation in the previous year. Some scenes in Hopkins’ play were borrowed from Powell. See Baldwin Maxwell, “Notes on Charles Hopkins’ *Boadicea*,” which details the textual relation between these two performances.

“early Georgian aristocrats” who wished to figure themselves as direct descendents of the Roman colonial elite (261).<sup>34</sup>

Though like its contemporary productions, the new 1695 *Bonduca* meditates on the establishment of a physical connection between Briton and Briton across history, that connection is not sexual. Instead, the physical connection between past and present that the new opera offers is mediated through the processes of digestion, decay, and growth that take place, over time, in the English earth itself as a result of war’s gory fertility. *Bonduca* marks its preoccupation with the generative rotting of human bodies in its opening lines, where the British Captain Nennius sets a scene of Roman death and starvation as England’s fattening increase:

Seutonius will Repent his Landing here:  
 Conquest hath already Enrich’d our Soyl;  
 Our British Fields fatten with Roman slaughter:  
 So much stale Carrion lies in every Ditch,  
 That the Rank Steams rise from the rotting Heaps,  
 And Choak up all the Air.  
 .....  
 A Famine Rages in their pining Troops;  
 The Mighty Roman Spirit sickens in ’em,  
 And the poor starved Remains of all their Forces,  
 Can scarce Advance to make a Feeble War (I 1).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See analysis in Orr, *Empire*; See textual history in Nielsen 599-600. See also *Classical Culture*, where Ayers also notes the efforts of early Georgian aristocrats to represent themselves as “descendants of the British and Romano-British patriciate of ancient Britain” (86).

Over the course of the opera, *Bonduca*'s adaptor rewrites the entire Roman conquest as a battle of competing ingestion, an economy of flesh where as Rome thins, Britain fattens, and in the end, either Rome will assimilate Britain to its empire, or Britain will assimilate Rome into its soil. In this conflict of consumption, Powell gives Britain the dubious advantage of being extremely delectable, reversing Fletcher's marked imbalance of material resources. Here the wealth of an island and the expansion of an empire is compressed into the vehicle of British flesh. Cannibalistic Roman soldiers long for it: "A good fat corpulent well-cramm'd Britain is provision for a Prince," says the hungry Roman corporal Macer to his troops (II 17). Even rape is replaced with digestion in Powell. When asked what he'd do with a wench, Macer replies "Twould be excellent if she were well boil'd / Or Roasted; but I am somewhat too low kept / To make use of her any way but with my Teeth" (III 18).

Not only are the British people fatter, so is the British land. Its fatness is the effect of the Roman wars of conquest. Instead of the indifference with which Fletcher's Romans measure out the earth, Powell's Roman general Seutonius repeatedly purports to be equally satisfied with either "A Conquest or a Grave in Britain" (III24). Walking a former battlefield, Seutonius admits that "Where e'er we set a foot in all this place, / We trample on a Roman's Tomb" (II 14). Queen Bonduca is "proud to think the richest Blood / Of all the Martial World, now only serves / to dung my Fields" (I 4), and the Roman soldiers even seem to recognize their physical disadvantage, although in words markedly less critical of the island itself than those voiced by Penyus in the original Fletcher. Powell's Romans complain,

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<sup>35</sup> The 1695 *Bonduca* is divided into acts, but not into scenes. I have quoted it using the act, followed by the page number.

Between no Bread and pitch Battels we have not  
Men left enough to storm a Village.

Seutonium is a Noble General; but I see no reason  
Why we should be all slic'd and slaughter'd,

And Dung land here, because he loves fighting. (II 15-19)

The play's final pronouncement on the blood-fatted fields explicitly makes soil fertility into the medium of national identity's continuous relation to British bodies. Two bodies, Prince Hengo's, and the heroic Caratach's, are the matter out of which the future of Britain will generate, though neither survives the war. Hengo has starved to death, his substance eaten up by Corporal Macer, a Roman soldier whom Hengo has already named "the thin, starv'd rascal! / The eating Roman!" (IV 39). Having trapped and starved Caratach and Hengo near to death in a cave, Macer tricks Hengo out of hiding with an offering of food and wine, then shoots him as he climbs down to retrieve the supplies (V 50).<sup>36</sup> Hengo himself dies an emblem of emptiness. His body, once a sign of youth and future, is now "full of wind," and his death, echoing Fletcher, seems to be the death of England itself, the picture of what Rome "hast brought this land to" (51).

Yet new lines added to the opera reverse the finality of the land's death in Hengo's. Instead of just eulogizing Hengo's body as waste—"lovely . . . ruins" (51), a "Royal Graft" (51), dead on the branch, or a "fair flower" (51) cut off "thus unblown" (51)—the revision adds to Fletcher's original imagery of barrenness and sexual immaturity, new imagery of Hengo's body rotting into generative national matter, bound up with Caratach's in a few feet of the last earth that is England's (52). Caratach's death

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<sup>36</sup> In a phrase that is curiously evocative of both the fecund power of the British countryside in Powell's *Bonduca* and the opera's copious references to meat and cannibalism, but probably misprinted, Caratach pronounces that the surrounding woods are "double loin'd with Soldiers" (V 50).

speech is redolent with commendations of his own heroic matter to his native soil as he falls, in defiance of written history, on his sword over the corpse of the British heir.<sup>37</sup>

Dying, he eulogizes the prince, his queen, the land, and his own body in a set of linked images where Hengo's corpse is "A fair rich Soyl" watered by Caratach's tears (52).

After willing his blood, "that richer Purple Stream" to Queen Bonduca and "my unhappy Country" (52), Caratach resigns Britain to Rome with a single caveat,

.....as my Blood

From this small fountain flows, grant me one Favour:

Lay this Young British Rose, Cropt in the Bud,

Close by my side; and since the World's your own,

Spare us but Earth enough to cover o'er

These small Remains, and I shall ask no more. (V 52-3)

By the close of the play, the space of British agency has shrunk from the island's "every ditch" to the "small remains" of Caratach's and Hengo's corpses.

Unlike Fletcher's *Bonduca*, Powell's play views these corpses as significant remainders. The play imagines futurity not by means of a future ploughman, but in a scene of prophecy that predicts the re-constitution of British matter in the bodies of future inhabitants. Though the island is entering "Albion's long, long Night" (V 52), we know from the prophecy made by British captain Venutius in act three that Britain will "yet raise her victorious Head, / Look o're the Rugged Alps, and make Rome tremble" (III

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<sup>37</sup> In Tacitus, as in Fletcher, the historical Caratacus returns as a prize to Rome. In Tacitus, he makes a speech and convinces the Emperor Claudius to leave him his life as a proof of the magnitude of Roman triumph in Britain (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.37). This end to the Caratacus story is interesting because it implies that the mere spoken or written history of Caratacus' military strength is not sufficient to prove the extent of the Roman challenge and therefore the import of Rome's success in subduing the Britons. Caratach's own body is necessary as proof. Likewise, by killing Caratach and spilling his "richer purple" blood in Britain and not Rome, Powell turns his body's physical proof of Britain's significance into a support for domestic, rather than Roman historiography.



23). In Powell, it is not a child of Bonduca's line but the island nation of Britain herself who raises her head and looks straight on from the tragic back-end of the stage into the pit at Drury Lane. To generate such a future for the land, Hengo's flesh is seed and "Soyl" at once, fertilized by Caratach's blood and tears to create the English who will eventually overthrow the Catholic French in King William's War. The post-Revolution English are Powell's culmination of national narrative, the material artifacts of all of this fecund violence, and a victory in themselves. Romans come to assimilate Britain into their empire, to snatch more land "i' the Bowels of us" (I 5). Instead the Roman soldiers are digested, along with their enemies, into the island's soil, destined, eventually, for the creation and content of British bowels. In the operatic revision, it is not the creation of a written Roman record, but this act of processing, assimilation, and digestion, that maintains the identity of English history. The nation, this opera proposes, is not written, but formed out of the bodies that turn into its land, and though "the last of thy great race" may be buried, he becomes a fair rich soil from which a future England "all our own Native growth" will spring.

In the end, then, even though *Bonduca*'s ancient Britons have all been exterminated, in several ways the 1690s *Bonduca* suggests that the soil itself acts as a historical record as well as the material preserver of the English lineage. In defiance of Caratach's identification between Romans and Records, the opera's score, by Henry Purcell, includes the injunction to Britons to "defend your country's wrongs" by recording their own history: "Record yourselves in Druid's songs" (*Songs in the Tragedy of Bonduca* 270). But the opera also envisions the recording of the history of the conquest in soil instead of song. Powell reconceives the act of a Roman writing history as an act of

burial in a new scene added to the opera where an English actor, playing the Roman General Suetonius, stalks across a stage that is England now and that represents an English field in the past as he pronounces Rome's registration of the British "deeds of honor," saying:

This is the fatal Field, the very place  
 Where Caratach has led his Troops to face us;  
 .....  
 Where e'er we set a foot in all this place,  
 We trample on a Roman's Tomb. (II 13-14)

Powell makes the long line of history into a material text, a field which Suetonius, the English actor John Verbruggen, reads aloud by walking.<sup>38</sup> He articulates a narrative, but the evidence of the truth of that narrative is to be found not in a manuscript or in his speech, but in shallow graves in the earth beneath his feet. And because he is the produce of that fair, rich soil, as he stalks across the stage, the player's English body is a text as authoritative as the histories of Imperial Rome.

Powell's opera, then, produces a relationship of mutual validation between the bodies and land of Britain's present and its past. The nation persists in spite of genocide because every body is a reformation of the matter of its earth. The soil persists as the material that both produces and consumes the bodies of its nationals, no matter how they die, or with what issue. As such, when the 1695 *Bonduca* does offer its audience an ancient prophecy of Britain's future imperial power, it is not the sort of prophecy that connects an ancestor to her heiress as in Cowley's poem. Instead, in the opera's third act,

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<sup>38</sup> In this context, it is also notable that Caratach, the material record of British historiographical authority, is played by Powell, if indeed he is the adaptor of the opera.

the British captain Venutius speaks an eleven-line vision of the British *island*'s future military supremacy. From all the way back in AD 61, Venutius sees volleys of cannon fire, sees England

.....yet raise her victorious Head,  
 Look o're the Rugged Alps, and make Rome tremble.  
 Methinks I see the big War moving forwards:  
 Hark how they shout to th'Battle! how the Air  
 Totters and reels, and rends apieces  
 With the huge vollied Clamours! Hear the Romans  
 Tearing the Earth i'th'the bitter Pangs of Death.  
 The Britains there (Comes, methinks I see it)  
 I'th'face of Danger pressing on to Conquest. (III 23)<sup>39</sup>

Written hastily, in the fortnight following the August 1695 victory of King William at the siege of Namur, *Bonduca* finds the seeds of British military supremacy planted and fertilized in the ancient battles between Roman and Briton. The opera picks up Fletcher's old text of doomed British defiance against the tyranny of ancient Rome and repurposes it to celebrate and historically contextualize the victory of the Protestant king against the forces of Roman Catholic tyranny in France.<sup>40</sup> What *it* does the actor playing Venutius

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<sup>39</sup> Powell, or his friend, took most of these lines from the original play, in which they are spoken of the Britons by the Roman general, Swetonius, in the first hours of battle while the Britons still seem to be winning. The tide of the battle soon turns in Rome's favor, so in their original context, this description of British military valor reflects a short-lived show of force about to be undermined by Bonduca's ineffective leadership. In their new context in Powell's adaptation, however, the lines represent instead the long-view of British empire.

<sup>40</sup> As quoted above, Powell, in his introduction to the reader, insists that "the whole Play was revised quite through, and likewise studied up in one Fortnight" ("To the Reader").

see when he says to the “loathsome” Pict Comes by his side, “methinks I see it”?<sup>41</sup> We can’t know where the actor, Mr. Horden, turned his eyes, but we do know that it is September, 1695, immediately following William III’s first clear victory in five years of war. If Horden looks out over the audience, he looks into a group of Englishmen and women flush with success against an empire as threatening as Rome. In context, Venutius’ long stare across the audience is a look at the victorious future of Britain, realized in the moment of the play’s performance as the fulfillment of a prophecy made in AD 60. The audience, then, is England herself, the island that raises her victorious head in the form of the militant and patriotic bodies of the living citizens and spectators.

In implying that William III’s victory in France is the fulfillment of England’s prophesied resurgence over her former colonizers, the 1695 *Bonduca* adds its voice to a chorus of texts, not just the Boadicea poems and plays like Cowley’s or Hopkins’, but also those histories of England, such as Guy Midge’s *The New State of England Under Their Majesties K. William and Q. Mary*, first published in 1691, and poems like Richard Blackmore’s much maligned Williamite epic *Prince Arthur*, published, like *Bonduca*, in 1695, which attempted to enfold the Dutch-born Prince of Orange within a version of English history and thus support his claim to royal power.<sup>42</sup> William’s preferred mythology co-opted the legitimizing myths of Stuart kingship—including the mythic

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<sup>41</sup> The Pict Comes, a rapist and traitor to the cause of his Briton allies, may allude in a number of ways to the tenuous nature of William’s political alliances in Scotland, where the Presbyterian revolution had been steadily reducing the power of the Church of England episcopacy over the course of the 1690s, and where the Scottish Jacobite cause had in 1692 been violently suppressed with the massacre at Glencoe. See Rose 210-18.

<sup>42</sup> Tanya Caldwell finds genealogy at “the heart of the 1690s crises” as old models of sovereignty based on royal succession fell before William III’s elective kingship in 1688 (*Time* 17). After the glorious revolution punctured the dream of a divinely protected Stuart succession, Caldwell claims, 1690s poets struggled with “the disjunction between Augustan imperial destiny and the realities of an England where popular tampering with that most sacred institution, monarchy, renders questions of rightful leadership and civic duties troubling to say the least” (Caldwell, *Virgil* 102). See also Caldwell, *Time to Begin*, 14-21.

kingship of Arthur.<sup>43</sup> However, as Colin Kidd and Wolfram Schmidgen have both shown, some of the most lasting and popular legitimizations of England's Dutch prince eschewed a transparently artificial enfolding of William within the succession of British kings, and instead emphasized mixture and heterogeneity as essential to the development of the English nation.<sup>44</sup> This latter form of Williamite literature is popularly represented by Defoe's 1700 satirical poem *The True-Born Englishman*, which offers England's history of conquest, invasion, sexual and cultural mixture as a boon to a nation that, though it is "Europe's Sink, the Jakes where she / Voids all her Offal Out-cast Progeny" (1:248-9), is for that reason superior, for "those Nations which are most mix'd, are the best, and have least of Barbarism and Brutality among them" (79).

Defoe and his contemporaries tended to focus on sexual and linguistic mixture to prove the "compounded Breed" of the English (1: 171). Defoe's poem defies the sexual legitimacy of the English nation, depicting it instead as a "Heterog'nous" mixture of

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<sup>43</sup> William's preference for a narrative that placed his rule as the fulfillment of Galfridian British history is evinced by his recognition of Richard Blackmore, his court physician and author of the transparent epic allegory *Prince Arthur* (1695), which celebrates William's entry into England as Arthur's rescue of Great Britain from the usurping Saxon rule. As Flavio Gregori writes in his Dictionary of National Biography entry on Blackmore, the poem was widely ridiculed for its poor style and servile imitation of the classics, but William recognized Blackmore by knighting him and presenting him with a gold medal. Dryden accused Blackmore of plagiarizing his idea of an Arthurian epic (Caldwell, *Time* 115), and interestingly, other instances where Williamite texts using the strategy of co-opting Stuart imagery to celebrate the Prince of Orange also plundered Dryden. For example, Thomas Fletcher's Williamite panegyric "To the King" uses imagery "reminiscent of Dryden's depiction of James II" (121), while authors on English opera note the insult added to injury by George Powell and John Verbruggen when they used the machinery from Dryden's massive Stuart celebration *Albion and Albanus* in their Williamite opera *Brutus of Alba*. For further discussion of Blackwell's *Prince Arthur*, and its relation to Williamite national myth-making, see Caldwell, *Virgil Made English* 113-122. It should also be noted that what Hughes calls Powell and Verbruggen's "impudence in plundering *Albion and Albanus* in order to celebrate William III" (429), Price calls "an implied insult to William III" since "a Jacobean opera had insinuated itself into a work that outwardly bade him every good wish" (Price "Political Allegory" 19). Price, however, is working under the ascription of anonymous authorship, while Hughes, like most other critics of English opera, gives it to Powell and Verbruggen. Given Powell's frequent jibes at Dryden, it seems less likely to be intentional satire of William III through the interpolation of a Jacobean opera, and more likely an attempt to bend Dryden's Jacobean text to Williamite uses.

<sup>44</sup> See Kidd 75-76. See also Schmidgen, *Exquisite Mixture* 5-8. Both Schmidgen and Kidd note numerous additional examples of texts celebrating England's heterogeneous inheritance in the 1690s, in addition to Defoe's *Trueborn Englishman*.

“Scot, Pict, Briton, Roman, Dane” as well as Norman, Western-Angle and Saxon (1:335, 358), and it defines England as a nation located in place, not in the body of its sovereign. In defying the two premises of England’s sexual and ethnic purity and the coherence of its political body within the representative body of the King, Defoe is part of the same historiographical battle waged since the late sixteenth century that Fletcher’s original play had addressed. Defoe, like Fletcher, accepts the discontinuity inherent in Briton’s ethnic and political history, and as a result, Britain becomes a “sink” in Defoe as it was a “gulf” in Fletcher. But where Fletcher’s gulf was a barren “quicksand-ruine,” Defoe’s both receives and produces progeny to form a “better” kind of mixed sexual inheritance. The Restoration *Bonduca*’s new and unique maneuver in this historiographical battle is the opera’s recognition of the full potential of the “Jakes” or “sink” metaphor deployed by both Defoe and Fletcher in their struggles to represent the mixture and disjunction so fundamental to British national development. Powell turns this Jakes into a dung-pit. The representative of England in Defoe’s poem, as in Powell’s play, is the island itself, the Jakes of Europe and the ground onto which “the silent nations undistinguish’d fall” (1:364), but Powell extends the metaphor of the Jakes or Sink, drawing on the materiality of the body to offer the possibility that even in the absence of “progeny,” a sink or a jakes can still be generative simply by retaining and reproducing national matter as soil and all that grows from it.

In this way, the 1695 revision of *Bonduca* might be classed with Defoe’s *Trueborn Englishman* as a celebration of British history as a heterogeneous, discontinuous narrative wrought, through the process of time and the work of mixture—this time subterranean rather than sexual—into a coherent nation with a reach across

oceans and alps. *Bonduca*'s adaptor dramatizes neither the end of the British historical narrative line, as in Fletcher, nor the beginning of a continuous narrative of the eventual triumph of a hereditary line, as in Cowley or Hopkins, but as in Defoe's poem, the laying down of broken, scattered, but none the less material evidence of national continuity in the earth and the bodies it produces. *Bonduca*, then, is a patriotic opera formed for William's England, encouraging allegiance to the idea of a unified nation made strong by the very violence and disjunction of its historical wars and conquests, yet capable of assimilating even a foreign king into British soil that persists in the face of any catastrophe or disjunction.

## II: "Upon that treacherous Tract of Land": *Cyder*, Saxon Matter, and the Herefordshire Soil

Taken as a metaphor for the making of polities, georgic cultivation raises the question of the responsibilities representatives have towards the fragments of historicized and culturally loaded matter that constitutes them. How does a poem represent the fragmented histories and didactic texts out of which it is compounded? Goodman's reading of georgic form views it as a "prosthesis," a method of mediation which lets the poet examine various materials from scientific or agricultural treatise, travel narrative, and national history, and reconstruct them as coherent form (43). The georgic poet speaks for the soil, the farmer, the statesman and the historian. He subsumes low material process, cultural and agricultural practice, and national history into a coherent unity of form. This was a capacity often noted and admired by eighteenth-century critics of the *Georgics*. Addison's *Essay on Georgics* identified their remediation of low matter into elegant verse

through the comical image of a farmer who “breaks the Clods and tosses the Dung about with an air of gracefulness.”<sup>45</sup> William Benson, too, noted that “[t]he *Georgic* has for its Subject the plainest and most common Things . . . and therefore to supply this Defect, he [the poet] undertakes to give them a new Form, and to raise up, as it were, another Creation to answer his Purpose. To this End he endows even the Earth, as well as Vegetables, with Sense and Passions” (*Second Book* iii). In order to make the earth speak, Benson reasons, the poet has to give it voice. John Dryden, Benson thought, was particularly bad at this (*First Book* vii).

In contrast to Dryden’s failure, Benson held up the example of John Philips’ *Cyder*, which he thought “everywhere abounds with this kind of Excellence, as it does with all Perfections . . . the English Poet has often come up to the Strength of the *Roman* Writer” (*First Book* xiii). Philips was particularly good at speaking for nature, and like Virgil, he managed to meld strength of poetic expression with the delicate task of constructing as natural the version of British national history favored by his patrons. Philips’ work was, like Virgil’s “what we call *Writing for the Government*,” as Benson put it (*Second Book* x). *Cyder* is in fact a piece of commissioned political propaganda, “a commercial front for what was actually a promotional publication for a leading minister who . . . needed to count on the support of precisely those people strategically praised in Philips’ poem” (Pellicer, “Harleian” 192). That minister is Robert Harley, then Secretary of State to Queen Anne, who had already paid John Philips for one successful poetic propaganda piece, and now, in concert with Philips’ other patron, Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, arranged housing, care, and supervision for Philips as he struggled for two

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<sup>45</sup> See Addison, Joseph. “An Essay on the Georgics.” See also Goodman, *Georgic Modernity* 22-35.



years, in the midst of what would prove to be a mortal illness, to complete the poem.<sup>46</sup>

The centerpiece of *Cyder*'s political apparatus is its series of encomiums to Tory politicians (Rogers, "Political" 425), but the poem's embeddedness in "a specific and well-documented Tory milieu" is also "reflected . . . in Philips's interpretation of English history, of recent political events, and even, occasionally, in his agricultural advice" (Pellicer, intro. i-ii). In fact, Benson was accurate in his identification of John Philips' special skills. Philips set the precedent for English georgic as a genre that could incorporate both a highly politicized perspective and a topographical component, one that derives its episodes and similes, in many cases, from England's rich tradition of chorographical and topographical poetry and prose.<sup>47</sup> Not only does information gleaned from Camden's *Britannia* and John Speed's *Theatre* furnish passages within the poem, but, with its tight focus on the land and people of Herefordshire, the poem makes regionalism key to its vision of national belonging. Philips "places celebration of the soil in the foreground of his tribute to the union of the three lands out of which Britain was born" (Crawford R. 115). Where Virgil's *Georgics* had inhabited a generic Italian

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<sup>46</sup> "Since 1704 Philips had been sponsored by Robert Harley and Lord Bolingbroke to finish his georgic and to make it reflect his Tory patrons' political agenda" (Pellicer, "Dry" 347). The poem he had already paid for was *Blenheim* (1705), commissioned as a response to *The Campaign* (1704), Joseph Addison's extremely popular, and volubly Whiggish celebration of the Duke of Marlborough's victory against France. Philips was paid by both Harley and the Lord Treasurer, Sidney Godolphin for his work. See Thomas's introduction to Philip's *Cyder*, xxii-xxiii. See also Rogers, "Political Georgic" 415-418; and Pellicer "Harleian Georgic" 191-193. Both Pellicer and Thomas, mention that Philips later claimed to regret writing *Blenheim*, which violated his own political principles as a convicted non-juror and isolated him from his even more convicted family—his two older brothers never spoke to him again (Pellicer, "Harleian Georgic" 189 and Thomas, "Introduction" xxii). For the details of Harley's stewardship, see Pellicer's "Harleian Georgic," esp. 185-190. Pellicer also suspects that it was Harley, working through Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, who arranged the notoriously handsome terms of Philips' contract with Tonson, which specified the ample payment of £40 for the poem, £10 for a second edition, and 100 presentation copies, probably gifts to the Tory lights complimented in *Cyder*'s many encomiums (Pellicer, "Harleian Georgic" 189).

<sup>47</sup> See Rogers, "Political Georgic" 419. On specific episodes derived from loco-descriptive works, Rogers writes, for example, that "the antiquarian note early on concerning Marcle Hill (*Cyder* 1: 78-88) mimics the procedures of loco-descriptive verse; It cites John Speed's *History of Great Britain* and William Camden's *Britannia*. The latter is a text on which *Cyder* draws elsewhere" ("Political" 430).

agricultural landscape “not defined as that of, say, Latium or Umbria” (Rogers, “Political” 419), Philips in *Cyder* uses the “Ariconian” apple-growing county of Herefordshire to create “a recognizably English space” (Crawford R. 117). Herefordshire acts “as a political combining agent to reconcile disparate elements within the Tory party by bringing them together in a common embrace” (Pellicer, “Harleian” 194).

In the sense that he uses the georgic mode as an instrument to draw together the disparate identities of moderate and high-church Tories, country-party supporters and old-style Whigs under the auspices of Harley’s and Bolingbroke’s government, Philips’ poem is considered especially successful. Yet critics argue that Philips’ poetics also negotiate significant political tensions in ways that, like Liu’s Georgic ploughman, alternately reveal and bury them. Philips takes as his models both Virgil and John Milton, using the English poet’s inverted blank verse line, “the closest approximation in English poetry to the Vergilian” (Durling 35).<sup>48</sup> Philips’ interpolation is more than stylistic, however, it is deeply allusive, “frequently recalling specific passages of *Paradise Lost*” (Pellicer, intro. ii), and using the tension created by investing a Tory propaganda poem with the imagery of an “arch-republican” to register ambivalence over some of the poem’s apparent political commitments (ii).<sup>49</sup> Philips marks, that is, the fact that some aspects of history have to be rejected, buried, and effaced in order for the georgic poem to speak as a representative of a unified politics, history, and nature. I will argue that in his use of the blood-fatted fields imagery, Philips registers an understanding of soil as the

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<sup>48</sup> Pellicer notes Philips’ dependency on the language, themes, and imagery of both Virgil and Milton, beginning his introduction to *Cyder* with the assertion that “John Philips is a quintessential poetic ‘son’—with claims to primogeniture. *Cyder* is the first of the British blank verse georgics: Philips is the first English poet to adopt comprehensively the formal characteristics of his Virgilian model, and the first to develop Miltonic imitation as a poetic idiom” (i).

<sup>49</sup> Especially the Union of England and Scotland under Anne. See J.C. Pellicer’s discussion in his introductory essay “The Politics of *Cyder*” in *Cyder: A Poem in Two Books*. See also Griffin.

medium for the continuity of identity in a way that is similar to Powell in that it foregrounds the soil's capacity to pass lost or broken narrative lines directly into British bodies. But where Powell celebrates mixture in line with his politics as a Williamite supporter, Philips is committed to linearity and genealogical continuity in his Tory poem. As a poet, he can represent these conflicts inhumed in the Herfordshire soil in ways that appear to resolve them, but *Cyder* is critical of the poet's mediation, and in the end, the England that can be eaten is a different country from the England that can be read. The blood fatted fields, therefore, work against *Cyder*'s apparent unity. They gesture both towards the fictiveness of historical and poetic representations of the nation's past, and towards a more true, if unrepresentable form of continuity in the relation between the nation's constituent soil and its bodies. Through soil, Philips can own in flesh a past he cannot own in words.

Soil is central to the vision of Englishness that *Cyder* offers. Like the seventeenth-century chorographers who wrote one hundred years before him, Philips begins *Cyder* at the invitation of "my Native Soil" (1: 5). For Philips, however, loyalty to the land co-exists comfortably with loyalty and obeisance to royal power as it could not have done in the work of Elizabethan or Jacobean antiquaries like Speed or Camden, or in the Glorious Revolution-era work of Powell. This is in large part because, by the time that Philips writes, it is possible to claim Queen Anne as the culmination of the Stuart line rather than a disruption to it. No longer faced with the elective rule of the Dutch Prince, or the tension between a dead English queen and a British king, Philips reframes Anna's rule as the ultimate triumph of "Fierce *Brutus* Off-spring" (2: 583), making her history a

continuation of the unbroken narrative of hereditary kingship espoused by James I and VI.

Monarchy, in *Cyder*, is the source of English history's coherence and the organizing principle to which England consistently returns; yet Philips manages to make monarchy's ascendancy into a function of nature. Ignoring the forced abdication of James II, Philips compresses the discordant history of the Restoration into a homogeneous period leading up to the reign of Anne in which the "fair-revolving Years / Our exil'd Kings, and Liberty restor'd" (2: 523-4). As is evident from Philips' attribution of the Restoration not to diplomacy but to "the fair revolving Years," the Stuart royal restoration is coded as the will of nature, a will carried out both by the work of time and the work of the land of Herefordshire itself. For as time restores Royal authority to England, Philips insists, the land of Herefordshire rises up to defend royal prerogative during the English Civil War:

[T]he *Cyder-Land* unstain'd with Guilt;  
 The *Cyder-Land*, obsequious still to Thrones,  
 Abhorr'd such base, disloyal Deeds, and all  
 Her Pruning-hooks extended into Swords,  
 Undaunted, to assert the trampled Rights  
 Of Monarchy; (2: 515-519)

With the image of "Her Pruning-hooks extended into Swords," Philips produces a direct echo of the language that Virgil uses to remonstrate against civil war's deleterious effects on the productivity of agricultural land, this time turning them into a celebration of Herefordshire's part in a righteous conflict. Disruption is ultimately enfolded within a

greater stability, and a national loyalty to the rights of kings is located in the land itself as the extended Pruning-Hooks precede not a long bloody description of the infertility attendant on civil warfare—as they do in Virgil—but “a rapid and selective survey of English history” (Rogers 430), that adulates the power of English Monarchy to “cement” the “numerous scepters” of England’s periodic internal discord from Edgar’s suppression of territorial battles among Anglo-Saxon tribes (Philips 2: 552, 338), to Henry’s ending of the bloody War of the Roses (2: 621). In depicting this latter civil war, Philips paints a battlefield scene reminiscent of seventeenth-century Royalist imagery of social roles confounded in the chaos of the English civil wars of the 1640s:

.....Here you might see  
 Barons, and Peasants on th’embattled Field  
 Slain, or half dead, in one huge, ghastly Heap  
 Promiscuously amast[.] (2:608-611)

Thus the extended pruning hooks in Philips act not to pervert or disrupt the purpose of the land, but to reinforce the stability of Herefordshire’s place in the nation over time. English history in *Cyder*, against the grain of the historical revolutions of the previous century, enlists time and the soil in service of the mythology of Royal power, telling history from the Anglo-Saxons up to Anne as a narrative line of succession often interrupted, but consistently resumed. Time itself brings forth the stable continuance of the Royal blood: “the Years / Ran smoothly on, productive of a Line / Of wise, Heroic Kings, that by just Laws / Establish’d Happiness at home” (2: 558-561). Time’s smooth, productive continuance culminates in the union of England and Scotland under Anne’s command, and there the poem ends, in a celebration of the combined military prowess of

Britain “in Union knit” (2: 647). The poem’s view of English history, then, is evidently Tory. It rejects mixture—represented on the battlefield as a “huge, ghastly Heap” of corpses, and in the cider vat as “heterogeneous Mixtures” that dilute a liquor’s “native Strength” (2: 137, 142)—and decries “Rich Foreign Mold” as a merely temporary and ultimately unhealthy manure for the roots of English apple trees (1: 120).<sup>50</sup> It locates the unity of the nation in Herfordshire’s loyal soil, but subsumes that unity within the greater form of the monarchy, which assimilates and controls each of Britain’s geographical regions to the benefit of all. *Cyder* enlists history, ultimately, in the service of a monarchy that rises above all temporary defeat at the hands of rebels, oath-breakers, and warring tribes to constantly resume its natural generational progression and its purpose: to unify Britain under the monarch’s absolute power.

Yet that monarchy’s relation to the ancient history of England, to an original people from which that unbroken string of kings is said, in *Cyder*, to come, was problematized by contemporary Whig Anglo-Saxonist claims, for Whig history, too, found its basis in the soil. We’ve seen already in this chapter how seventeenth-century antiquarians asserted the continuity of the English island in contrast to the short reigns of its conquering kings, how Williamite propagandists and followers used the island itself as a crucible within which all nationalities mixed into Englishness, and how English soil became an organizing principle that could assimilate even the most catastrophic of discontinuities—genocide and conquest—into the continuous history of the island nation. The sense of continuity that the island as organizing principle allowed was the basis of the Whig version of English history, which saw a foundation for English parliamentary

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<sup>50</sup>Pellicer interprets this image of roots quickened only temporarily by “foster Earth” (1:124) as a direct dig at the issue-less reigns of England’s imported protestant monarchs. See his introduction, xi-xii. On the conflation between mixture and Whig politics under William, see Schmidgen, *Exquisite Mixture* 11.

power in an immemorial constitution that derived from the Anglo-Saxon institution of the *wittengamot*.<sup>51</sup> During the seventeenth century, the Saxons were established as the first true Englishmen, the founders of a national spirit of liberty, and of the nation's immemorial common law (Kidd 84). As a result, for a time, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, antiquarian research into Britain's Anglo-Saxon past was highly politicized, enlisted in the struggle between defenders of royal absolutism and proponents of an ancient constitution rooted deeply enough in the island's native institutions that it could curtail the power of a king.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, because of the emphasis on continuity in Whig conceptions of the immemorial constitution, arguing against the Whigs meant emphasizing the discontinuity of English history, something that Tory and Royalist historians, with their ideal of the unbroken dominion of a single royal line, were not used to defend.<sup>53</sup> Antiquarian research in defense of the Whig interpretation of history drew on the soil as an organizing principle of Englishness, and also as a storehouse of evidence in the form of ancient objects that could testify to the continuing relevance of Saxon culture and institutions to eighteenth century ideals. Philips, reinterpreting the history of a region along opposite political lines, had to offer his own competing reading of the Saxons in the soil.

This complex relationship to Britain's native history is processed, in the poem, through an extended allusion to the blood-fatted fields that, like *Bonduca*, posits the soil's

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<sup>51</sup>For the myth of Saxon origins and of an immemorial "ancient constitution" that was the unwritten basis of the common law, see Pocock, J.G.A. *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* 30-56.

<sup>52</sup> See Sweet, *Antiquaries* 194; and Pocock, *Ancient* 148-228.

<sup>53</sup> Against Whig claims in favor of an "immemorial constitution" that legitimized elective kingship and parliamentary power as native English institutions, the Tory party's historiographical champion was Robert Brady, whose *A Compleat History of England* (1684) argued that the Norman conquest represented a disjunction so total from the institutions of former rulers, that whatever had come before, immemorial or otherwise, was rendered irrelevant. Kidd summarizes the Tory viewpoint thus: "the free Saxon nation had been conquered . . . Parliament was a post-Conquest creation, existing by grace of the monarch; and the appearance of the Commons was even more recent" (Kidd 89). See also Pocock, *Ancient* 182-228.

digestion of dead bodies and blood into fertility as the only continuous relation that exists between Britain's present and original inhabitants. The allusion comes in *Cyder*, as it does in Virgil's *Georgics*, at the end of the poem's first book, and follows, likewise, on a discussion of the influence of the sun. Instead of describing portents, the death of a sovereign and the decent of civil war as Virgil does, however, Philips ends his section on "the sun's intemperate force," (167), with the story of Ariconium, an ancient city destroyed by an earthquake at some point after the Roman occupation.<sup>54</sup> This time it is not soldiers' bodies, as in Virgil's civil wars, but the bodies of England's original forefathers who are "in one sad Sepulchre enclos'd" after an earthquake destroys the town(172). Interestingly, the story of Ariconium bears almost no relation to civil war—the context of internecine bloodshed that frames the blood-fatted fields in Virgil is instead transferred, as we have seen, to the end of the poem, where Philips uses it as a means to celebrate the constant resumption of the Stuart line in spite of civil war's disruption.<sup>55</sup> Rather, Philips' use of the blood-fatted fields imagery in the Ariconium story deals with a set of problems more like Powell's: how to construct a specifically British history without recourse either to the admission of a total discontinuity with the past, or dependence on the historical narratives of enemies—this time not Romans, but Whigs.

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<sup>54</sup>Ariconium was a pre-Roman town known to be located in Herefordshire. The City of Ariconium is mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, and English historians have attempted to pinpoint its location starting with Camden, who put it in Kenchester (1695: 575), though shortly after *Cyder*'s publication John Horsley suggested that it was rather located at Ross-on-Wye (465-6).

<sup>55</sup> One possible exception being Philips' description of the subterranean winds that cause the earthquake as "More dismal than the loud displod'd Roar / Of brazen Enginry, that ceaseless storm / The Bastion of a well-built City, deem'd / Impregnable" (1: 194-7). In this case the reference to civil war relates to the poem's Miltonic form. In this scene, as in Milton's scenes of war in heaven in *Paradise Lost*, the materials of destruction are stored within the Paradisiacal earth (6: 509-519).



Ariconium is an interesting field for Philips to choose as his place of battle with the Whig historiographers, for Philips uses the same word throughout *Cyder* to refer to the region of Herefordshire generally, which he variously calls “Siluria,” “Ariconium,” or “*Cyder-land*.”<sup>56</sup> The interchangeable adjectives “Silurian” and “Ariconian” are common throughout the poem to refer both to apples and to people, with valences ranging from the merely geographical—pears are compared to “*Ariconian Products*” (1:480), the poem’s readers are addressed as “*Ariconian Knights*” (1: 7), and “*Silurian Plants/ Admit the Peache’s odiferous Globe*” (1: 306)—to the “half-mythic”—as when Philips lauds the martial prowess of the ancient British tribe of the Silures as a people wrought of everything that an isolationist Tory of the early eighteenth-century could admire:

.....Where shall we find  
 Men more undaunted, for their Country's Weal  
 More prodigal of Life? In ancient Days,  
 The Roman Legions, and great Caesar found  
 Our Fathers no mean Foes: and Cressy Plains,  
 And Agincourt, deep-ting'd with Blood, confess  
 What the Silures Vigour unwithstood  
 Cou'd do in rigid Fight; (1: 585-592)

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<sup>56</sup> As John Goodridge has shown in his brief appendix on the subject, contributions to the mythology of Siluria as the quintessential English georgic/pastoral setting include works by authors as far back as Peirs Plowman, as well as those of Thomas Traherne, Henry Vaughan, John Milton, John Philips, John Dyer, William Diaper, and Alexander Pope (Goodridge 181-2). Pellicer suggests that in Philips, as in the works of authors before and after him, Siluria is the “half-mythic region of eighteenth-century georgic poetry which takes its name from an ancient Welsh tribe, and from which the nation’s moral regeneration is hoped to proceed” (Pellicer, intro. x). According to Camden, Siluria comprehends the Welsh and western border counties of Radnorshire, Monmouthshire, Glamorganshire, Brecknockshire, and of course Philips’ own Herefordshire (Camden 1610, 1615). In *Cyder*, most often, it refers to Herefordshire primarily. See also R. Crawford, *Poetry* 115-122, on the importance of Herefordshire as the privileged soil out of which Englishness is produced.

The ancient Ariconian city then, might appear to be another inflation of Herefordshire as the heartland of English culture. Certainly Philips' reference to it, like his incorporation of the stories of the martyrdom of King Ethelbert and the traveling of Marcle-Hill, is another indication of what George Sewell called Philips' particular skill "in all manner of Antiquities, especially those of his own Country" (6). Ariconium is a fixture of chorographical descriptions of Herefordshire, registered in the Antonine Itinerary, while its destruction by earthquake, along with surmises as to its location at the site of Kentchester and descriptions of a detailed list of antiquities including "stones of inlaid Chequer-work, British Bricks, Roman Coyns . . . large Bones, leaden Pipes, several Roman Urns with ashes in them" (Camden 1695: 575), is recorded in both Camden and in Speed (49). Rachel Crawford, in her excellent essay on *Cyder*, views it this way. In her reading of the blood-fatted fields scene, Crawford applies the idea of *Cyder* as a poem about regional soil as a basis for national identity by drawing on contemporary theories of soil-science which suggested that wines and cyders had a distinct "race" gathered from the bouquet of the soil itself to suggest that the apple-tree acts to translate the Englishness of Ariconian soil into consumable fruit (123). "Philips deepens the notion of race" Crawford writes, "by suggesting that eating apples and drinking cider is a national sacrament in which the English eat the body and blood of their most redoubtable ancestors" (125). For Crawford, the apple tree's mediation of Silurian blood is of a piece with its use of Herefordshire as a regional producer of British national identity, so that the ingestion of British forefathers by present apple-eaters is a kind of sacramental relation to the great Silurians of the British past, and soil, like monarchy, participates in an uncomplicated resumption of the ancient line of Britons and aids in the creation of a

unified British body-form. While I find the notion of transubstantiation in Crawford's reading particularly compelling—especially since Philips was a non-juror—ultimately, I hold that there is a more complex relation to history effected by Philips' Ariconian soil. In fact, the name "Ariconium" is misleading. The occupants of Philips' city are not the ancient British Silures he so admires. The Ariconium he describes has already been conquered by "all-subduing Latian Arms" (1: 180). Neither, however, are the inhabitants Roman—when the earthquake starts, they don't pray to Roman gods, but "humble Rites / Perform'd to Thor and Woden" (1: 214-215). The ancient Ariconians of Philips' episode are Saxons, and not just any Saxons, but luxurious, city-dwelling, pre-Christian Saxons, worshipers of false gods secure in "The Bastion of a well-built City, deemed / Impregnable" (1: 196-7). They share, that is, much in common with a Tory caricature of the Whigs whose histories extolled their institutions in Philips' time.

In other parts of *Cyder*, those same Saxon ancestors emerge as a violently disruptive element in British history. In the brief survey of English history that ends the poem, and with which our analysis began, the Saxons are represented as Britain's original inhabitants, but their legacy is hardly desirable. Britain, though geographically unified and self-sufficient: "sever'd from the world/ By Nature's wise Indulgence, indigent/ Of nothing from without; in One Supreme / Entirely blest; and from beginning time / Design'd thus happy" (2: 332-36), is also plagued by "a Race / Of Kings, and numerous Sceptres" (2: 337-8). These are the Saxons, they are engaged in "Havoc, and Dismay" (2: 546), and are "Destructive of the public Weal" (2: 339), and in fact the nation begins its triumphal procession towards Anne only when King Edgar, whose entry into the poem is announced with sun imagery that recalls iconography of the Stuart Restoration, "arose,

and into one / Cemented all the long-contending Pow'rs" (2: 551-52).<sup>57</sup> The peace that Edgar brings through the strength of his rule reflects the more common Tory interpretation of Saxon history, where the Saxons were a race of barbarians and petty kings civilized and Christianized only by their subjection to a centralized monarchy.<sup>58</sup> Edgar begins the legacy of unification that culminates in Anne's act of 1707, and Monarchy becomes the medium in which all historical disjunction is dissolved and assimilated into Englishness.

At Ariconium, however, Philips is not just making fun of Whig historical claims to derive their nation from a citified barbarian horde. The greater problem with Ariconium is that there is no evidence that it ever existed at all. This, too, is a reflection of the issues plaguing Anglo-Saxon history in Philips' time, when the competing claims of politicized historiography were exacerbated by a lack of written history or material proof, and scholars resisted the task of writing a universal British history because so few sources were available in the Saxon period (Levine 305).<sup>59</sup> The problem of Britain's absent original history frames the story of Ariconium, a town that, Philips tells us

Perhaps had stood, of ancient British Art

A pleasing Monument, not less admir'd

Than what from Attic, or Etruscan Hands

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<sup>57</sup> Edgar emerges like "the orient Beam / Of *Phoebus* Lamp" (2: 550-1). Examples of similar Stuart iconography include a poem by Richard Watson, in which Charles II is represented as Phoebus, reclaiming his "usurp'd chariot" from the parliamentarians: "The Sun is set, none but *dimme lights* appeare/ ... / Till our *Augustus*, by his birth and merit / Come the *usurped Chariot* to inherit" (*The Panegricke and the Storme* 20); see also Jenkinson, who quotes this stanza on page 53 of his study, which also notes a broader analysis of sun imagery in late seventeenth-century monarchies; See also Koslofsky.

<sup>58</sup> See Sweet, *Antiquaries* 191-194.

<sup>59</sup> See also Sweet, *Antiquaries* 198. Both Levine and Sweet quote Edmund Gibson's succinct complaint to Thomas Tanner as an illustration of their points. Gibson gives up the idea of a universal history of England because it would require him to "thrash among the Saxons and the Danes, where the materials for a History are soe narrow and have in them soe little of connexion". The quote comes from a letter from Gibson to Thomas Tanner, Bishop of St. Asaph. 21 October, 1694. Bodleian MS. Tanner 25, ff. 250-51. Quoted in Levine, *Battle* 305, and Sweet, *Antiquaries* 198.

Arose; had not the Heav'nly Pow'rs averse

Decreed her final Doom (1: 183-7).

Instead of leaving “a pleasing Monument” to their accomplishments in art and engineering—equal to those left behind by the Greeks and Romans, Philips’ “luckless” British fore-fathers are “ingulft / By the wide yawning Earth . . . / . . . in one sad Sepulchre enclos'd” (1: 172). Importantly, the loss of Ariconium is not just a loss of life, it is a loss of evidence. The earthquake has buried the town so deep that “the Name / Survives alone” (1: 235-6).<sup>60</sup> It is on this unstable ground of already absent evidence that Philips erects his “spacious City . . . with firmest Walls/ Sure moulded, and with numerous Turrets crown'd, / Aerial Spires, and Citadels, the Seat / Of Kings” (1: 176-8).

Philips’ “Brave Ariconium, uncontrolled and Free” (1:179) seems initially to take a large and unusual step away from the Tory party line by weaving the image of Saxons living in an exalted British city and calling those Saxons “our forefathers.” However, *Cyder* is a poem that, as Juan Christian Pellicer suggests, often undermines itself through mock-heroic deflations and paradoxical imagery (intro. vi), and within the context of Philips’ highly self-aware Miltonic imitation, the description of Ariconium immediately becomes legible as just such a move.<sup>61</sup> Its spires, walls, and turrets, not to mention its multiple crowns and kings, refer us back to two Miltonic cities, neither of them good signs. The first is Pandemonium, Hell’s capital in *Paradise Lost*, book two, whose

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<sup>60</sup> Incidentally, Philips is exaggerating the degree to which evidence of Ariconium’s location was unavailable even in his own time. The Camden account lists a much more robust catalogue of items, both British and Roman, though it does include coins, mouldering urns, and bones which are, in what is perhaps also a nod to Virgil, described as “large.”

<sup>61</sup> Juan Christian Pellicer writes that “even in his fundamentally serious works, Philip’s imitation often brings him to the brink of parody, and sometimes well past that point. This parodic element of *Cyder* informs and frequently unsettles its political argument” (Pellicer, intro. iii). Pellicer also suggests that Philips’ Miltonic imitation has political undertones, since “Philips’s Miltonic imitation generally, would . . . have signalled to careful readers a certain ambivalence towards the celebrated union of the British nations” (iv).

architect built “many a towered structure high, / Where sceptred Angels held their residence,/ And sat as Princes” (1: 733-5). The second, and more direct reference is from *Paradise Regained*, a source that has not so far been recognized as important to Philips’ work, but which I believe is relevant here. The allusion is to book four, where Satan describes the city of Rome to the Son of God in an effort to tempt him with worldly political power. Satan gives the Son a vision of Rome:

With gilded battlements, conspicuous far,  
Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires.  
Many a fair edifice besides, more like  
Houses of gods—so well I have disposed  
My aerie microscope—thou may’st behold,  
Outside and inside both, pillars and roofs  
Carved work, the hand of famed artificers  
In cedar, marble, ivory, or gold (4: 53-60).

Not only is Philips’ Ariconium, like Milton’s Rome, an “aerie” (Milton *Paradise Regained* 4: 57) or “Aerial” (Philips, *Cyder* 1: 177) construction, built on unstable ground, suspiciously luxurious and inhabited by a dubious number of kings and heroes, but, more subtly, Philips also aligns his own positioning of the reader in relation to the city with Satan’s positioning of the Son of God in relation to Rome. Like Satan telling the Son of God to behold what Satan can show him through his “aerie microscope,” Philips the poet tells his reader to “attend; whilst I of ancient Fame / The Annals trace, and image to thy Mind” (1: 168-9). Here Philips calls attention to the poet’s role as mediator of the

matter of national historical fact—a nationalist poet is the lens through which a reader/observer experiences the Herefordshire soil and the history it represents.

The poet's role as mediator in *Cyder* seems on the surface as if it must be merely ceremonial. *Cyder's* depiction of lenses, even the microscope lenses that so disturbed Locke, presents them as mere tools of enlargement: the "polish'd Glass, whose small Convex / Enlarges to ten Millions of Degrees" (1: 344-5).<sup>62</sup> Nature viewed through the microscope in Philips' poem, is just a more articulated unity, and its lens is offered as a tool that allows an observer to experience, physically, for himself, the ordered beauty of nature:

.....the hidden Ways  
 of Nature wouldst though know? how first she frames  
 All things in Miniature? thy Specular Orb  
 Apply to well-dissected Kernels; lo!  
 Strange forms arise, in each a little Plant  
 Unfolds its Boughs: observe the slender Threads  
 Of first-beginning Trees, their Roots, their Leaves,  
 In narrow Seeds describ'd; Thou'lt wond'ring say,  
 An inmate Orchat ev'ry Apple boasts.  
 Thus All things by Experience are display'd,  
 And most improv'd[.] (1: 350-360)

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<sup>62</sup> Although Philips' poem is outside of the constraints of Goodman's *Georgic Modernity*, it should be noted that precisely because of its apparent commitment to unerring vision, even through the media of microscopes and georgic forms, the poem appears throughout Goodman's study as the example of a georgic that does bury the "noise of history" in an apparent unity of landscape (60, 110). That apparent commitment, I would suggest, is self-consciously affected. I hope to show here that Philips does meditate on the distortions enacted by mediation, although his poem offers other, non-representational means for resolving those discontinuities that it seems not to see.

In this later portion of *Cyder*, the poet's vision of nature is "improved" by tools that enlarge the kernel and reveal the hidden order of Natural design. What's inside is just a smaller version of what's outside: "Laws of Life" (1: 347).

Yet even in this seemingly unexceptionable microscopic vision of the infinitude of order, Philips points to the role of artists as mediators. Only "the well-dissected Kernel" will reveal a tree. The microscope, like historical tomes, appears to offer an unadulterated truth to the eye of the viewer or reader, but the apparent unity and order of that truth is a result of careful preparation. In history, as in the kernel, careful cuts have been made—abdications, for instance—to represent fragmented and contingent truths as eternal wholes. Poets and microscopes both present images, similarly misleading forms of vision, where what seems to be on "display" is in fact already altered by dissection. At *Ariconium*, the poet is not a transparent lens that can "display" the ancient city, but a mediating creator who "image[s] to thy Mind." He is not a privileged interpreter of the soil's evidence, that is, but an illusionist, an artificer who presents what is actually a mere spot of broken ground to the reader as if it were a city of "firmest walls" and "sure moulded" towers.<sup>63</sup> With its allusions to pandemonium and Satan's telescopic view of Rome, the idea of an ancient and original British civilization with its own art and architecture is thus, from the beginning of the episode, framed as just the kind of story that the lord of lies would tell, complete with the poet's cue "Perhaps," and his self-consciously mediated "image" of a grand original empire based on nothing but name, conjecture, and the evidence of a few "mould'ring Urns."

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<sup>63</sup> Milton has another reference to telescopes in Satanic context in *Paradise Lost*, book one, where Satan's shield is compared to "the Moon, whose Orb / Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views / At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole, / Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands, / Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe" (*Paradise Lost* 1:287-291).



As Pellicer has noted, the motif of deceit is important in *Cyder*, as important as one might expect in a poem that takes one of its models from the story of the temptation and the Fall. The poem is filled with fair ground that produces insipid fruit, of delicious-looking apples whose flesh has been consumed by worms, and in one image that recalls both the nether-worldly explosions of Ariconium's destruction and the atrocities of the recent civil wars, a beautiful, flower-filled meadow that has been hollowed out and packed with explosives so that "when / Embattled Troops with flowing Banners pass / . . . / by sudden Blaze . . . / Torn and dismembered, they aloft expire" (1: 449-456). At Ariconium it is not the land but the poet/antiquarian who deceives his reader. Philips strongly emphasizes the mediatedness of his representation of an Anglo-Saxon past, which is based not in the concrete evidence of monuments—for Philips tells us there is no mark at the ancient town's site—but in an absence covered over with an "image."

Given the aerie quality of Philips' Ariconium, it seems at first difficult to connect this vignette to the physical impingement of history into the present experience of the nation that the blood-fatted fields represent in Virgil's *Georgics*. Like other satires on antiquarian studies, the parallel between the imaging poet and Satan with his aerie microscope seems to imply that the minute researches of antiquarian studies are deceptive mediations of soil that, seen plainly, has no meaningful connection to the present. Instead, Philips offers an alternative relation to the historical matter with which he associates the Ariconian soil, one that is achieved not through the mediation of the eye's "Specular Orb," the poet's deceptive "image" (1:352), or the historian's carefully dissected and re-membered representation of the progress of history, but through the unmediated processes of ingestion, decay, and regenerative growth. For when "the

Ground adust her riven Mouth disparts” (1: 227) and Philips’ aerie city is swallowed whole by the earth, brave Ariconium doesn’t actually disappear. Instead it is recycled, at least in part, into the matter of Herefordshire’s apples.

Philips, like Virgil in the original *Georgic* scene, emphasizes the soil’s ability to digest. After the ground, “satiated,” closes “Her rav’nous Jaws,” the city of Ariconium is almost totally “consumed” (1: 226-234). No trace is left, Philips tells us,

.....save Coins and mould’ring Urns,  
 And huge unweildy Bones, lasting Remains  
 Of that Gigantic Race; which as he breaks  
 The clotted Glebe, the Plowman haply finds,  
 Appall’d. Upon that treacherous Tract of Land,  
 She whilome stood; now Ceres, in her prime,  
 Smiles fertile, and, with ruddiest Freight bedeckt,  
 The Apple-Tree, by our Fore-fathers Blood  
 Improv’d[;] (1: 238-46)

As Philips writes Milton’s Rome over an originally British Ariconium, the “Coins and mould’ring Urns” of Roman civilization are the only material traces of the purportedly British cultural monuments at Saxon Ariconium’s “ample Site” (1: 238). The old cultures are gone, swallowed up, literally, by the English earth with a finality that suggests the historical and legal disjunction that Tory historians posited against Whig claims to an immemorial common law. To attempt to reclaim the site of Ariconium for British culture is both doomed and, Philips’ allusions suggest, damned, for “Fam’d Ariconium; uncontroul’d and free” (1:179) does not offer a pure original inheritance but one tainted

by Roman luxury, vitiated by Saxon idolatry, and tinged with the “uncontrol’d and free” rhetoric of Whig historiography.<sup>64</sup> It deserves to disappear, and the ploughman’s response to the mouldering urns, so much more explicitly negative than the response of Virgil’s ploughman to those giant bones, evinces this. As an artifact, something that has to be interpreted and worked into a representation of British, and especially Ariconian, history, the urn is appalling. It destroys the carefully constructed coherence of a Britain that is British, rather than Roman and Saxon and Danish. As part of the narrative of history, the Saxon *wittengamot* competes with and disrupts the representations of the Stuart monarchy. Ancient Saxon culture does not and should not survive. It seems entirely incongruous that Ceres and the apple-tree should smile at what renders the farmer appalled.

John Chalker’s reading of Philips takes note of the unsettling incongruity of the image of an appalled ploughman in an Ariconian field. For him, the lines set up a dichotomy between heroism and farming, death and life. Interestingly, however, in his analysis of these lines, Chalker does not quote all the way to the end of Philips’ grammatical unit.<sup>65</sup> Instead he presents Philips’ final word on Ariconium as: “Upon that

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<sup>64</sup>Just as we hear the echo of “Smiling Ceres” in Pope’s “nodding Ceres,” so too, Philips’ coins and mould’ring urns might be the source of Pope’s “Statues, dirty Gods and Coins” in the 1731 *Epistle to Burlington* (*Works* 3: 171-185, line 8), especially since Philips’ lines follow a description of the polytheistic prayers of the dying Ariconians. The objects are what Topham buys for Pembroke, and are the mean materials of the enthusiast rather than the tasteful collection of Burlington. Philips and Pope thus both connect the Anglo-Saxon legacy, and the antiquarian enthusiasm for its recovery, to a species of luxurious excess the wastefulness of which can only be redeemed by the decomposing and regenerating processes of agricultural cultivation.

<sup>65</sup>I do, but I have left off the end of the sentence. The clause which follows the comma after “improved” is not related to the story itself, but recalls the poet from his Ariconian digression. The sentence reads in full: “Upon that treacherous Tract of Land, / She whilome stood; now *Ceres*, in her Prime, / Smiles fertile, and, with ruddiest Freight bedeckt, / The Apple-Tree, by our Fore-fathers Blood / Improv’d, that now recalls the devious Muse, / Urging her destin’d Labours to persue” (sic 1: 242-5). The apple-tree is paired with Ceres—both smile fertile, but the apple tree is also modified by two additional clauses: it is improved by our forefather’s blood, and it also recalls the Muse to her labors.

treach'rous track of land / She whilom stood, now Ceres in her prime / Smiles fertile, and  
with ruddiest freight bedeck'd / The appletree . . ." (1: 242-5). Quoted in this way, one  
can see how Chalker concludes that

Philips, in a manner entirely typical of his age . . . make[s] explicit the  
idea of agriculture as an all-enduring, fundamental activity which survives  
the decay of rulers and the destruction of cities . . . . [T]he conclusion must  
be that 'Ceres in her prime' symbolizes a way of life that is more  
permanent and probably more valuable than the life of heroic action (39-  
40).

This cannot be what Philips means—rulers, for him, do not decay, they act as divinely sanctioned representatives for the unity of the nation forever. Nor is agriculture the real subject of *Cyder*, which celebrates apples as a means of celebrating Stuart authority and the England of Tory grandees. The work of the farmer is not contrasted to, but symbolic of, the heroic action of kings, queens, and statesmen who make continuity possible in the realm of human action. However, once our forefathers' blood is reestablished as the fertilizer that brings the ruddy glow to those Herefordshire apples, "improv[ing]" them, the meaning of this passage shifts. Neither "the life of heroic action," nor agriculture's "fundamental activity" is pertinent to the kind of continuity through which Saxon history persists in a way that entirely frees human history from having to account for it. Human labor, agricultural, political, military, historical, or authorial cannot recover a past that is present only in the form of appalling fragments haply discovered in treacherous ground. What improves these apples, and makes them capable of producing smiles instead of the ploughman's disgust, is not agriculture, but Ceres: the regenerative activity of soil itself

as it distributes our forefathers' matter into the flesh of a redstreak apple. Evading the dissecting knife of the genealogist and the mediating lens of the historian, Philips finds a way to retain Saxon ancestry without retaining Saxon institutions, to own our forefather's bodies without owning them as forefathers. This passage does not emphasize the contrast, then, between agriculture's continuity and civilization's decay, nor does it liken the consumption of apples to participation in the unified British identity that *Cyder* everywhere else creates. Instead the blood-fatted fields describe the continuity of decay as a unifying process in itself, different from the unifying process of the poet or historian specifically because it does not have to cohere. Processes in the soil make the decayed, finished, cut off, and nearly invisible past into a visible, material part of present existence even as, in Philips, the soil's act of burial removes the need to represent Saxon history as a legally-important precedent or a part of the political unity of the nation now. A better national inheritance than the appalling, moldering remains of a possibly once-great culture that is probably built of airy lies, and a putative Saxon city that is evinced only by Roman artifacts, is the fertility of the land occasioned by the city's destruction and its people's well-deserved slaughter. As soil, a history of savagery and disruption, in itself appalling, can still make the Ariconian apple smile.

### III. "No Marks, No Monument": The Road Past Towton and the Nation as Text in Defoe's *Tour Thro' The Whole Island of Great Britain*.

Whig authors, too, used the georgic mode to naturalize and celebrate their versions of the British nation. Perhaps none did so more effectively than Daniel Defoe, whose widely-read and oft-reissued *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1722-1726) has

been celebrated by critics as the closest the early eighteenth century ever got to an “English Epic.”<sup>66</sup> Although, generically speaking, it is most easily described as a prose travelogue, the *Tour*’s “georgic element” is well-documented by Pat Rogers, who offers as proof of Defoe’s close relation to Virgil, the *Tour*’s two direct allusions to the blood-fatted fields.<sup>67</sup> Both describe visits to civil war battlefields from the fifteenth-century War of the Roses, and each evokes a list of weaponry almost identical to the one in Virgil. Ultimately, these two moments in Defoe’s text negotiate a totally different relationship to the nation than the one offered in Philips’ and Powell’s scenes of blood-fatted fields. Because unity in Philips is represented in the form of successive Stuart bodies, it can be celebrated through a focus on Ariconian regionalism, knowing that all regions are unified in the queen, while earth can offer an alternative form of the ownership of history through direct, unmediated contact with “our Forefather’s blood.” The unified legitimacy of monarchy, in other words, enables the nation’s regionalism and the soil’s immediate communication of a fragmented past. In Defoe’s *Tour*, the island itself is the primary source of national identity and its “Whole”-ness is what legitimates the unity of the nation. Defoe aims in his *Tour* to celebrate the island’s inherent wholeness, to which isolated regions and soil filled with contradictory and undigested fragments of the past are dangerous and disordering matters. In order to produce a unified vision of the nation, Defoe’s *Tour* erases all “Marks” and “Monuments,” all evidence, all blood, all alternate historical interpretations, and even the ploughman himself from the scenes at Bosworth

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<sup>66</sup> “English Epic” is Pat Rogers’ phrase (intro. 33), but Alistair Duckworth and Geoffrey Sill concede, with various caveats, that the characterization is just, while Christopher Parkes has also called the work an epic, arguing specifically that “by substituting London (the center of the great commercial network) for the court, Defoe creates the business of trade as the new power circulating in the nation and lends it some of the epic’s heroism and majesty” (402).

<sup>67</sup> Rogers writes that, “the ‘Georgic’ framework of the *Tour* . . . inheres in two modes of parallelism: detailed similarities at a local level, amounting almost to borrowing; and broad thematic analogies” (“Defoe and Virgil” 95). Defoe’s Blood-fatted fields allusions are the former.

and Towton, leaving the narrator's structuring, mediating gaze as the reader's only means of connection to the matter of the English earth.

The first of the *Tour's* two allusions to the blood-fatted fields comes in letter seven, when Defoe's narrator visits Bosworth Fields in England's Midland counties:

[W]e turned N. to see *Bosworth-Field*, famous for the great battle which put an end to the usurpation of *Richard III* . . . . They showed us the Spot of Ground where the Battle was fought, and at the Town they showed us several Pieces of Swords, Heads of Lances, Barbs of Arrows, Pieces of Pole-Axes, and such like Instruments of Death, which they said were found by the Country People in the several Grounds near the Place of Battle, as they had occasion to dig, or trench, or plough up the Ground. Having satisfied our Curiosity in these Points, we turn'd East towards *Leicester*. (Defoe, *Tour 2*: 206)

This indication of rusted, broken weaponry uncovered in a field by a ploughman is followed by another allusion to the same passage in Virgil as the narrator approaches the site of the battle of Towton in letter nine:

[W]e pass'd over *Towton*, that famous Field where the most cruel and bloody Battle was fought between the two Houses of *Lancaster* and *York*, in the Reign of Edward IV. I call it most cruel and bloody . . . for here Fathers killed their Sons, and Sons their Fathers; yet for some time they fought with such Obstinacy and such Rancor, that, void of all Pity and Compassion, they gave no Quarter, and I call it the most bloody . . . for

here, at *Towton*, fell six and thirty thousand men on both sides, besides the wounded and Prisoners (if they took any).

Tradition guided the Country People, and they us, to the very Spot; but we had only the Story in speculation; for there remains no Marks, no Monument, no Rememberance of the Action, only that the Ploughmen say, that sometimes they plough up Arrow-heads and Spear-heads, and broken Javelins, and Helmets, and the like; so we cou'd only give a short Sigh to the memory of the Dead, and move forward. (3: 94)

Interestingly, Pat Rogers reads these moments as we've seen Chalker read Philips, Monica Gale read Virgil, and Paul Hammond read Dryden. For Rogers they are a study in contrast, between violence and growth, and between city and country:

It is not merely the vocabulary which recalls Virgil—an identical list of military relics—but the precisely caught air of wonder and the sense of incongruity, almost absurdity, when the peaceful activity of ploughing yields such bizarre trophies of the past . . . . For both writers, agriculture serves as an emblem of peace and rural innocence, something that warfare destroys with its essentially *urban* disruption of the rhythms of nature.

(*Text* 137-8)

I disagree with Rogers here, and not just because the *Tour* more generally avoids such urban-rural oppositions, but also because Defoe's individual references to the blood-fatted fields are remarkably different from Virgil's in a number of salient ways.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See on Defoe and cities for example Duckworth, who argues, with others such as Hackos and Sill, that Defoe advocates for “[a] landscape of Augustan compromise” (454). Duckworth continues, “Defoe’s values...are often displaced into scenes that combine the country and the city or that provide a reminder of the city in the country” (456). While Defoe’s *Tour* does register ambivalence towards the “uncompact, and



Although the identical lists of weapons, the civil war sites, and the references to ploughing clearly show these to be references to *Georgics* book one, lines 489-496, the difference between the three scenes might be summarized in this way: Defoe's fields in fact "yield" nothing, not fattening fertility for the soil, not weapons, not bones, and not even ploughmen. For Defoe is not himself, not even figuratively, a ploughman, and neither does he ever meet an actual ploughman, much less the food he produces or the turned-up furrows in which he works, in either field.

Defoe's scenes evoke several kinds of evidence to be found on site at Towton and Bosworth, but none of them are material. There are, Defoe's narrator tells us, "no Marks, no Monument" at Towton. Neither does Defoe dig down to find them. Agricultural workers are only referred to by Defoe's guides at each "Spot" of ground, but never actually met there. Bosworth and Towton remain the two-dimensional surface of the British map, for neither Defoe nor anyone present with him ever mentions fertility or raises a furrow to bring buried evidence into contact with the present. Defoe simply stands and points to the "Spot of Ground where the Battle was fought" at Bosworth and the "very Spot" at Towton. Glancing back to Philips, we might call Defoe's move "aerial" in several senses, first in that it involves a manual gesture of pointing and in that it involves speech, then in that by turning the battlefields into "spots" it converts a three

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unequal" (2: 65), and even monstrous growth of London (2: 65), I do not believe that we find anywhere in it, an idea of urban culture or values associated strongly with warfare or death. Thriving cities in the *Tour* are in general represented as progressive places, throwing off, as soon as possible, the lingering traces of warfare. York, where "the beauty of peace is seen in the rubbish" of the city's dismantled fortifications, is an excellent example, and one that occurs immediately following the blood-fatted fields at Towton (3: 96). One possible exception is the interesting effect Defoe creates in his description of London as "the most glorious Sight without exception, that the whole World at present can show, or perhaps ever cou'd show since the Sacking of Rome in the European, and the burning the Temple of Jerusalem in the Asian part of the World" (1:202). As Betty Schellenberg explains in her analysis of these lines, "Defoe is deliberately situating his city not only at the head of Britain but also at the apex of history and at the confluence of Eastern and Western civilizations. But surely the reader stumbles as well into the misreading of a London placed between two spectacular conflagrations" (299). I agree in regard to both effects of these lines.

dimensional experience of being-in-place into the map's two-dimensional representation of an aerial view of the fields, where the place of battle is marked not by present evidence but by a contained and defined "spot."<sup>69</sup>

In addition, Defoe's scenes are "aerial," because instead of being uncovered in the soil, the weapons are reported orally by the country people who have guided the narrator to stand on the field.<sup>70</sup> At Towton no physical evidence is ever produced. At Bosworth field, the narrator does see some weapons, but they are not located in the field but "at the Town". Once again, the connection between field, weapons, and ploughmen is evinced not by a direct experience with the soil, but by oral report. An unnamed "they" guide the narrator to the place of battle, and later to the weapons in town, which "they said were found by the Country People, in the several Grounds near the Place of Battle." Finally, there is no food in Defoe's allusions, no fertile rotting of bodies buried just underfoot to compensate for "most cruel and bloody" war, no twice-fatted fields, no improved apples made ruddy by our forefather's deaths. Instead of the ploughman cultivating and the soil processing the nation's past, we get the country people saying and Defoe pointing out the place of battle: "here . . . here . . . [on] the very Spot." But the reader gets no evidence in form of fertility, marks, or monuments. She must trust, instead, to what her narrator hears and sees. She encounters Towton and Bosworth fields through the lens of the narrator.

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<sup>69</sup> John Speed suggests that the civil war battlegrounds marked on the maps in his 1611 *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* present a similar effect by mediating their disturbing referents through ink: "we from under our own vines may behold the prints of indured miseries, sealed with the blood of those times, to the losse of their lives and liberties . . . [but] heare not the sound of the Alarum in our Gates, nor the clattering of armor in our campes, whose swords are now turned into mattocks and speares into sithes" ("To the Reader").

<sup>70</sup> This reading is founded, in part, on the work of Paula McDowell, for whose analysis of the status of oral report in another of Defoe's fictional-non-fictional texts, see "Defoe and the Contagion of the Oral"; and on the suggestion of Professor Alison Conway, who pointed to the pointing of Defoe.

This substitution of the narrator's vision of the field's surface in the *Tour* for the ploughman's physical encounter in the furrows of the *Georgic's* field is typical of the *Tour's* design throughout. Critics of the *Tour* have almost unanimously agreed that *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* functions as an exercise in virtual nation-building, one that presents the text's "vision" or "view" of Britain as a "Whole Island," whose topography is "flatten[ed]" (Bowers, "Great Britain" 152) and whose regional borders are unified and made permeable by a relatively cooperative geography, made to seem more cooperative by Defoe's de-emphasis of travel's difficulties and dangers.<sup>71</sup> Defoe's is a "virtual tour" then, first because it is not quite true—it depicts extensive trade networks flourishing along roads that are not yet finished, and canals that have only been proposed, and also because it claims to transmit to the reader a transparent vision of all that the author sees in his circuits around the island.<sup>72</sup> Defoe announces that he will bring the reader,

such an Account of Things, as may . . . give him a View of our Country, such as may tempt him to travel over it himself, in which Case it will be not a little assisting to him, or qualify him to discourse of it, as one that had tolerable Knowledge of it, though he stayed at Home. (*Tour* 2: 3)

Whether walking abroad, or sitting at home, the *Tour* offers to be its reader's eyes.

Joanne Hackos calls the *Tour* "a reliable verbal map" (256), and Terence Bowers argues that the eye of the *Tour* is "an empowering eye, enabling a large segment of the

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<sup>71</sup> Bowers argues that in the *Tour*, "[d]ownplaying the difficulty of travel is part of the strategy to create an image of Britain as a country without internal barriers" ("Great Britain" 158).

<sup>72</sup> On unfinished roads and canals, see especially Parkes 403-411. For the phrase "virtual tour" see Rogers, "Embedding" 63. Rogers coins this phrase to describe something slightly different than what I mean here: "much of the text, covering areas of the nation that he had never penetrated, was based on a medley of blind assumptions, guesses, and naked thefts from earlier writers. His book comprises a virtual tour, one that derives from his brain and imagination as much as it proceeds from any recent legwork" (63).

population to see their country, to navigate through it, and to engage in a kind of personal mapping of the nation” (155). Likewise, Christopher Parkes argues that the *Tour* is literally “composed . . . as map space” (403), its descriptions written to scale, and plotted on a two dimensional axis that takes London (or the Trent in Northern England and Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland) as its spatial reference, and “represents an attempt to change the nation from actual historical space into conceptual space in which the landscape becomes meaningful, or a nation, only when it is brought into a useable system of intersecting lines” (403). This last point is essential—for in it Parkes distinguishes between the verbal/visual object that Bowers describes, a text which aims to empower the reading populace to visualize the nation that belongs to them, and another kind of artifact, a text that “turns the nation from actual historical space into conceptual space,” in other words, a text that seeks to replace the reader’s vision with its own, and the reader’s nation with the text of the *Tour*.

Certainly the narrator of the *Tour* claims to offer the closest thing to an immediate transparency of vision that print will allow. In his preface, Defoe frames the work to come as a visual spectacle, “[i]n Travelling thro’ *England*, a Luxuriance of Objects presents itself to our View. Where-ever we come, and which way soever we look, we see something New, something Significant, something well worth the Traveller’s stay, and the Writer’s Care” (1: 47). But that spectacle, Defoe’s preface also claims, is entirely produced by the author’s singular vision: “the Author . . . is very little in Debt to other Mens Labours, and gives but very few Accounts of Things, but what he has been an Eye-witness of himself” (1: 49). Critics including Frank Bastian, J.H. Andrews, and especially Pat Rogers, have given Defoe the lie, showing how extensively Defoe depends on other

texts—primarily the continuation of Camden’s *Britannia*, edited and reissued by Edmund Gibson in 1695, but also William Dugdale’s *Monasticon* (1655-1673), John Senex’s *New General Atlas* (1721), John Mackey’s *Journey Through England* (1722), and a host of other works on local antiquities—to fill out the matter of the *Tour*.<sup>73</sup> Still, Defoe’s narrator seeks constantly to minimize the appearance of this multiplicity of voices and temporalities, and to “identify the progress of his physical tour with the progress of his narrative ‘tour’” (Rogers, *Text* 64). Not only does he repeat his promise not to “describe a country by other men’s accounts of it” (Defoe, *Tour* 2:3), and not only does he suggest that the book will bring an equal “view of our country” to the reader that travels and the reader that stays at home, but Defoe frequently uses the second-person to give the impression of the reader being “upon the very Spot” (2: 129). Bowers remarks on the use of second person to move the reader through Windsor Palace, for example, where the *Tour* “enables its readers to imagine themselves in these domains” (“Great Britain” 156). But the narrative “you” shares more than vision with the narrator, who is, in Schellenberg’s words, “busily constructing and then interpreting the landscape he claims merely to see” (295). The narrator does not just invite the reader’s self into Britain’s various spaces, he replaces that self. As the narrator crosses Coldingham Moor into Scotland, for example, the “we” of the narrative transitions into a “you” who shares not just the narrator’s view, but the conclusions he draws from it: “you see hardly a Hedge . . . nor do you meet with one House . . . you come down a very steep Hill . . . From the

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<sup>73</sup> For the full record of Daniel Defoe’s library at the time of his death, see Payne. For a useful extract of some of the antiquarian and chorographical volumes that Defoe (rather than Farewell) probably owned on this list, see Rogers *Text*, 211. Rogers’ thorough and protracted labors with this text has shown that the *Tour* is not, however, entirely fabricated from other sources and from memories, as critics have occasionally suggested. The first two chapters of *The Text of Great Britain*, Pat Rogers’ recent monograph on the *Tour*, detail the possible itineraries of several journeys made between 1721 and 1726 that could have contributed to Defoe’s material. See *Text* 61-79.

Top of this Hill you begin to see that *Scotland* is not all Desert” (Defoe, *Tour* 3: 153). The *Tour*, then, is a virtual tour of a virtual nation: the *Great Britain* it represents only exists within the pages of the text, and in order to move through this virtual space, it constructs the vision of its own traveler/reader and then structures her response.

The critics mentioned above have shown how the function of geography is essential to the *Tour*'s effort of national imagination: the “verbal map” can make broad, lonely wastes and mountainous deserts passable, put traversable ground between Britain's major cities where before there had only been a “blank,” and can project a future network of good roads and navigable canals over the mire and disconnection of the present (Parkes 406). But if the “verbal map” is the *Tour*'s ideal representation of the British earth, what is the role of the soil in a virtual nation? Soil is an abstract concept even in the landscape- and garden-centered arguments of Hackos and Duckworth, but it is not always abstract in the *Tour*. In the *Tour*, soil has two uses. First, soil's role is similar to the role played by rivers and roads and other physical matter in the *Tour*'s Britain: soil produces and circulates value. Second, soil acts as evidence of the narrator's presence-in-place as he travels through Great Britain, remarking on its present state.

The reciprocity between trade and soil fertility is made explicit at numerous points in the *Tour*. In Cheshire, where cheese is the major export to London, “this Cheese Manufacture...increases every Day, and greatly enriches all the County; raises the Value of the Lands, and encourages the Farmers to the keeping vast stocks of Cows; the very Number of the Cattle improving and enriching the Land” (2: 191). In letter eleven's South-eastern Scotland, where Defoe complains that the land is badly under-fertilized and under-utilized, his prescription is a similar reciprocity of trade and cultivation, for, “the

greatest Thing this Country wants is more enclosed Pastures, by which the Farmers would keep Stocks of Cattle well-foddered in Winter, and which again, would not only furnish good Store of Butter, Cheese, and Beef to the Market, but would, by their Quantity of Dung, enrich their Soil” (3: 157-8). Elsewhere, trade dispenses with the intermediary of cows, as in letter eight, in Yorkshire’s West Riding, where the cloth-dyeing manufacture contributes directly to the fertility of the soil:

as the Dying-Houses, Scouring-Shops and Places where they used this Water, emitted the Water again, ting’d with the Drugs of the Dying Fat, and with the Oil, the Soap, the Tallow, and other Ingredients used by the Clothiers in Dressing and Scouring, &c. which then runs away thro’ the Lands to the next, the Grounds are not only universally watered, how dry soever the Season, but that Water so ting’d and so fatten’d enriches the Lands they run through, that ’tis hardly to be imagined how fertile and rich the Soil is made by it. (3: 64-5)<sup>74</sup>

One explanation for the fact that there is no “mark” at the site of battle, then, even in the form of increased fertility, is the fact that trade, not bloodshed, holds a promise for the future in the *Tour*. Indeed this bias against war as a potentially productive act stands out even more clearly when we consider that the benefit of fertility is entirely absent from all battlefield scenes. Significantly, the two scenes where Defoe references Virgil’s blood-fatted fields are bereft of both blood and fat—even though the latter word is used with frequency to describe soils in every section of the *Tour*. Meanwhile, at Dunbar in

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<sup>74</sup> John Ricchetti has also noticed “the way the clothing manufacture cooperates with the landscape” in this scene, and, in another portion of the *Tour* that I have not quoted above, how “Defoe traces the circular system in the fertility of the downs (hills) and valleys around Dorchester” where sheep feed on the rich grass, and fertilize it with their droppings (132).

Scotland, though Defoe mentions both the “fatal Field” of the battle of Dunhill and the “fruitful and rich” soil of the plain between Dunbar and Edinburgh within a few hundred words, the plain’s battles and its richness are not connected (3: 156-7), while the blood spilled at the two battles of Newbury, mentioned in letter four, though “a double Scene of Blood . . . fought almost upon the same Spot of Ground” (2: 39) produces none of the richness that over-wintered cattle for the market, Cheshire cheese, or cloth manufacture create.

Often soil in the *Tour* performs its function of recirculating value and its function as evidence simultaneously, as at Cambridge, where Defoe’s narrator remarks on the litter of straw and dung left behind when the city’s yearly fair is over: “in less than a Week more there is scarce any Sign left that there has been such a thing there: except by the Heaps of Dung and Straw; and other Rubbish which is left behind, trod into the Earth, and is as good as a Summer’s fallow for Dinging to the Land” (1: 126). Like the blood that fattens Virgil’s Emathia, the soil trod into the Cambridge common field is a promise to the future, for it “pays the Husbandman well” in increased fertility (1: 126). But the soil here is also evidence of the truth that the fair occurred in this place and that Defoe saw it. Indeed, Pat Rogers has argued that letter one of the *Tour*, the section where the visit to Cambridge is recorded, is especially important to Defoe’s establishment of an illusion of immediacy and up-to-date reportage, since it is the section in support of which Defoe seems to have made the most recent and the most extensive excursions.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The first letter, which contains Defoe’s trip to Cambridge, specifies a date of starting out, and makes a consistent effort to mark its progress in time with reference to local and contemporary news. The stops in it reflect a roughly believable temporal and spatial movement across East Anglia and the Fall season. For Rogers’ complete argument that the *Tour*, this letter in particular, is “more of a new concoction, less of a warmed-up ragout” (64), see Rogers, *Text* 61-79.



Soil, including the fairgrounds of Cambridge, the soft-clay of the Leicester roads and the waste grounds of Yorkshire's West Riding, are among the tools Defoe uses to create the illusion of physical travel in his journey through textually-constructed space.<sup>76</sup> Yet in using soil as a form of evidence, both of Defoe's own presence in place and of the value of trade to the continued growth of the nation, Defoe exposes himself to the same problem that plagued Philips in *Cyder*—he must control and suppress alternative readings of the matter of the nation. Philips answers this challenge by subtly devaluing the work of antiquaries as a manipulative mediation of matter, and supplements mediating historical and poetic interpretations of soil with the direct physical experience of history available in the reciprocity between human flesh, British soil, and the flesh of an apple. Defoe, too, devalues the work of other antiquaries, but instead of implying that the soil can better assimilate and disseminate British history without their help, he rather assimilates other antiquarians' claims into his own, totally mediating, text.

Defoe recognizes that along with the British land comes a long history of British chorographical, historical, and travel writing, replete with contradictory details that, like the impassable British landscape (Bowers 158), and the multiple significations of British country houses (Schellenberg 297), threaten the vision of unity Defoe wishes to project over the whole island of Great Britain. The *Tour* is therefore highly concerned with its dissemination of historical fact. Defoe's narrator returns repeatedly to his promise not to dwell on antiquity, and ties that promise to his mission of describing "the Situation of Things . . . not as they have been, but as they are" (1: 48). He protests that though the countryside around him may clamour with "innumerable Remains of Antiquity" (3: 10),

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<sup>76</sup> J.H. Andrews also suggests that Defoe disguises his borrowings from other texts through "frequent references to coaches, horses, inns and other details of the road" ("Defoe and his Sources" 268).

though he is “tempted very often to make excursions here on account of the history and antiquities of persons and places both private and public” (3: 10), he will resist, for “I am writing a Description of Places, not of Persons, giving the present State of Things, not their History” (3: 161). The history that must be resisted includes the history of war and conquest, both the truly antique remains of the “long . . . seat of War between the Several Nations; Such as the *Britains, Scots, Picts, Romans, Saxons, and Danes*” (3: 10), and the more recent remains of the English civil wars, which are likewise “Matter of History, and none of my Business at present” (3: 156). In a passage from another one of Defoe’s 1724 publications, *The Great Law of Subordination Consider’d*, where the narrator is generally considering to be summarizing the composition of the *Tour*, he writes that,

I have often complain’d, that tho’ the English Historians, especially in their relating Facts, have been very particular and distinct; and the Histories of the several Wars in England are very well written, yet that they are all very indifferent in their Geography, and that the Reader is spoken to, as supposing he knew before where every-thing spoken of, was done, and how every Town or Country mention’d was situated; (47)

The narrator, then, sets up an image of the nation in which remembrances of antiquity threaten, in their excessive and fragmentary detail, to overwhelm the experience of the “present state” of the nation both in the sense of its present state *here*, by leaving out details of place, and in the sense of its present state *now*, by offering up an overwhelming array of particularity and detail about the past. Defoe’s narrator asserts as much in his preface to the second volume of the *Tour*, where he also outlines the strategy he has been

using to combat this problem all throughout the text. He will reframe those numerous voices as the voice of a single intelligence mediating his experience of travel:

[T]o describe a Country by way of a Journey, in a private Capacity, as has been the Case here, though it requires a particular Application, to what may be learned from due Enquiry and from Conversation, yet it admits not the Observer to dwell upon every Nicety, to measure the Distances, and determine exactly the Scite, the Dimensions, or the Extent of Places, or read the Histories of them. But it is giving an Account by way of Essay, or, as the Moderns call it, by Memoirs of the present state of Things, in a familiar Manner. (239)

Defoe protects the unity of the *Tour*'s design from the "every nicety" of Great Britain and its history, by reframing the many voices of chorography and history as the single, unified, self-evident voice of "a private capacity." With the exception of his direct references to Camden, which are also, in large part, a means of controlling the visibility of the influence of that text on his own *Tour*, Defoe does not work dialogically with texts that might complicate or contradict his descriptions, but instead absorbs the ephemeral, place-based evidence of "conversation" and "due enquiry." Indeed we can see him doing so in almost any randomly chosen section of the *Tour*, for wherever "fame," "history," "antiquity," or "the common people" report a fact, it is likely to have come from a written source, and most likely to have come from *Britannia*.<sup>77</sup> Defoe thus turns a polyphony of voices into that of an individual's private capacity to see, hear, think, and speak: these "Memoirs of the present state of Things".

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<sup>77</sup> For Defoe's methodology of intertextual embedding, see Rogers, *Text* 111-116, esp. 115.

The narrator's effort of gathering up evidence of "the present state of things" is itself represented as a georgic labor by the *Tour*. It is not, however, the ploughing and processing labor of Virgil's farmer or Philips' apple grower. Instead of cultivating the "Things" of England, Defoe's nation-builder gleans them. From the very first pages of the book, the labor of researching and writing the *Tour* is represented through an image of gleaning after harvest:

Whoever has travell'd *Great Britain* Before us, and whatever they have written, though they may have had a Harvest, yet they have always, either by Necessity, Ignorance, or Negligence passed over so much, that others may come and Glean after them by large Handfuls (1: 47).

Defoe repeats this observation again, in the second book of the *Tour*:

I will not promise that even this Work, tho' I am as careful as room for writing will allow, shall not leave enough behind, for such a Gleaning to make it self richer than the Reapings that have gone before; and this not altogether from the meer Negligence and Omissions of the Writers, as from the abundance of matter, the growing Buildings, and the new Discoveries made in every part of the Country. (2: 153)<sup>78</sup>

The nation, in Defoe's *Tour*, is an organic whole, "flourishing" and "fruitful" (1: 47), and not only of the matter circulated through trade and manufacture, but also of matters of fact. These facts are "gleaned" by the narrator, who reaps them by the handful even after other authors have taken their pass. Defoe's reaping and gleaning metaphor is distinct from Virgil's rotting, ploughing and growing in its image of the flat surface of the land,

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<sup>78</sup>Here, however, it should be noted that Defoe refers to future additions and appendices to the *Tour* itself, not to a new work. The *Tour* will "make it self richer" rather than leaving matter behind for other writers.

rather than multi-temporal furrows, and in its suppression of process—to glean facts “by large Handfuls” is not to analyze or interpret them, it is simply to walk through space and pick them up.

We see this difference in action within the text of the *Tour*, which routinely suppresses the collaborative, intertextual work of multiple scholars and reframes it as the ordered, structured, and above all, individual intelligence of the *Tour*'s narrator, who rarely meets a point he cannot resolve through the virtual act of being-in-place. At Colchester, for example, Defoe lifts a description of the city's walls and buildings from Gibson. In its original context in *Britannia*, the passage shows an intergenerational, intertextual dialogue between scholars collaborating on the question of Colchester's antiquity based on a variety of sometimes contradictory empirical evidence:

in the middle of the City, stands a Castle ready to drop with age . . . but that this City flourish'd exceedingly in the time of the Romans, abundance of their Coins every day found here, are a most certain argument. Tho' I have met with none more ancient than *Gallienus*; viz. those of the *Tetrici*, *Victorini*, *Posthumus*, *C. Carausius*, *Constantine*, and the succeeding Emperors. [Besides which, here are also found old Roman bricks æquilaterally square, like paving-bricks, but thinner; and some huge thick ones. It is likewise observable, that the Towers and Churches are built of Roman bricks and ruins. (421-2)

The [ symbol in this passage indicates an addition by Gibson and the continuators to their new translation and edition of Camden's Latin. In the first, 1695, translation by Gibson and his associates, these portions of the text were listed as “additions” at the end of the

section on each county. In the new edition of 1722, Gibson uses the [symbol to distinguish between old and new information, between the voice of the original text and the voice of the continuators who interrupt, contradict, and add to it.<sup>79</sup> Defoe draws heavily on this same passage, including its additions, in book one of his *Tour*:

*The Castle of Colchester* is now become only a Monument  
showing the Antiquity of the Place, it being built, as the Walls of  
the Town also are, with *Roman* Bricks; and the *Roman* Coins dug  
up here, and ploughed up in the Fields adjoining, confirm it. (1:  
59-60)<sup>80</sup>

Although the conclusions he reaches are the same, the means by which the *Tour*'s narrator reaches them are quite different. Both writers invite the reader to authorize the narrator's account of Colchester's antiquity by reference to material artifacts. Yet where Camden and his continuators invite the reader into an ongoing conversation, presenting

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<sup>79</sup> See Gibson's introduction to the 1695 *Britannia* for his description of the continuator's choice to relegate their additions (and those of *Britannia*'s first seventeenth-century translator) to the bottom of the page and end of each county description respectively:

it must not be understood as if any thing of Mr. Camden's were struck out, or what is new, were mix'd confusedly with his Text . . . that were a liberty which but few would allow, and none ought to take . . . to do justice to [Dr. Holland] . . . [we] put his *Additions* at the bottom, in a smaller character . . . after Dr. Holland had been thus treated, we could not in common modestly go to insert any thing of our own . . . and yet, considering that many things we had to say farther . . . the following method appear'd most natural, To make our *Additions* at the end of each County; and by a *Letter* inserted in the several places they belong to in the text, to admonish the Reader that he may either find Mr. *Camden's* opinion confirm'd; or a more particular account given of the place; or reasons offer'd why we dissent from him; or lastly, the description of something wholly omitted . . . ("The Preface to the Reader" [2])

The 1722 version integrates these additions with the text. Defoe had the 1695 edition, however, it is clear from his account of Colchester, that he mixes the voices of translators, author, and continuators in his own writing. I have used the typography of the 1722 version here to show the full resource on which Defoe drew with more efficiency. The description of Colchester in Defoe's edition of *Britannia* can be found on page 351.

<sup>80</sup> Defoe uses more of the passage, including portions I have not quoted, as his description of Colchester proceeds. This is a fact that should give us some pause, if we are inclined to believe that Defoe used other sources for the most part only where his own material was insufficient, as Frank Bastian suggests (772). Colchester is the town, besides London itself, with which Defoe probably had the most recent and direct experience (Rogers, *Text* 66), so Defoe is not just raiding the antiquaries for supplies, he is systematically assimilating, processing, and re-presenting their knowledge as the projection of his private imagination.

an array of evidence, including coins and stones from different periods of Roman history, which they describe in detail as if to invite the reader to analyze and conclude for himself whether the walls of Colchester were built before or after the dissolution of the empire, Defoe simply looks on the walls and reads them as transparent information “showing the Antiquity of the Place.” Importantly, Defoe erases all distinction between voices in this passage, not just his and Camden’s, but also Camden’s and Gibson’s.<sup>81</sup> He also uses, but drastically simplifies the coins, which are transformed from their antiquarian function as texts that must be analyzed and interpreted in their own right in order to ascertain their age, to a blunt, unmistakable confirmation of the wall’s Roman derivation.<sup>82</sup> In simplifying the presentation of material evidence, most importantly, Defoe removes the authority by which evidence is evaluated from the reader, to whom Camden and the continuators have presented their over-plus of proof, to the narrator. This is Defoe’s georgic labor of gleaning, rather than Virgil’s labor of ploughing, in action. Defoe’s narrator does not dig the coins himself, nor does he process them through a labor of research and comparison. He simply picks them up as nuggets of self-evidence that need only be seen to be understood. The reader experiences the coins as immediately transparent evidence, but only because they are already mediated through the narrator’s vision. It is in order to organize the niceties of written history into a single, private

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<sup>81</sup> Rogers describes another passage in which the indistinction among authorial voices is noticeable to one familiar with Camden. In a long passage plagiarized almost directly from Gibson’s Camden in the description of Beverly: “Defoe...introduces the passage by saying... ‘Mr Cambden gives us the description’ . . . . In fact, this borrowing comes from a section added by Edmund Gibson . . . . There is also the oddity in that Defoe retains a reference in *Britannia* to ‘our Author,’ by which Gibson meant Leland—the effect in the *Tour* is to leave the impression that Camden is meant” (*Text* 114). Rogers concludes that “the section shows Defoe at his most feebly dependent, and shows the limitations of his method” (114), however, I would suggest that Defoe’s reduction of the apparent number of sources for his information might be more intentional assimilation than feeble dependence.

<sup>82</sup> On interpreting coins as texts, see Addison’s *Dialogues upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals*. See also Alvarez “‘Poetical Cash’”.

perspective that reflects the unity of Defoe's vision for Great Britain, that his narrator suppresses the cacophony of scholarly voices whose historical matter might otherwise be as fragmented and contrary as Britain's mountainous regions or its worst clay-county roads.

Returning in light of the polyphony of historical voices to Defoe's two Virgilian allusions, it is important to recognize that the specific locations of Bosworth Field and Towton were, like the antiquity of Colchester, areas of some scholarly crux. Accounts of what happened at and after Towton differed widely, but for his own summation, Defoe probably relies not so much on Camden as on Edward Hall's 1548 *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustrate Famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke*.<sup>83</sup> Defoe's number of casualties resembles Hall's, as does his emphasis on the lack of quarter given and the "unnatural" slaughter of family member by family member, for, in Hall's words, "in it [the battle] the sonne fought against the father, the brother against the brother, the nephew against the uncle, and the tenaunt against his lord" (Hall 187). Hall's account of the battle also emphasizes the misery of civil war, and like Defoe he points out that the slain were "all Englishmen and of one nacion" (187). Defoe's focus on the "memory of the Dead" at Towton (3:94), however, is probably inspired by his reading of John Leland, whose works he commends at other points in the *Tour*.<sup>84</sup> Leland's *Itinerary* (republished by Thomas Hearne in 1710) is the only one of Defoe's known sources that mentions Towton's buried dead, and it records that before the corpses were transferred to the church yard in Saxton Village, "they lay afore in 5 Pittes, yet appering half a mile of by North in Saxton Fields" (37). The question of whether there are any bones or spears left

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<sup>83</sup> Hall's book has a complex publication history. See for a summary, Herman's DNB entry on Hall.

<sup>84</sup>See for example 3: 105.



in Towton, then, is left uncertain by its historians. Meanwhile, Gibson's Camden, Defoe's most oft-cited source, has little to say about the battle except that it was "the True English *Pharisalia*" (1722: 866), and would therefore not have been much use to Defoe.<sup>85</sup>

The scene at Bosworth fields is no more straightforward. In this case, Defoe's sources are either Gibson's translation of *Britannia*, or John Senex's *New General Atlas*. The two texts are a tangle of self-referential reportage, for Senex paraphrases Gibson and Gibson quotes another antiquarian text, William Burton's 1622 *A Description of Leicester Shire*, in which Burton himself also appears to be coloring his account with an allusion to the Virgilian blood-fatted fields. Unlike Defoe, whose narrator announces that he is "satisfied" without ever posing a question, Burton is clearly defending the idea that these fields are the location of the famous battle, in spite of their three-mile distance from the nearby town. He writes

that this field was fought in this place appeareth . . . By divers peeces of armor, weapons and other warlike accoutrements, and by many Arrow heads here found; whereof, about twenty yeares since, at the inclosure of the Lordship of Stoke, great store were digged up, of which, some I have now in my custody, being of a long, large and big proportion, farre greater than any now in use. (47)<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Camden gives no reason for his calling Towton this, but he does say that Henry VI's forces were "weakest, by their being too strong" (866), which might explain the reference to *Pharisalia*, implying that Edward IV's troops, though outnumbered as Caesar's were, yet routed and slaughtered their over-confident enemies.

<sup>86</sup> Burton also makes note that Bosworth is located "in a fruitfull and fertile soyle" (47), although this could as easily be the loco-descriptive mode, which generally includes information about the goodness of fields, its meaning might be inflected by the nearby allusion to Virgil.

Although the passage contains no explicit citation connecting it to Virgil, it describes a list of weaponry unearthed by agricultural workers in a field of civil war battle which are distinguished by their unheard-of size, all details that correspond to Virgil's eight lines, and which are reported in the same order.<sup>87</sup> In the stripped-down language of Senex's *New General Atlas*, the allusion to Virgil is repeated: "Three m. from hence lies *Redmoor-Plain*, where *Hen. VII.* defeated and kill'd *Rich. III.* In this Field Arms much larger than those now us'd are found in ploughing the Land" (Senex 217). Three *Georgic* ploughmen in, the passage begins almost to look like a parody of the empiricist's succinct objectivity, particularly if one suspects that the word "arms" is an intentional pun.

If the narrator of the *Tour* is, as Betty Schellenberg suggests, "aware of a fragile boundary between that coherent image and the potential for multiple signification if not complete fragmentation, of his material" (297), few passages show that fragility with greater clarity than Defoe's two blood-fatted fields. At Bosworth and at Towton, the nation is at its most imaginary, constructed out of literary allusion, contradictory histories, vision, and oral report. The clamoring echoes of six different histories compete as Defoe looks out on the fields at Bosworth and Towton, at pieces of ground on which, in any case, there seems to be nothing to see. On the one hand, a vision of either field unmediated by the narrator is a landscape of meaningless earth, devoid of the marks and

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<sup>87</sup>If Burton is making an intentional allusion to Virgil, it is interesting to note that Burton, too, puts his own private capacity in place of the ploughman's, examining and even owning the evidence of former civil wars, and admiring their unusual size. It is also of interest to note based on Burton and Senex that Defoe is far from the only historian to include such literary allusiveness in passages that are simultaneously designed to read as located in a distinct time and place—that is Leicester at the time of Lord Stoke's enclosure (which Burton says happened "twenty years since"). The Literary allusiveness of the passage may not be exactly a clue to fictionality in either Burton's text or Defoe's, but may rather be an echo of the fading methodology of teleological and typographical history which preceded Bacon's empiricist historiography—a subtle hint, one of many that occur throughout the *Tour*—that England is Rome revived (and improved). See, for example, the first letter of the *Tour*, where Defoe imagines Newmarket as a better Circus Maximus, or Defoe's comparison of London to Rome, quoted above (*Tour* 1: 118, 202).

monuments that should evince whatever happened exactly here. On the other hand, to look at Towton or Bosworth through the eyes of the antiquary is to look at it in a state of cacophonous over-determination—a battlefield, a cornfield, a patch of earth, a grave, a space of unnatural cruelty, Lord Stokes' enclosure, the fields of Philippi, and “the EnglishPharisalia” at once. Defoe simplifies these voices and reassures his reader that he does, in fact, stand on some solid ground, and he does so again by pointing to the earth as evidence, for he tells us that he stands “here . . . here . . . [on] the very spot” (3: 94), at Towton, or at Bosworth on “the very spot of ground where the battle was fought” (2: 206). As Defoe unifies the geography of Great Britain within a single vision, a “reliable verbal map” that permeates the boundaries of mountains and moors and resolves them into a “Whole Island,” he unifies the perceptions of Britain's various antiquaries and chorographers into a single “private” imagination whose “memoirs” organize and interpret the knowledge they gather by looking at the land. But just as the unifying vision of Britain's geography flattens the nation into a map, making its mountains passable and its various rivers and roads into “a useable system of intersecting lines” (Parkes 403), Defoe's vision flattens a multiplicity of perspectives into the voice of a single intelligence, making history's most fragmentary evidence into an isolated point on the surface of the earth that the narrator can see and know, a place he can point to, and from which he can, “having satisfied our curiosity in these points” (2: 206), sigh and “move forward” into the rest of the text (3: 94).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> I find this sigh to be quite intriguing, but I read it not as a sign that Towton is a scene of elegiac mourning over the miseries of civil war and human kind's doomed repetitions, but in relation to Defoe's tendency, throughout this text, to relegate evidence about the places he visits, even when it is originally taken from other written texts, to the status of oral report. This allows, again, Defoe to reframe knowledge about place as a function of place, something that one can only gain by being in place in order to speak to the people who can repeat it. Defoe's sigh, rather than a sign of his melancholy in regard to the human tendency to violate the laws of nature by mixing death with life, reduces the sadness of Towton fields to an

In his *The Great Law of Subordination Consider'd*, there is a long passage that critics generally read as Defoe's own description of the circumstances under which he gathered the information for his *Tour*:

As thus I made myself Master of the History, and ancient State of England, I resolv'd in the next Place, to make myself Master of its present State also; and to this Purpose, I travell'd in three or four several Tours, over the whole Island, critically observing, and carefully informing myself of every thing worth observing in all the Towns and Countries through which I pas'd.

I took with me an *ancient Gentleman* of my Acquaintance, which I found was thorowly acquainted with almost every Part of *England*, and who was to me as a walking Library, or a moveable Map of the Countries and Towns through which we pass'd; and we never fail'd to enquire of the most proper Persons in every Place where we came, what was to be seen? what Rarities of Nature, Antiquities, ancient Buildings were in the respective Parts? or, in short, every thing worth the Observation of Travellers. (46-47)<sup>89</sup>

Critics have not identified the “*ancient Gentleman* of my Acquaintance,” whom the narrator of the *Great Law* goes on to tell us, is about three-score, or was, at the time of the trip, which he dates at 1688-9, and is the well-educated son of a clothier (51). Pat Rogers and Ilse Vickers both quote the passage above, and both are skeptical as to whether the friend ever existed. Well they might be, for the *Great Law*, like the *Tour*, is

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immaterial expense of breath and leaves it, another oral report, hanging in air, on the fields themselves so that Defoe and his narrative might move on.

<sup>89</sup>For this quote see also Rogers' introduction (34) as well as *Text* (63); and Vickers (160).

delivered by a fictional narrator—the “I” of the text is a French merchant, an émigré to England and indeed, the remainder of this section of *The Great Law* is taken up with a long speech, courtesy of our French narrator’s ancient friend, on the evils of drunkenness, the insubordination of the poor, and especially the historical foundation of England’s moral degeneration in the “exceeding Joy” felt at the Restoration of King Charles II (59). Whether or not this man existed, the description is not really, at least not simply, a delineation of Defoe’s method in compiling the *Tour*, especially not thirty years before he began writing it. It does, however, make an effective advertisement for what the *Tour* will offer, for the narrator of the *Great Law* must have had an uncomfortable journey.<sup>90</sup> Forced to compensate for the spatial ineptitude of England’s historians who offer facts with no reference to Geography, he has to travel with

Maps of every Country before me . . . , as also, I had a Book, entitled *Britannia*, written by that very learned Antiquary, Mr. *Camden*, and some other Books too, which treat of the natural History, as well as the Antiquities of every County; with these Helps in my travelling, together with my learned Companion, I was generally inform’d of everything material, wherever I came; whereas without these I might have gone thro’ many, Places where valuable Antiquities, and other Curiosities of Nature or Art were to be seen, and have known nothing of them; and he that travels England without such Helps, may in many Cases, almost as well, stay at Home. (47-8)

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<sup>90</sup> For example, Pat Rogers writes, “The ‘other Books’ certainly included William Dugdale’s works on monasticism and antiquarian topics, as well as the county histories that Defoe appears to have consulted, although we may doubt whether he actually carried around these ponderous folios on such trips as he actually made” (*Text* 22).

“[E]verything material” in the nation of England is located not down in the soil, but “before me,” that is, simultaneously, in the conceptual space of the map, the book, the other books, and the learned companion’s conversation, and also in the unifying vision of the traveler himself, who imports the information gained from these sources and overlays the land with the meanings it provides. Without such helps the traveler “might have gone thro’ many places” where things were “to be seen, and have known nothing of them” (48). Defoe’s description of the physical geography of England is as a blank space filled in with matters of fact. Soil in itself is speechless. It is not a representative and it cannot represent itself without the words of the narrator, his books, his maps, and his friend. Defoe cannot be more explicit: there is nothing “material” in the physical experience of the nation. Knowledge and experience do not visibly “enrich” the grounds as the fats from cloth-dying do, and so there is no way to interface with the spatio-temporal experience of Britain without mediating representatives. One cannot know it or belong to it without the book to read his nation for him, without the book, “he that travels England . . . may . . . almost as well, stay at Home” (48).

With its description of “the present state of the country . . . as well in culture, as in commerce,” its observations on antiquity, its promise to attend “Where-ever we come” to “something new, something significant, something well worth the travelers stay, and the writer’s care” (*Tour* 1: 47), the *Tour* takes the place of “such Helps” as the *Great Law*’s maps and volumes of antiquity (*Great Law* 48). Most importantly, because it represents the memoirs of a private capacity, the *Tour* is everyone’s “learned companion” who enquires “of . . . every thing worth the Observation of Travellers” (47). Just as the *Tour* replaces the divided geography of Britain with a “Whole Island,” it replaces the

cumbersome, contradictory baggage of antiquarian authors with the individualized and private memoirs of the narrator, whose printed vision unifies not just the geography and trade-networks of the island, but its history as well. Ultimately, unlike the material relations between past and present described by Powell and Philips, the scenes of encounters with the nation's history materialized in the blood-fatted fields of Towton and Bosworth are not really encounters with the past as materialized in the soil, at all. Instead the narrator's intelligence resolves the problem of the battlefield's indeterminate signs of fertility, of its weaponry that breaks, but won't break down, by removing both of them from the depths of the dirt to a conjecture in the air or objects on the surface of a table in town. Because it does not need to encounter the axes and armor or acknowledge the blood in the soil in order to know that "here . . . here," was "that famous Field" (*Tour 3: 94*), the narrator's mind takes the place of the soil of Great Britain, integrating all its regions and the pieces of its history into one unified whole which does not need to be labored over to be made material, for it has already been cultivated, grown, and harvested. Britain is a fiction: a representation of unity mediated by Defoe's narrator from the competing scraps of historical knowledge unfurled over speechless soil. It is to solve the problem of soil's incapacity to represent itself coherently that Defoe invents his text-as-nation. For the narrator and the reader he creates in his own image, all that is left is to walk over the surface of the *Whole Island of Great Britain* and glean.

## Chapter Three

“The Smell of Gain”<sup>1</sup>: Nightsoil in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Imagination

In Book Three of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Jonathan Swift contrasts the landed estate of Lord Munodi, his figure for the ideal rural patriarch (Lock 120), with the fecal economy of Lagado's “Academy of PROJECTORS” (*Gulliver* 164).<sup>2</sup> Where Lord Munodi's estate comprises “a most beautiful Country; Farmer's Houses at small Distances, neatly built, the Fields enclosed, containing Vineyards, Corngrounds, and Meadows” (163), the rest of Balnabarbi and its capital city, Lagado, is a wasteland plagued by projectors, whose efforts to “contrive new Rules and Methods of Agriculture and Building” are founded in theoretical principles that consistently prove contrary to nature.<sup>3</sup>

On Balnabarbi, agricultural resources are allocated towards “happy Proposals” for the future, and not the present productions of the soil. Gulliver sees the ill effects of schemes to build a mill on a dry mountainside (165), to extract sunshine from cucumbers (167), to plough land with hogs (168), and to grow wheat from chaff (171). But while projectors pursue the theoretical proposal that “[a]ll the fruits of the Earth shall come to Maturity at whatever Season we think fit to chuse, and increase an Hundred Fold more than they do at present” (164-5), at present the people actually starve. No one but Munodi directs the production of either corn, or grass for meat and transportation animals, and so

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<sup>1</sup> In full: “[t]he Smell of Gain was fragrant even to Nightworkers” (Mandeville 1: 93).

<sup>2</sup> For readings of lord Munodi, see Lock *The Politics of Gulliver's Travels*, 118-21. See also Carole Fabricant, “The Subversion of the Country House Ideal,” in *Swift's Landscape* 95-172.

<sup>3</sup> As proofs of economic despondency in a nation, these evidences mirror some of those described by Charles Davenant, for example in his early treatise in political economy, “Discourses on the Public Revenues, and on the Trade of England . . . Part II” in *Works*. Davenant writes that “Where a nation is impoverished by bad government, by an ill-managed trade, or by any other circumstance. . . rents will everywhere fall, lands will lie untilld, and farm houses will go to ruin . . . The flocks of live cattle must apparently diminish; and lastly, the inhabitants will by degrees, and in some measure, withdraw themselves from such a declining country” (1: 358).



in spite of “so many busy Heads, Hands and Faces, both in the Streets and the Fields, . . . I never knew a Soil so unhappily cultivated, . . . or a People whose Countenances and Habit expressed so much Misery and Want” (163).<sup>4</sup> For Swift then, as for Charles Davenant, his fellow follower of the conservative Lord Bolingbroke, the cultivation of the soil is a litmus for the physical, social and cultural well-being of a people.<sup>5</sup>

The only resource that does seem to circulate in ample supply in Lagado is feces, and during his visit to the academy, Gulliver encounters one projector in particular who attempts to capitalize on this apparent surplus.<sup>6</sup> The “most ancient Student of the Academy” (167), this projector’s

Employment from his first coming into the Academy, was an Operation to reduce human excrement to its original Food, by separating the several Parts, removing the Tincture which it receives from the Gall, making the Odour exhale, and scumming off the Saliva. He had a weekly Allowance from the Society, of a Vessel filled with human Ordure, about the Bigness of a *Bristol* Barrel. (167-8)

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<sup>4</sup> The Academy of Lagado has long been accepted as a satire on the Royal Society, but as David Alff comments in his recent article on the projectors of Lagado, critics have suggested a number of interpretive frames for these scenes, including a reading of the academy in relation to Irish projects, and of the Academy of Lagado as the Dutch Academy at Leiden (246-7).

<sup>5</sup> Swift and D’Avenant were both hired propagandists for the Tory party, and like its leader Bolingbroke, “rejected the new England and lamented the demise of what they considered to have been the traditional political and social structure firmly entrenched” in status markers like rank and the ownership of land (Kramnick, *Bolingbroke* 4-5). Eighteenth-century political economists struggled to understand the indicators of national wealth or poverty. Most heavily favored the productivity of land as a fundamental measure of wealth. See again Davenant: “Gold and silver are indeed the measure of trade, but the originale of it in all nations, is the natural or artificial product of that country, that is to say, what their land or what their labour and industry produces” (1: 354).

<sup>6</sup> For instance, in addition to the barrelful of waste with which the Academy “supports” this projector, feces also figures as part of an experiment to plough and simultaneously fertilize land with hogs that produces “little or no crop” (168), augurs the secret conspiracies of politicians (179), and gushes from the anus of a dying dog (169).

The ancient projector makes the unforgivable mistake of trying to excise soil entirely by producing food directly from feces. Happy in his ample allowance, if not in the results of his ineffective employment, Gulliver's ancient student epitomizes the absurdity of a fantastic valuation of waste matter as real property. He derives from the early modern figures of the alchemist and the mountebank, frauds who attempt to disguise an avaricious pursuit of easy gain with a claim to the disinterested pursuit of universal improvement.<sup>7</sup> Pursuing profit for its own sake, with no recourse to the principles of human or natural economy, the ancient projector at Lagado mistakes the representative of value—feces—for the essence of value—the nutrition available through food produced in rural soil.

In its juxtaposition of the real value of the cultivated landed estate with the fantastical value attributed to feces by madmen and charlatans, *Gulliver's Travels* reprises one of the central symbolic oppositions of the financial revolution.<sup>8</sup> Like his fellow scribblers Gay and Pope, Swift uses human excrement as a metaphor for the energy and dynamism of capital, circulating to an unprecedented extent in the unsettlingly impermanent media of paper and promises.<sup>9</sup> In the early part of the century,

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<sup>7</sup> See Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, book 5, chapter 22: "Poor Panurge was violently sick at the sight of an officer of Quintessence distilling human urine, in a huge tubful of horse dung and Christian shit. Ugh, faugh, the dirty villain! Yet that same dirty villain informed us that this sacred distillation, sprinkled upon the person of kings and lofty princes, lengthened their lives by a fathom or two" (749).

<sup>8</sup> Critics writing on the literature of this period frequently note its oppositions between paper (money), air (credit, promises, word of mouth), and female sexuality (fickleness, fecundity) as "models of value," and the traditional model of value where wealth is based in stable, tangible land and its productions. For these discussions, see Pocock, J.G.A. *Virtue, Commerce, and History* 103-123; and *The Machiavellian Moment* 423-461; Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his circle* 39-48; Thompson 43-86; Sherman 14-54; L. Brown 19-23, 30-33, 39-52; Gee 75-78, 96; and Ingrassia 1-16.

<sup>9</sup> Dominique Laporte's 1978 study *The History of Shit*, which meditates on the Freudian sublimation of feces into gold, has been an important source of inspiration for this dissertation. Laporte also relies on readings of shit as the individual's pile of inalienable possessions. See for example, chapter two, "Cleaning up in front of one's house" (26-55). His reading of feces in eighteenth-century England is largely focused on Swift, and takes Swift to be caricaturing the gaze of the oppressive state, which looks to stercus to

these new models of value terminally disrupted traditional notions of value centered on the landed estate, so that “that power, which according to the old maxim, was used to follow land, is now gone over to money” (Swift, *Examiner* 14, 74), while “the wealth of the nation, that used to be reckoned by the value of land, is now computed by the rise and fall of stocks” (76).<sup>10</sup>

This chapter argues that through the mediating agency of the dungheap and the cooperative labor of the farmer, some eighteenth-century authors recognized that feces does become first soil, then food. But, if in chapter two, the material connection to the nation mediated by the blood-fatted fields was desirable, when nightsoil is the medium, authors occasionally reject the incursions of urban people’s matter into their own soil, food and flesh.<sup>11</sup> We begin with a brief discussion of the conspicuous erasure of nightsoil from the agricultural history of eighteenth-century Britain. Emily Cockayne and Leona Skelton have offered evidence for the widespread agricultural use of both human and animal excrement from large population centers in England and Scotland before 1700, but historians of the eighteenth century find little or no mention of nightsoil use in England.<sup>12</sup> Donald Woodward, in the only paper to directly address the agricultural use of nightsoil in the eighteenth century, suggests that the reason for this elision is “feelings of distaste,” which Woodward believes, in spite of references to nightsoil in some

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identify the hidden thoughts and desires of its subjects in his *Grand Mystery: of the art of meditating over an house of office* (1726) (Laporte 62-3).

<sup>10</sup> My references to the *Examiner* may be found in volume nine of *The Prose Works of Swift*.

<sup>11</sup> I am using the late eighteenth-century euphemism “nightsoil” as the most efficient word for human excrement considered as a fertilizer. The eighteenth century, as is quite relevant to this discussion, had myriad names for it, including, though not limited to, street-sweepings, or scrapings, town dung or sullage, city muck, man’s dung, mud, dust, laystall muck, human ordure, poudrette, and “beer” (for this last, see Fussell 174), as well as classing it promiscuously under the more general headings of dung and muck.

<sup>12</sup> See especially Cockayne’s chapter “Dirty” (181-205). The common term for these population centers is “town” and I will use this term throughout. In urban studies, it generally refers to a population center of twenty-five hundred people or more. See for this figure, Sweet, *The English Town* 8-9; See also Corfield.

agricultural manuals, “do seem to have limited the application of human faecal matter to English fields” (274). I argue that in John Evelyn’s *Philosophical Discourse of the Earth* (1675), later revised and reissued twice in the eighteenth century as *Terra* (1706, 1778), fresh nightsoil is presented as a distasteful substance, its bad taste indicating its “pernicious” source in raw human feces. What historians have taken for the eschewal of nightsoil, however, appears in Evelyn and elsewhere, to be its sublimation within composts and mixtures. Reduced to “Mould” on a dunghill, nightsoil loses its sensible qualities as well as its name. It no longer evinces the “rankness” and “perniciousness” that attest to its urban and human content. Through the cooperative agency of dunghill and farmer, agricultural authors lay claim to a potent, if unstable substance, without having to own it in words. In section two, we look at the epoch-making work of Jethro Tull, whose 1731-33 agricultural treatise, *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, introduces the “New Husbandry” to Britain, and marks, for many historians, the start of modern agriculture.<sup>13</sup> Tull’s often hyperbolic disgust towards dung generally, and human dung raised in cities in particular, exhibits both a physical and an imaginative distaste. He hates the flavor of “such Dung as is made in Great Towns,” and he links that flavor to the luxury consumption that occurs in such places. Tull’s treatise denies the idea that soil remediates dung; instead dung is just an expensive poison, and Tull theorizes a concept of plant nutrition that allows him to make soil fertility an effect of pure human agency instead. His system renders the rural landowner independent, financially and physically, from the excess of urban consumption. It is just this independence, however, that Robert

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<sup>13</sup> For the central importance of Tull to eighteenth-century agriculture and his legacy to modern agriculture, see Sayre, “The pre-history of soil science”; De Bruyn, “Reading Virgil’s ‘Georgics’ as a Scientific Text”; and “From Virgilian Georgic to Agricultural Science.” See also Wicker; Fussell, *Crop Nutrition* 97-101; and Baron Rowland Edmund Prothero Ernle, *English Farming Past and Present* 148-179. For an article that argues against Tull’s significance, see Marshall.

Dodsley and William Ellis find objectionable in Tull. *Horse-Hoing Husbandry* breaks all material ties between country and city bodies. For Dodsley and Ellis, the dunghill is an agent of sociable connection, remediating waste into plenitude. We will look first at Robert Dodsley's georgic poem "Agriculture," the only published portion of his projected three-part poem *Public Virtue*. Dodsley's response to Tull has been read only rarely, and in general is taken as mild approbation. This reading shows that Dodsley is in fact criticizing Tull's rejection of dung because of the isolation of rural and urban economies it implies. Dodsley celebrates, instead, mixture and circulation, holding up the market gardeners on "Thames prolific bank" as the epitome of good economy for their diligent labor in the reclamation and recirculation of London's waste (2: 134). Dodsley responds to the "distaste" accorded urban muck and urban culture in Tull's treatise by emphasizing the "joy improvement brings" to those who can harness the mutually regenerative powers of rural production and urban consumption (2: 107). Next, we'll look at agricultural manuals by William Ellis, a common farmer of Hertfordshire who turned agrarian author and produced several tomes of husbandry advice between 1732 and 1756. In Ellis' *The Practical Husbandman* (1732), *Chiltern and Vale Farming* (1733), and his collected *Husbandry, Abridged and Methodized* (1772), nightsoil cooperates in the recuperation of excess and waste as surplus and value. Farmers around London perform feats of labor and care enabled by the special richness of nightsoil. They physically incorporate the urban and rural economies by mixing their soils, bringing produce to London, and returning with more waste to transform into fertile earth.

In this chapter's last section, we will examine the complex function of nightsoil in the later works of Tobias Smollett, whose novels, travelogues and reviews bear out his

extensive reading in the contemporary texts of agricultural improvement. For Smollett, as Robert Adams Day has noted in his introduction to *History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769), “scatology had been an obsession . . . throughout his career in letters” (xlvi), yet despite the usually negative association with excrement in Smollett’s works, his mid-century non-fiction exhibits an interest in nightsoil’s recuperation within an agricultural economy that integrates urban and rural matter. In his reading of agricultural manuals for the *Critical Review* (1754-1763), and his non-fiction travelogue *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766), Smollett finds a chemical “answer” to the problem of nightsoil’s bad taste, one that can replace nightsoil’s rank associations with the totally material and wholly exchangeable chemical properties of “nitre and volatile salts” (*Travels* 199). Ultimately, however, this “answer” does not serve. Without the cooperative labor of the dungheap and the farmer, “nitre and volatile salts” are just another name for rankness and perniciousness. Smollett incorporates Tullean “distaste” for nightsoil into his last two fictions, *History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769), and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), where human beings violate their own bodily integrity as they consume food grown from undigested excrement as if it were well-digested Mould. Nightsoil is dangerous—a vector for foreign bodies, as well as disease—it is a material instantiation, as well as a symbol, of corruption. Smollett’s final novel accedes the possibility that things symbolically coded as waste—such as people, land, and money—can be redeemed as surplus without violating judgment or good health, yet nightsoil as a material remains outside the bounds of recuperation. His final judgment of nightsoil as dangerous is not necessarily a negation of his earlier appreciation of excrement’s chemical properties, or of the contributions of agricultural science to domestic and national economies. Rather, it

is a vote of no confidence in the taste of consumers and the good faith of statesmen, who will happily rely on the language of taste to represent feces as a delicate repast without engaging in the cooperative work of recuperation necessary to truly redeem it. Smollett's texts anticipate both the aims and the disturbing implications of the movement for agricultural improvement in the late eighteenth century. Agriculturalists champion nightsoil as a chemically valuable fertilizer in the second half of the century. We close by showing that their program relies less on the processes of recuperative mixture, than on the rhetoric of taste. Agriculturalists sell nightsoil as the very stuff of wealth-production. Essentializing nightsoil's chemical value, they leave out the needful labor that transforms rankness into joy.

### I. The Agnotology of Excrement

Historians have almost universally denied the use of nightsoil in eighteenth-century British fields. Mark Overton, for example, writes in his *Agricultural Revolution in England*, that “[a]n obvious source of manure, from human beings, was little used before the nineteenth-century, partly because it was believed that it tainted crops” (109). The agricultural historian Eric Kerridge claims that “not until the later eighteenth century were covetous eyes cast upon London nightsoil, and even then, fortunately, most of it was disposed of other than to farmers” (241). The urban historian Rosemary Sweet writes somewhat more cautiously that “the potential of urban manure for agriculture was only highlighted in the second half of the eighteenth century, and was popularized by Arthur Young in his *Six Weeks Tour*” (*English Town* 79). Social anthropologist Alan McFarlane suggests that Britons never used significant quantities of human ordure in their

agriculture (173). Donald Woodward's excellent article on the use of off-farm manures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is an exception, in that it confirms that "nightsoil, and town muck in general, had been used by English cultivators since at least medieval times" (273), but Woodward still concludes that nightsoil use seems to have been curtailed both by the accessibility of supplies and by "distaste" (274). Most recently, Liam Brunt has challenged part of Woodward's claims—arguing that the use of other off-farm manures was "widespread and intensive" in England between 1700 and 1840 (333). Nevertheless, Brunt leaves nightsoil out of his enquiries, affirming that "the use of nightsoil in English agriculture was not common" (344). Rather, "farmers were reluctant to use nightsoil because they believed that it could taint the flavour of the crops" (344).

Brunt's last statement seems to be corroborated. In what Woodward calls one of the "strongest condemnations of the use of human excrement" in early agricultural writing (Woodward 273), John Evelyn assures his readers that a tasteful gardener will not use nightsoil to grow his esculent roots, and that the discerning consumer will be able to identify contaminated vegetables by their taste. In his *Philosophical Discourse of the Earth* (1675), Evelyn writes that due to "the impurity, and rankness of the dressing . . . we omit to enumerate amongst our Soils, *Stercus humanum*, which, howsoever preferr'd by some before all other . . . unless exceedingly ventilated and air'd perniciously contaminate[s] the odor of *Flowers*, and is so evident in the Vine, as nothing can reconcile it" (118). Because plants "contract the smell and relish of the ferments, apply'd to accelerate their growth," only those without good taste will purchase vegetables grown in nightsoil. Likewise, only "vulgar Gardeners about this City" are so tasteless as to "confide in Dungs" for the fertilization of their plants (117). Here Evelyn conflates



physiological with aesthetic taste. To use *stercus humanum*, or eat vegetables grown in it is not only to taste *stercus humanum* and therefore have a bad taste in one's mouth, but is also to be vulgar, and therefore to have a bad taste in one's judgment. Evelyn's "vulgar Gardeners about this City" are guilty of both enormities. Luckily, Evelyn suggests, the taste of human ordure identifies such vulgarity. Like the truly delicate consumer in Hume's "Of the Standards of Taste," those of good judgment will "perceive every ingredient in the composition" (141), and so will be able to distinguish the esculent roots besmeared with ordure from those grown in soil not "over-muck't" (117).

Yet what has been taken for a straightforward disavowal of a substance that represents the phantasmic valuation of waste by the vulgar producer and his depraved consumer is not quite so transparent. As he goes on, Evelyn shows us that through rotting and mixture, the status and the name of nightsoil can change. After affirming that he will omit nightsoil from his list of soils because its flavor is irreconcilable "unless exceedingly ventilated and air'd," Evelyn in fact goes on to explain how such ventilation would work. He begins, importantly, by shifting the terminology he will use from the already fastidious Latin, "*stercus humanum*," and offers instead to discuss "particular and simple *Composts*, (for so I take leave to use a *Solecism*, till they are blended together with the rest, as we shall afterwards shew)" (118). Evelyn describes and points out his own linguistic shiftiness. He uses a solecism, or "An impropriety or irregularity in speech or diction" (OED 1a) to obfuscate his move from the unacceptable substance of *stercus humanum* to the nonequivalent term of *Composts*—that is from a substance that in itself is distasteful enough to require that it be omitted, to a mixed substance that by blending

*stercus humanum* “together with the rest” can actually transform this unacceptable matter into soil. Evelyn goes on to explain exactly how:

To give some instances of the nature of particular and simple *Composts* . . . whatever they be, they are by no means fit for the Earth, and use of the Husband-man, unless, besides their richness, they be perfectly well digested, made short, sweet, and almost reduc'd to a crumbling Mould; so order'd, as not only not to lose any of their virtue, but to improve it, and to excite, entertain, and communicate heat, and vegetative Sprits to what you shall apply them: And that this is not done *per se*, that is, by immediate application, without prejudice . . . experience tells us, especially in the soil of *Animals*, which is of all other the most active, consisting of *Heterogeneous* parts, and repugnancies, without which no fermentation could be obtain'd. (118-9)

“[T]he soil of *Animals*”—and the only animal that Evelyn has mentioned within the last several pages is human beings—is not without its “virtue,” but that virtue is not available “*per se*, that is, by immediate application, without prejudice”—it has to be “order'd” by the husbandman’s labor of mixture with other soils, and “made short, sweet, and almost reduc'd to a crumbling Mould” by the digestive faculties of the dungheap before it can be applied to the gardener’s use. Here Evelyn’s recommendations accord with those of some eighteenth-century agricultural treatises. Francis Home asserts that farmers should add human excrement to dungheaps in order to “quicken the fermentation” of the whole (73), and “Mago,” a correspondent to the agricultural periodical *De Re Rustica*, observes that “[h]uman excrement is . . . by itself too strong a manure for any land, and should

therefore be made into a compost before it is used” (138). William Ellis suggests that farmers should mix “humane Ordure grown stale, whereof the strength is gone” with other soils for application to their fields (*Practical 2*: 29). Abstracting from William Marshall and John Morley, G.E. Fussell describes the late eighteenth-century consensus on “[t]he progress of change in the composition of the dunghill” (173):

When the heap had been made it was seen that the mass swelled and heated . . . [a]fter some time the heat abated, and a brown liquor was given off. Finally the whole took on an almost uniform soapy appearance and the temperature declined. Frequent turning and mixing reduced the whole to a blackish residuum called mould . . . In Surrey, it was common to see such mixens on the waste at roadsides, like William Marshall’s, made of a complex of materials said to be got from St. George’s fields, including horse and cow dung, slaughterhouse waste, night soil, street sweepings, and so on. (173)

Thoroughly digested into the mixen’s Mould, nightsoil disappears. If Evelyn’s recommendation that nightsoil and other animal manures be composted remains viable throughout much of the eighteenth century, it also reflects our twenty first-century consensus on nightsoil. The World Health Organization identifies nightsoil as a carrier for pathogens like cholera and typhoid as well as parasitic organisms like trematode (Smith, n.p.), and encourages its use only after long-term storage or other treatment (Mara 95).<sup>14</sup> Because of the dangers posed by raw excrement as an agricultural additive, in a current practical text on composting human excrement for agricultural use, Joseph

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<sup>14</sup> See also Mara, *Guidelines for the Safe Use of Wastewater and Excreta in Agriculture and Aquaculture*, 47-89.

Jenkins notes that his book is “*not* about recycling nightsoil by raw applications to land, which is a practice that should be discouraged when sanitary alternatives, such as composting, are available” (45). Jenkins’ language also mirrors Evelyn’s focus on the “sweet . . . crumb’ling Mould” that gives sensory indications of nightsoil’s transformation in the dungheap. For Jenkins, composting “converts humanure into a friendly, pleasant-smelling humus safe for food gardens” (Jenkins, 46). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of course, it was not a consensus on the existence of pathogens themselves but the rank taste and smell of nightsoil that pointed to a pernicious presence in the soil, and led farmers to debate the relative benefits of fresh or composted manures.<sup>15</sup> Evelyn’s position on this issue seems quite clear in spite of his solecism. Like current researchers on nightsoil, Evelyn suggests that the “*Heterogeneous* parts, and repugnancies” of excrement, its rankness, has to be broken down and transformed from a heterogeneous and repugnant material to a uniform, sweet-smelling, “crumbling Mould” before it can be used “without prejudice.”

In spite of the good reasons for composting nightsoil, the linguistic slipperiness of Evelyn’s statements about its application as a part of compost also identifies a challenge that historians face in trying to explore the actual likelihood or extent of nightsoil use in eighteenth-century Britain. In fact soil or dung from human excrement is rarely identified as such before Young’s and the Board of Agriculture’s rehabilitative efforts in the 1790s, unless it is being disavowed. Distaste is both literal and aesthetic, but farmers appear to have conquered it, at least sometimes, not so much by avoiding nightsoil altogether as by composting it and renaming it. Instead of being called nightsoil, human excrement is

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<sup>15</sup> For an excellent article on seventeenth-century practices of the use of fresh nightsoil in China, see Xue. China was frequently the example on which eighteenth-century authors drew when they wished to suggest the use of raw nightsoil. See for example, *De Re Rustica* 2: 92-5.

referred to under titles including “mud,” “dung,” “town dung,” or “street scrapings,” or simply indicated within the generous signifying space of several repetitions of “&c”.<sup>16</sup> Nor are these alternative names necessarily euphemisms—like Jenkins’ preferred term “humanure,” they may refer to nightsoil as part of a compost of other soils, its repugnancies changed through mixture and decay into rich, sweet-smelling mould. Even so, Evelyn is not omitting the matter of nightsoil from his compost pile in the sense that a modern historians have in general understood it. Rather, he is omitting the sense of nightsoil—its rankness and its definition as a separate substance from the crumbling mould that it feeds. Once blended, in his articulation, *stercus humanum* is no longer *stercus* at all, but virtuous, improved, earth. The implication is that what no longer looks and smells and tastes like *stercus humanum*, is not. Like Philips’ apple eaters, Evelyn’s well-digested dungheap no longer has to own what it is.

Like Locke denying the insensible properties of matter, historians have tended to accept without question the euphemistic elision of nightsoil from agricultural manuals. One circumstance that does suggest concrete evidence for the use of human excrement in eighteenth-century farming, however, is the number of cities that sold or gave away the rights to collect their town manure. To sell rights, or even to give them away, requires a either a buyer, or someone willing to invest time, money, and materials like carts and horses in nightsoil collection. Both scenarios imply a ready use or market for nightsoil.

London, with its enormous population, the highest in Europe by the start of the eighteenth

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<sup>16</sup> For more contemporary examples in addition to those produced throughout this chapter, see Young, *A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* (1768). Young writes that, “All round London, at a small distance, they have a proper idea of bringing various sorts of manures; but at the distance of 10, 12, and 18 miles they do not by any means bring a twentieth part of the quantity which they ought; considering what rich sorts they might procure at a small expence” (283); See also Public Act, 32 George II, c. 16 HL/PO/PU/1/1758/32G2n71, which amends for greater efficiency an act made twenty six years previously that allows for “a certain Quantity of Dung, Compost, Earth, or Soil, to be yearly shipped as Ballast from the Laystalls in London on Board any Collier or Coasting Vessel.”

century, had to pay people to collect its waste, and this fact has skewed ideas of municipal sanitation in other urban areas.<sup>17</sup> Most of London's waste-removal was by watercourse; even so, there was enough left over to make a significant, and acknowledged, impact on the soil of surrounding counties (Woodward 270). Yet in this as in so many things, London was a special case. Smaller cities could, and sometimes did, rent out the right to collect the town manure. Edinburgh, which was generally innovative in its solutions to the significant waste management problems that the city faced from its foundation, began in 1700 a system in which the whole city was divided into lets, or "tacks" rented, and later distributed annually to individual investors who paid for removal in exchange for the dung ("Cleansing" 17).<sup>18</sup> Hull, as Arthur Young describes it in his *Six Months Tour* (1770), sold "All . . . sorts of manure, . . . the sullage of the streets, &c &c &c, is purchased at about 2s. 6 d. or 3s. a wagon-load of 50 bushels, and spread on the fields to great profit" (163). Hull had apparently been doing so for at least twenty-five years (164). At Bury St. Edmunds, where Young was raised, "they purchase the manures arising in that town at a vast expence; and with such eagerness, that were the town half as big as *London*, they would buy them all (*Six Weeks* 282). Woodward shows that for the farms surrounding Cambridge "the annual influx of undergraduates helped to swell the volume of 'town muck'" (266). Nor was the sale of nightsoil limited to larger towns. In Cornwall, the small town of East Looe, still barely 5000 inhabitants even in 2014, was able as early as 1717 to sell the right to collect town dung from the city's streets, stables

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<sup>17</sup> For these figures and an excellent paper on the development of British agriculture in relation to eighteenth-century population growth, see Wrigley.

<sup>18</sup> Notes on the sale of the tacks in the eighteenth century can be located throughout the Edinburgh town council records indexed under "dung" or "fulzie." That farmers and landlords as well as investors were purchasing the dung is apparent from the records of the tacksmen. For example, in 1740, a tack went to "Alexander Davies, Farmer" (61: 195), while just after the new year in 1741, Sir Charles Gilmore took a division "for the use of his Tennants" (61: 203).

and privies.<sup>19</sup> Given the number of towns that were collecting and selling their dung, widespread disavowals of the tastefulness of nightsoil and human excrements as manure seem insufficient evidence that British farmers did not use soil made from human excrement in their fields. Rather, the likelihood is that the joint work of dungheap and farmer transformed what had been knowable only as excrement into sweet-smelling Mould that goes by other names.

## II. “Such Dung as is made in Great Towns”: Nightsoil in Tull, Dodsley, and Ellis

For Jethro Tull, no process of mixture and composting could transform human matter into soil. A friend of Robert Walpole’s, and the heir to one of those scrivening types so vilified by Swift and Bolingbroke, Jethro Tull’s ineluctable distaste for human matter is largely politically and economically motivated, and so a brief summary of Tull’s own ambiguous class-position is essential to understanding his proposed physiology of plants. Tull seems to have considered himself to be an ally of the landed gentry, but he was not a member of that class or its party.<sup>20</sup> Educated at Oxford, he could not financially support the career in politics to which he aspired.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he became a farmer, and his epoch-

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<sup>19</sup> See “Memorandum,” Cornwall Record Office, MS X155/699.

<sup>20</sup> And indeed that class has endeavored to claim him, too. Tull’s nineteenth-century biographer, the Earl of Cathcart, descendant of the eighth Lord Cathcart, who was a friend of Tull’s, insists that Tull was “the scion of an ancient Berkshire and Oxfordshire family” (12), while earlier, Tull’s eighteenth century biographer, D.Y. of Hungerford, who wrote a version of Tull’s life for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* also emphasized Tull’s connections to nobility and gentry (522-6).

<sup>21</sup> Tull’s life story is scattered through his writings. Norman Hidden has, however, performed an invaluable service in sorting out the history of Tull’s acquisition of Prosperous Farm in Berkshire, especially since Hidden elucidates Tull’s class background by placing him as one of those who benefitted, in some ways, from the instability surrounding the financial revolution. He acquired the land on which he farmed because his great uncle (also called Jethro Tull) was steward to a family of local gentry, the Husseys, out of the scraps of whose over-mortgaged estate he was cobbling together an estate of his own (Hidden 30). When the Husseys broke in the late seventeenth century, Tull the steward was concerned in many of their affairs, and went down too, but managed to save a small farm from the general wreckage by transferring the title to his nephew (31). That nephew’s son is Jethro Tull the agriculturalist. On Scrivening types, see Kramnick, *Bolingbroke* 56-63. See also Swift, *Examiner* no. 14: “the country gentleman is in the position of a young

making work, *Horse-Hoing Husbandry* (1731-33), reflects the ambiguity of his class position. It is a medley of whiggish zeal for progress, financial speculation, and divestment of the rural laborer, with conservative calls for a return to hierarchy and rejection of the Whig myth that “the Common Law . . . was to our Ancestors a better Inheritance than that which came to them from their Parents,” because the Common Law cannot guarantee that “the Possessors of Land” will not be “trampled on by Servants and Labourers” (1733: vi-vii). The book’s language is loaded with satire, sparks of erudition, lashes of anti-intellectualism, rejection of the ancients’ “Canon . . . in Agriculture” (1733: ii) in favor of modern experimentation and improvement, and country squire-style nostalgia deriding the confused social hierarchies of the court, and griping for the days before “Plough-Servants first began to exalt their Dominion over their Masters so that a Gentleman-Farmer was allow’d to make but little Profit of his Arable Lands” (1731: xi).

Despite his oft-indulged disdain for the insolence of laborers, however, Tull is not really a country squire. He is, as Laura Brown Sayre and Simon Schaffer paint him, an agrarian capitalist, or “gentleman improver,” and his whole effort as an improver is directed toward the facilitation of the landowner’s right to profit from his land.<sup>22</sup> As Carole Fabricant has pointed out in her readings of other Augustan-era authors, the financial relationships of capitalist society co-existed with, and were sometimes

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heir, out of whose estate a scrivener receives half the rents for interest, and hath a mortgage on the whole” (74).

<sup>22</sup> As Simon Schaffer has noted, Tull’s book marks a turning point in the English conception of the earth’s fertility because “he denied the possibility of legitimation through scriptural history and he accepted the possibility of speaking for an explicitly antagonistic social group—the improving landowner” (134). In fact Tull does not make any explicit claims to delegitimize scriptural history or to “break the link between Scriptural morality and the product of the labour on the soil” (135), but he is unique among agricultural writers up to his time in that he never mentions his agricultural labor as an explicitly Christian practice, either. He is a firm believer in class hierarchy, and yet, his only sop to the “paternalistic society based on the doctrines of Christianity” that J.A. Downie identifies with the Country party (58), is his payment of the poor tax, which he grudges because the poor steal his turnips. Sayre also makes note of Tull’s landlord-focused system, and sees Tull’s rigid hierarchy of classes, and his principles of strict monoculture in the field as mutual responses to the phenomenon of social leveling (124).



sublimated into, nostalgia for the social organization of a long-gone rural patriarchy (97-8). But unlike the nostalgia that is legible in the agricultural manual of Tull's contemporary Charles Lisle, for example, where the virtuous labor of farming founds the moral purpose of the empire (xii-xiii), Tull's nostalgia has nothing to do with the nation—it is for a time when servants obeyed, good hands never left for London, and the landlord was enabled by the authority of his position to “display his despotick Power . . . by sowing what he thinks fit, and when” (Ellis *Practical* 19). Tull calls for strict social hierarchy, but speaks out against tithes and poor rates; he imagines the rural estate as a system for the production of gentlemen, but the “virtue” of that gentlemen is never imagined as more than the bare profit he reaps from his acres.<sup>23</sup> Indeed Simon Schaffer believes Tull to be an atheist (135), and he is certainly conspicuous in his lack of concern for the relationship between farming and morality or farming and the good of the commonwealth. Tull's innovations are couched, in many ways, as a return to natural hierarchy that might be achieved through the separation of city and country, however, and this results in a peculiar mixture of nostalgia and improving zeal, hierarchal mania and leveled capitalist competition. Like the scriblerians, Tull vituperates luxury through the figure of Dung, but he does it in order to cut off his capitalist landlord from dependence on all others, not to benefit society or the coffers of the state.

In order to secure the landowner's independence, the division between country and city is theorized as a rule of nature in *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*. To explain how, we will need to make a technical distinction between the substances that eighteenth-century

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<sup>23</sup> Note for example: “a Poor Farmer . . . when he had prepared his Land for Barley, and could not procure Seed to sow it, plow'd on 'till Wheat Seed-time, and (by means of such Additional Plowing) without Dung, had so good a Crop of Wheat, that it was Judg'd to be worth more than the Inheritance of the Land it grew on” (1733: 21 n.3).

husbandry manuals usually referred to as “earths” and “dungs.” Earth, in eighteenth century agriculture, was generally divided into clays, sands, loams, marles, chalks, and peat-earth, with its composition varying according to place. Earths could be, and often were, mixed together so that the drainage of a wet, heavy earth like clay might be amended by the addition, for example, of sand, but earth itself was still often treated as an elemental material in the early eighteenth century, separable as a concept from any dung that might rot into it, or water or air that might move through it.<sup>24</sup> Dung, on the other hand, is putrefying matter—usually excrement, although “dung” could refer to the broader category of manures, including mineral and vegetable manures, as well.<sup>25</sup> Tull considers its active principle to be nitre, or nitrous salts, and he contrasts Earth to Nitre/Dung, Water, Fire, and Air, all “Materials” that are not earth, but that were thought by previous and other theorists to “contribute, in some manner, to the Increase of Plants” (10).

Tull’s theory is that Earth and only Earth is the “food of Plants” (10). “By Food” he specifies, “is meant that Matter, which being added and united to the first *Stamina* of Plants, or *Plantulae*, which were made in little at the Creation, gives them, or rather is their Increase” (10).<sup>26</sup> Only “that which nourishes and augments a Plant, is the true Food of it,” Tull writes (13), and through several experiments of his own and his analysis of others by Jan Baptist Van Helmont, John Woodward, and Richard Bradley, Tull concludes that only Earth “becomes an absolute part” of plants (13), while all of the other

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<sup>24</sup> For a more thorough explanation of the changing understanding of earth’s constitution over Tull’s lifetime, see Fussell, *Crop Nutrition* 75-112.

<sup>25</sup> I follow Tull’s practice, throughout this section, of capitalizing Dung in order to differentiate Tull’s urban excremental substance from the broader category of animal dungs.

<sup>26</sup> From his definition of food as something added to the “*Plantulae* . . . made in little at the Creation,” we can surmise that Tull adheres to a preformationist principle, and that his logic of assimilation is most similar to David Humphrey’s or to Samuel Clarke’s. See chapter one.

“Materials” simply contribute to the conditions of their growth.<sup>27</sup> Like the human stamina that rejects all particles not predestined to rise with it at the end of days, Tull’s “*Stamina* of Plants, or *Plantulae*” reject all “extraneous food”, that passes through them without becoming “an absolute part” (Humphreys 101-2). When Tull, then, says that Earth is the only food of plants, he is also insisting that dungs and manures in no way contribute to plant tissue. Although the “lacteal mouths” on their roots can become choked with dung if they are planted in and forced to imbibe it (4), plants do not assimilate putrefied matter, and therefore no part of plant matter is actually made of dung. Once again a repugnant material is excluded from participation in the body’s increase by denying that it can be digested. Again, we find at issue here the human individual’s claim to own the particles of his own flesh.

In *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, all dung is “Cart Dung,” that is, dung purchased and carted in from the city to the field, usually the contents of a city laystall, including everything from human ordure, to horse manure, offal, dust, soot, and ashes, and transported to the farm in quantities of approximately thirty cartloads per-acre (1733:123). That Tull means town dung when he writes “Dung” is evident not only in the long, bombastic passage against the substance that is the center of Tull’s chapter “Of Dung,” but in several other references throughout *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*. For example, Tull writes that “very few Fields can have the Conveniency of a sufficient supply of Dung, to enable them to produce half the Wheat, those will do near Cities, where they have plenty of it” (20).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, though virtually all modern writers on Tull presume

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<sup>27</sup> See Tull, 1733: 10-14.

<sup>28</sup> See also 1733: 21, in the chapter “Of Tillage.”

he means sheep's dung, Tull himself states explicitly that this is not the case.<sup>29</sup> Sheep's dung, Tull asserts, probably falsely, is even more costly than "Cart-Dung" in the long run, since the need to set land aside for pasturage and feed-crops, and the limited seasons in which animals can live on pasture, "makes the price of their Manure quadruple to what it would be, if equally good all the Year, like Cart-Dung (123).<sup>30</sup> Dung is in general then, in *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, a product of the urban economy of consumption and exchange, and Tull takes as a matter of fact too obvious for explication what most twentieth-century critics deny: that human excrement in the early eighteenth century is in use as a manure in the fields around cities and towns.

Tull's initial rejection of "Cart Dungs" is framed as entirely financial. Tull surmises that since plant root systems are essentially "guts inverted" (1733: 3), they ingest microscopic particles of earth, or plant "pabulum" (3), directly through physical contact with the soil. This pabulum is passively pushed into "lacteal mouths" located on the roots of plants by the pressure of roots growing through the "superfices" of the soil (4). In order to get more pabulum to the roots, and in order to loosen the soil so that the roots may grow more easily into it, Tull recommends continual, frequent, cultivation of the soil bed. Tull invented both his horse or ox-drawn hoe and his plough with four coulter to mechanically mix, turn, crush and pulverize the earth, while his seed drill is built to plant crops in rows so that pulverization of the soil could continue between rows of plants even after they were in the ground. Since the earth is also infinitely divisible

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<sup>29</sup> E.R. Wicker writes, for example, that "Tull had in mind the ordinary barnyard manure which he thought was important for its soil division properties but to which he objected because he found it harmful as a carrier of weeds, a defect attributable in part to his ignorance of correct procedures for collecting and storing manures" (47).

<sup>30</sup> Tull's couching of this whole arithmetic in the subjunctive (sheep dung is "reckoned" cheaper, but this cheapness "is to be questioned"), makes it appear likely that Tull, who generally highlights any knowledge he has gained through his own experience, used city muck to manure his fields before developing his Dung-less method of tillage.

into smaller and smaller parts, it contains infinite nutrition provided that it is continually ploughed, and therefore it does not need either soil additives or rest. This theory—and Tull’s practice here is a forerunner of modern monoculture farming—makes crop rotation unnecessary as well as fallow: why plant turnips one year and beans the next when both species consume the same minute earth?<sup>31</sup> Important to note here, too, is Sayre’s observation that Tull’s physiological theory mirrored his social theory: “If all individuals have the same physiological needs then competition for resources is total; so that if in a traditional, hierarchical world multiple uses or interests could be complementary, in a leveled world agricultural productivity had to be strictly directed toward the profit of the landholder”(124). Just as all plants, weeds and sanfoin alike, competed for the same nutriment, human beings were competing for the same monetizable value from the earth. Tull’s method, with its large requirement of space and relatively few seeds planted, was not productive of high yields, but low inputs made it profitable, at least theoretically. The benefit of Tull’s system was a benefit to the landlord, to the exclusion of all other persons concerned, from the nightmen who sold dung off the laystall, to the contractor who fed his majesty’s troops on cheap and plentiful corn. Significantly absent from Tull’s treatise is the sense of the farmer’s virtue in shouldering the responsibility for feeding his nation—and indeed other nations—that is so conspicuous in other eighteenth-century texts on agriculture, from Arthur Young’s propaganda, in which, “[i]n a rich, populous, industrious kingdom, every inch of the soil should be applied to feeding MAN” (*Farmer’s Letters*, 1771 2: 226), to Thomson’s *The Seasons*, in which Britons should “venerate the plough” not for their own profit, but to “be the exhaustless granary of a world!” (Thomson, “Spring” 87).

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<sup>31</sup> See Sayre, “Prehistory” 858.

As a part of its general program of isolation, then, Tull's system eliminates the farmer's dependence on Dung and the city people who produce it. Tull did not argue against experience that dung does *nothing* in a field, but he did argue that its virtue was totally mechanical. As dung decays, Tull believed, its fermentation produces nitre that causes the soil to divide, and this division lets plant roots reach more pabulum. Dung thus "may be said to nourish Vegetables in much the same manner as my Knife nourishes me, by cutting and dividing my Meat" (1733: 10). After an experiment where Tull fed nitrous salt to the roots of a mint plant, which subsequently died, however, Tull affirmed that, according to his analogy "when Nitre is apply'd to the Root of a Plant, it will kill it as certainly as a Knife misapply'd will kill a Man; which proves, that Nitre is, in respect of Nourishment, just as much the Food of Plants, as Arsenick is the Food of Rats" (10). Since Dung is so potentially dangerous, and so expensive, and since "[t]he almost only Use of all Manure, is the same as of Tillage, viz. the Pulverization it makes by Fermentation" (1731: 166), its disadvantages outweigh the benefit of a little extra fermentation for which tillage might easily be substituted. Tull measures dung against tillage:

Dung, which is the most common Manure, is apt to increase Weeds, as Tillage (of which Houghing is chief) destroys them, and Manure is scanty in most Places, but Tillage may be had everywhere. Another Difference is, the vast Disproportion of the Price of Manure, and that of Tillage (1731: 166).

Dung is "but a poor Succedaneum of the Hough" (160), and may therefore wholly and profitably be replaced by tilling and hoeing the ground. Dung's expense only compounds

its status as waste. Dinging ones fields, Tull tells us, is an act equivalent in ostentatious uselessness to polishing one's plough (xxix).

Initially, then, Tull identifies Dung with luxury only in as much as it is an excessive and expensive addition to the field that impoverishes the farmer without adding to his crop. Tull writes that, "I must confess, that I have much less Aversion to Dung in the Field, than I have to the Expence of Buying and Carrying it thither" (1731: xxix).<sup>32</sup> As *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, proceeds, however, the opposition to Dung becomes moral and material as well as pragmatic when Tull links his indignation against the excessive uselessness of "Cart-Dung" with expressions of hatred and disgust for the city people whose luxuriant over-consumption produces it in such vast quantities, and with fear that the matter of their corrupted bodies has tainted the flesh of his plants. In his 1733 chapter "Of Dung," Dung is in fact rendered as a species of luxurious excess, that is, a thing, as in John Sekora's definition of luxury, which people both "do not need, and may not claim" (25). In "Of Dung," the individual's inability to "claim" dung is its most pernicious aspect because it threatens the sovereignty of the landowner over his own self-constituting soil. Like Philips or Powell, then, Tull points to something in excess of the mere materiality of Dung that Dung transmits into the bodies of plants. But unlike Powell

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<sup>32</sup>Tull used the dung available to him on his farm, but opposed buying in off-farm soil-additives. Interestingly, he also adds, in his supplementary notes to *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, that if fed to cattle and not to human beings, there is no harm in dung: "Such Plants as *Cabbages, Turnips, Carrots, and Potatoes*, when they are designed only for Fattening of Cattle, will not be injured by Dung, Tillage, and Hoing altogether, which will make the Crops the greater, and the Cattle will like them never the worse" (1733: 19, n.2). The implication that another digestive system in between the human and the earth mitigates or erases the taste of urban others and the excess subjectivity that taste implies indicates that like Evelyn, Tull believes that a change of state which results in the removal of rankness (dung in grass to cow flesh) is sufficient to erase any pernicious particles. Another probable implication, given the discrepancy between Tull's intense ire for dung in other sections, and his mild dismissal here, is that Tull's personal principles regarding the attachment of subjectivity to matter are not actually engaged in his depiction of Dung in *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*. In spite of its widespread and long standing influence, his maligning of the stench of noble excrement is a rhetorical strategy to disgust his reader. This was John Hill's perspective, who observed of Tull in 1756, "[h]e wrote to establish the use of a particular kind of tillage in its [Dung's] stead, so that he may be considered as a prejudiced person" (*Complete Body* 2: 137).

or Philips he sees this non-consensual transmission as a violation of his own agency. With the help of many of the rhetorical figures of classical and modern complaint against luxury, Tull fiercely moralizes the use of Dung in agriculture, making its use by the farmer tantamount to participation in a depraved luxury economy that deceives and harms consumers, and implies that Dung, because it is the product of other human bodies, undermines the ownership of the landholder, not just over his land, but even over his own flesh.

“[T]here is, I'm sure,” sneers Tull, “much . . . reason to prohibit the use of Dung in the Kitchen-Garden, on account of the ill Taste it gives to Esculent Roots, and Plants, especially such Dung as is made in great Towns” (18).<sup>33</sup> In Tull, the excessiveness of the urban commercial economy is materialized through the presence of a “stench” or “taste.” Not just nutritionally empty and luxuriously expensive, Dung’s rank excess of signification in the form of taste and smell indicates its physical fullness of other, urban, people:

’Tis a Wonder how delicate Palates can dispense with eating their Own,  
and their Beast’s Ordure, but a little more putrify’d and evaporated;  
together with all sorts of Filth and Nastiness, a Tincture of which those  
Roots must unavoidably receive, that grow amongst it.

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<sup>33</sup>Tull is drawing directly on Evelyn, here. Elsewhere in *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, he notes that Evelyn also recommends pulverizing soil: “[t]he Experiment of artificially pulverized Earth seeming to confirm what I had writ of the *Pasture of Plants*, I could not forbear inserting it into my *Chap. of Tillage*, as soon as I had read it; but Mr. *Evelyn* takes no Notice that the *Surfaces* of those fine *Parts*, into which the Earth is *divided* by such *Pulverization*, is the *vegetable Pasture*; but runs into a *Simile* which would better fit the Climate of the *Indian Plants*, than *ours*; therefore I omit his Theory” (1733: iii). It is notable, given his rejection of Virgilian husbandry as outlandish and archaic unto irrelevance, that Tull here exoticizes Evelyn, and places him in the position of an honored, but obsolete, and so supplanted, forebear rather than a scientific predecessor.



Indeed I do not admire, that learned Palates, accustomed to the *Goût* of *Silphum*, *Garlick*, *la Chair venee*, and mortify'd Venison, equalling the Stench and Rankness of this sort of City-Muck, should relish and approve of Plants that are fed and fatted by its immediate Contact. People who are so vulgarly Nice, as to nauseate these modish Dainties, and whose squeamish Stomachs even abhor to receive the Food of Nobles, so little different from that wherewith they regale their richest Gardens, say, that even the very Water, wherein a rich Garden-Cabbage is boil'd, Stinks;

(18)

If this passage were intended as a satire rather than as part of a husbandry manual, it might have been attributed to “Dr. S—T”. Identity smears each station on this sliding scale of human filth: to eat the “Food of Nobles” is to eat at once the produce of the Nobles’ intestines, the produce of their gardens, and themselves. That which is made out of human waste stays human, “but a little purified” through putrefaction. Tull relies on the concept of some lingering human identity present in all that “City-Muck” to convince his reader that the practice of dunging one’s fields is tantamount to sharing them with a heterogeneous crew of Cits whose persistence in the soil and its produce is testified by the stench and rank flavor of their excrement. That excrement is not only disgusting, but dangerous:

The very Effluvia of Animal Bodies, sent off by Perspiration, are so noxious, as to kill the Animal that emits them, if confin'd to receive them back in great Quantity. . . . How noxious then must be the more fetid Steams of Ordure? . . . In great Cities the Air is full of these Effluvia . . .

People are generally observ'd to live a less time, and less healthfully in  
 Cities, than in the Country; to which difference, 'tis likely, that the eating  
 unwholesome Gardenage may contribute. (18-19)

The use of Dung, therefore, involves the farmer in the corruptions of a larger commercial economy that depends on the production and consumption of excess that is detrimental to both individual bodily systems, and the body politic, for its continued expansion. Tull draws on nearly every depravity associated with the anti-luxury side of the luxury debates to describe town dung. Just eating food grown in town dung, for Tull, enacts a particularly disgusting form of class mixture.<sup>34</sup> Subordinates feed on the bodily matter of their superiors when they “receive the Food of Nobles, so little different from that wherewith they regale their richest gardens.” The flavor of urban food is also strongly associated with the unpatriotic and delicacy-destroying strong spices of foreign cuisine. Here Tull mimics anti-luxury tropes explicitly when he argues that Dung tastes good to the “delicate Palates” of urban eaters only because the senses of these people are depraved.<sup>35</sup> The ill taste in city food is the taste of city muck and city people, fed on the foreign goût of silphium and garlic, and the unhealthy meat of cruelly-raised animals, while urban life is that of a mixed mass of people, deluded into thinking they possess “delicate palates” but actually unable to separate a nobleman’s food from a nobleman’s

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<sup>34</sup> Certainly, the luxury debates coevolved with the financial revolution over the same period, and many of the eighteenth-century arguments for and against luxury are located in texts that are also considered sources on the “crisis of value”. One compact statement of the relation between the financial revolution and the idea of luxury may be found in part two of Charles Davenant’s *Discourses on the Public Revenues*, where he blames the fact that “our luxury, and depraved manners, have introduced among us the use of many things fetched from abroad” (347) for the necessity of foreign trade and new financial instruments, since given the habits of the English people, and the difficulty of restraining them, it is no longer possible for the nation to depend solely on its own produce. For the “crisis of value” and related discussions, see note eight above.

<sup>35</sup> For thorough discussions of what constitute anti-luxury tropes in both classical and eighteenth-century contexts, see Berry 126-176. See also Sekora; and Berg and Eger.

excrement. Dung is even associated, for Tull, with the carnage of war, which the landed-interest typically opposed: “[i]f a Catalogue were publish’d . . . of the Pestiferous Effects, which have happen’d from the Putrefaction of dead Bodies, after great Battles, even in open Air, No-body, I believe, would have a good Opinion of the wholesomeness of Animal Dung” (19). Yet we have to remember that in spite of its bombastic style, Tull’s manual is not just a satire on Whig policies that protect the interests of urban middlemen over the interests of the country.<sup>36</sup> It is also an agricultural manual, and Tull is in fact suggesting that Dung transmits something not just ideologically but materially dangerous and disruptive into the dirt of urban gardens and the bodies of consumers.

The vitiated taste that Tull expresses does not surprise him in city eaters so used to the strong flavors of “modish dainties” (18), is particularly interesting in the context of Tull’s broader theories of soil and plant nutrition. As explained above, plant digestive systems, according to Tull, are essentially inverted forms of the human gut with the difference that “plants have no stomach nor aesophagus” (4).<sup>37</sup> They obtain their “pabulum” passively, “their Mouths or Lacteal Vessels opening on their outer spongy Superfices” to be stuffed by the pressure of the surrounding dirt so that each of the roots “presses their Lacteal Mouths against the Soil without” (4). Plants, Tull also argues, have no palates, and he shows a series of experiments proving that plants will take up ink, salt,

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<sup>36</sup> For one well-known, if later, example of a similar tirade that associates material sophistication with cultural depravity, see Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origins of Inequality” (3: 76 n.\*7). This tirade against the heterogeneous mixtures of urban luxury may also have influenced Smollett’s Matthew Bramble, whose possible debt to Jethro Tull is discussed below.

<sup>37</sup> Here Tull’s extended analogy between the human and plant gut is reminiscent of John Arbuthnot’s *Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments*, also printed in 1731, where Arbuthnot, likewise, distinguishes between passively consuming plants and actively consuming animals, and compares plant roots to inverted animal guts. Arbuthnot writes “An animal, considered in its material part, cannot well be defined from any particular organical part . . . the characteristic of an animal is to take its Aliment by a voluntary Action, by some aperture of the body, which may be called a Mouth, and to convey it into another called the intestines, into which its roots are implanted, whereby it draws its nourishment much after the manner of Vegetables, only a vegetable has its root planted without” (62).

or pulped garlic indiscriminately with their water, even if it is poisonous to them and causes the plant to die. Tull's heavily-dunged garden plants, passive mouths pressed up against the "City Muck" and unavoidably poisoned by it, bear a striking resemblance to his city consumers, who are also passively fed on "Filth and nastiness" that physical proximity makes it impossible to avoid. Moreover, the incapacity of plants to filter out dangerous and disgusting substances directly results in the consumption of those substances by consumers. In addition, the fact that plants and city-dwellers cannot taste undermines the idea expressed, for example, in Hume's essays, that taste's basis in material reality will ensure some correlation between what is natural and what is fashionable.<sup>38</sup> Tull's image of the filth-eating consumer gives us a taste that is so destroyed by "unwholesome Gardenage" and "modish Dainties" clogged with garlic and feces that the consumer in fact works to enjoy Dung-filled foods. The urban consumer uses her imagination to convince herself that delicacy and distinction, or "nice"ness are vulgar, while the insensibility of the urban eater, who can swallow feces and think it cabbage, is, from the fashionable perspective, "delicate" (18). Urban food, then, is unfree, compulsorily ingested by people too far-gone to tell the difference between a nobleman's food and his excrement. As in Swift's Academy of Lagado, Tull's account of the city's appetite for filth is a commentary on the dangers of representing value as if it is a projection of the human imagination rather than a material property. Once one begins to place value in things that are actually dangerous to the body, there is no limit to how distorted taste can be. Even human waste may be mistaken for food.

Tull implies in his chapter "of Dung" that the fundamental danger of luxury consumption, with its attachment to projected, imaginary value, is its disengagement of

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<sup>38</sup>See D. Hume 146-7.

the physical faculty of taste from the rule of nature. The farmer, in Tull, precisely because of his relationship with the intrinsic value of land, is like Hume's truly delicate consumer in "Of the Standard of Taste," able to "perceive every ingredient in the composition" and judge it aright (141). The farmer's job, Tull tells us, is "to feed Plants to the best Advantage" (10), to distinguish and separate the soils for his palate-less charges—that is not just palate-less plants but tasteless humans, too—keeping apart true fertile earth, infinitely and intrinsically nourishing given infinite labor of the part of the farmer, from corrupt, contingent City Muck. City-Muck in Tull mediates the hidden relations between rural estate and city consumer that undermine the basis on which land and the farmer's labor might be said to represent value in its fundamental form. Tull wishes to deny that any such relation of dependence exists between the rural farmer and the monied cit. It is in order to erase these relations, and deny the contributions of others to the productivity of his land, that Tull banishes the necessity of Dung and all outside additives from his fields.

These outside additives included not just Dung, but also human labor other than the landlord's.<sup>39</sup> Tull, like Locke, was certain that the landowner's labor, not God's mere gift, makes land productive: "this different Reputation they give to the Land, does not at all belong to it, but to the different Sorts of *Husbandry*" (128), he wrote.<sup>40</sup> His system reproduces Locke's homogenization of all land as equally valuable, given ample labor, that is an essential premise of Locke's theory of property because it eliminates the

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<sup>39</sup> On Tull's system as a response to his antagonistic relationship with labor, see Sayre, *Farming* 117; and Schaffer 135.

<sup>40</sup> See Locke, *Two Treatises*: "I ask, whether in the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America, left to nature, without any improvement, tillage, or husbandry, a thousand acres yield the needy and wretched inhabitants as many conveniences of life as ten acres equally fertile land do in Devonshire, where they are well cultivated" (116)?

immorality attendant on the engrossment by a few of what was intended to be a gift to the many.<sup>41</sup> In Tull's system, too, as in Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, the owner of land is the source of its value because it is by his mixture of labor with the soil that land is reclaimed from the wilderness and comes to produce the surplus necessary to feed others as well as himself. Tull argues, for example, that "if Agriculture were taken out of the World, 'tis much to be fear'd, that those of all populous Countries . . . would be oblig'd to turn Anthropophagi, as in many uncultivated Regions they do, very probably for that Reason" (16).

The productivity of land is limited only by the amount of labor its owner expends on it. Because plants feed on divided earth, "Pasture may be Increas'd in a Proportion to the Division of the Parts of Earth, whereof it is the Superficies, which Division may be mathematically Infinite; for an Atom is Nothing; neither is there a more plain Impossibility in Nature, than to reduce Matter to Nothing, by Division or Separation of its Parts" (1733: 17). Infinite labor equals infinite plant-food, and precisely because labor equals fertility for Tull, his theories evince a suspicion that the labor of others might lessen the owner's claim to own the fertility of his land. *Horse-Hoing Husbandry* is pitted everywhere with declamations against the insolence of "Hands" who refuse to work on behalf of their masters. Tull's antagonistic relationship with his laborers is perhaps best illustrated by an example from a November 1764 article on Tull from the *Gentlemen's*

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<sup>41</sup> This reading is indebted to Robert Markley, see "Land Enough in the World" esp. 831-2, where Markley concludes that in Locke's *Second Treatise*, land shares with money the properties of liquidity, use-value, and self-reproduction. "As men work," writes Markley, "profits multiply exponentially. Locke's account of value blackboxes the natural world so that the 'almost worthless materials' on which human labor operates have no internal structure, no qualities that escape or resist abstract calculations of productivity. The infinite elasticity of use, in short, fosters a view of nature as capacious but effectively featureless" (831).

*Magazine*. The author, D.Y. of Hungerford claims to have known Tull personally, and here recounts the story of Tull's initial attempts to train laborers to his methods:

Mr Tull employed himself assiduously in training of servants, and in accommodating the instruments proper for his new husbandry to their limited capacities: And this work he found much harder to accomplish than he at first expected . . . . The late Lord Ducie Moreton, who followed Mr Tull, or rather accompanied him in this laborious and vexatious business, has very frequently, if I have been rightly informed, to correct the awkwardness of his plowmen, or overcome their obstinacy, stript himself of his dignity, and put his hand to the plow himself. (524)

Of most note in this passage is the way that the breakdown of the mechanism of labor—the ploughman's body—makes visible the narrative by which the landowners Tull and Ducie Moreton lay claim to the produce of the soil as their own even though they themselves do not directly mix their own bodily labor with it. Only when the "Hands" as Tull usually refers to his laborers, refuse to work, does the owner "put his hands to the plow himself" (524). By doing so, he reveals that the owner's "Hands" and his hands are not the same. He interrupts a chain of significations that is essential to the fiction of property ownership. The ultimate, result of this revelation is that the value of a landed estate, the very sign of permanent and stable wealth in eighteenth-century law and culture, is contingent on matter beyond the agency of the owner himself: the resistant bodies of other, lower-class people as well as the fecund and reeking dung of luxuriant cities.

Tull can find “Hands to receive our Money, to take away our Goods, and to beat us; but such are wanting as will work faithfully at reasonable Wages” (1733: vi). His mistrust of wages is evident, for they do not appear to purchase him total control over the produce of his soil. Someone, for example, is stealing turnips out of his fields, and Tull complains that

notwithstanding the Actions of these People are lawful in destroying my Crops, because effectually prohibited by no Law; yet I cannot help thinking it very hard, after paying four Shillings in the Pound to the Poor's Tax, and extravagantly for the little hand work bestowed on my Turneps, that the best Product of my inclosures should not be my own (1733: iv).

Labor is supposed to procure an equal amount of value, but Tull finds the value of his labor channeled and dissipated into the hands of the freeloading poor. In order to close this unacceptable disjunction in his narrative of ownership, Tull sets out to “contrive Automata to do the Business appertaining to Tillage without Hands” (vi), to replace, that is, his disobedient organs with more reliably non-agential ones. He invents the seed drill to plant seeds in straight rows and at appropriate depths, the horse-hoe to cultivate between the rows of plants, and the five-coultered plough to raise up ridges of earth and pulverize them so that his plants’ “lacteal mouths” may more easily consume their particulate food. Tull excludes the laborer from his rural economy to ensure that the land is more completely under the farming landlord’s ownership, since now the labor that mixes with the land is performed by an automatic and therefore more perfect extension of his body.<sup>42</sup> Like Dung, the smell of which exposes the rural landowner’s reliance on city

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<sup>42</sup> It is important to note, of course, that Tull was not the one in the field, guiding the horse-hoe; he still needed laborers to do this work, though fewer of them. What is important, however, is that once the plough



luxury to cultivate his farm, the disobedience of laborers exposes the incomplete sovereignty of the landowner over his own land. Tull's reliance on machines, just like his eschewal of Dung, mitigates the threat of contingency, which otherwise offers to reduce all forms of value, including the landed estate, from permanent and stable signs of their own intrinsic worth to mere soil dependant for its value on a narrative of ownership that may at any time be interrupted by the disobedience of hands or revealed to be fiction by the rising stink of soil laced with city muck. If the land is not his own, Tull's landlord is back in the world of social relations where the value of land is dependant, even despite the infinite pasture of earth, on corn factors and butchers who buy and sell, eaters who eat and excrete and prices that rise and fall. Tull strives to make his farmer independent of Dung and labor so that in years when corn is cheap, he can hold back his commodity, and "keep the remaining Twenty Quarters, 'till he can sell them at *five Shillings* a Bushel" (1733: 125). Instead of virtue for the citizen, Tull's farm makes profit for the possessor by keeping separate from city markets in labor, corn, and dung.

It is as part of an effort to redeem the moral and monetary value of urban and rural interdependence that the London bookseller Robert Dodsley answers Jethro Tull's excoriation of town dung directly in his georgic poem "Agriculture." "Agriculture" is the only finished portion of Dodsley's projected three-book poem *Public Virtue*, and its second canto begins with Dodsley's versification of *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*. Dodsley describes Tull's theories of plant nutrition, his seed drill, and his practices of soil cultivation and the use of wider rows. Indeed, "Agriculture" seems at first to honor Tull as "fair *Berkeria's* Son, / Whose precepts, drawn from sage experience, claim / Regard"

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enters, with its reduced reliance on "*low Life*" (1733: i), laborers disappear again, no longer rebelling in numbers fit to disrupt the economy of the farm. It is as if the laborer is no longer a part of the string of significations by which the landlord mixes his labor with the land.

(2:49-51).<sup>43</sup> Dodsley “voic[es] Tull’s position with pungent phrases” (Pellicer, *Dodsley* 78), and even mimics Tull’s bombastic style, asking rhetorically,

But from the steams of ordure, from the stench

Of putrefaction, from stercoreous fumes

Of rottenness and filth, can sweetness spring?

Or grateful, or salubrious food to man?

As well might virgin innocence preserve

Her purity from taint, amid the stews. (2: 69-74)

However, Dodsley’s regard turns to critique, and his mimicry to mockery as the canto proceeds, and the author admits to the reader that fair Berkeria’s son had “ill practis’d the lore / Of his own precepts” (2: 98-9). The poem blames Tull for failure at husbandry, ultimately associating that failure not with the bad influence of luxury, or even the related pains of disease, but first and foremost with the cardinal sin of sloth.<sup>44</sup> In lines that seem

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<sup>43</sup> Indeed, no other critic on “Agriculture”—and only three full-length articles and Sayre’s dissertation do address this poem—discusses any negative aspect to Dodsley’s section on Tull. Juan Christian Pellicer’s excellent article on “Agriculture” as a register of the preoccupations of mid-century georgic is the most thorough in its evaluation of this section, but even Pellicer suggests that Dodsley is laudatory or at worst “attempt[s] to strike a balanced position” in his description of Tull. Dodsley, Pellicer writes, “rehearses Tull’s preference for mechanical over biological methods of cultivation and his objections to dunging . . . but also warns against giving credulous assent to Tull’s teachings . . . This, however, is close to stating the obvious” (78). I hope to show that the strength of the language that Dodsley uses to offer a counter to Tull’s “objections to dunging” is more than “merely fortuitous” (Pellicer 78). See Pellicer, “The Georgic at Mid-Eighteenth Century and the Case of Dodsley’s Agriculture.” See also Laura Brown Sayre’s reading of Dodsley’s lines in *Farming by the Book*. She notes tantalizingly that “Dodsley blamed Tull’s failure to revolutionize British husbandry on the economic instability of the latter’s farming efforts,” an explanation that was “common,” but leaves it there, since her focus is on the fact that Dodsley’s georgic ignores Tull’s “anti-Virgilian” strain (151-2). In her article on mid-century georgic’s engagement with the science of agricultural improvement, Clare Bucknell also mentions Dodsley’s passages on Tull (343). Finally, Michael Genovese’s article focuses primarily on book one, and does not mention Tull at all.

<sup>44</sup> That Tull’s health was never good is a fact that no reader of *Horse-Hoing Husbandry* can miss. His trips to France and Italy as well as his move to Prosperous Farm, three essential steps in the development of his system and instruments, were occasioned by the need for a more salubrious climate (D.Y. 523, 524). He also complains of the effect of his health on his writing and experimentation in the preface to the 1733 edition: “’Tis no wonder that the Stile is low as the Author, or the Dust that is here treated of, since the Whole was written in Pains of the Stone, and other Diseases as incurable, and almost as cruel” (1733: i).

to confuse Jethro Tull with an allegorical personification of Sloth itself, Dodsley describes Tull as losing both his farm and his reputation:

.....Sloth  
 Relax'd the hand of Industry: his Farm,  
 His own philosophy disgracing, brought  
 Discredit on the doctrines he enforc'd. (2: 99-102)

Here Dodsley, like Hume and the poet James Thomson before him, makes indolence the most dangerous enemy of nations.<sup>45</sup> What begins as a versification of Tull's agricultural principles turns now into a warning against the miserable and mind-numbing effects of idleness on agriculture, which Dodsley personifies through the figure of a lazy farmer asleep at the threshold of his cottage, lying, of course, next to a pile of dung:

Him sordidness and penury surround,  
 Beneath whose lazy hand the farm runs wild;  
 Whose heart nor feels the joy improvement gives,  
 Nor leaden eye the beauties that arise  
 From labor, sees. Accumulated filth  
 Annoys his crowded steps; even at his door  
 A yellow mucus from the dunghill stands  
 In squalid pools; (2: 105-12)

Here, as with Tull's "nice palates," a failure of husbandry is a failure of taste and discernment, but instead of an inability to discern the ill taste of city muck in a garden cabbage, Dodsley derides Sloth's inability to "feel the joy improvement gives" or see

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<sup>45</sup> See Hume, *Essays*, "Of Refinement in the Arts" 167-77, esp. 177; and Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence*. See also Jordan 22-36.

“the beauties that arise from labor” (2: 107-9). Importantly, this time, the filth oozing mucus at the farmer’s door comes not from *urban* nightsoil, but from the rural farmer’s own domestic midden heap—which would have served, on an eighteenth-century farm, to collect the family’s household waste. Potentially, the midden heap was destined for the field. In practice, however, as numerous contemporary agrarians complained, the midden heap was often allowed to accumulate, exposed, in badly-drained plots where its nutrients could run off with the rain.<sup>46</sup> In Dodsley’s image, a badly managed, leaking heap threatens the threshold between civilized hearth, and the “wilderness” that wants to reclaim the farm. Waste, then, is not the matter of human excess as such, but the failure to recognize that excess as a potentially useful surplus and apply it towards the reproduction of more food to consume. The sleeping farmer’s incapacity to recognize the beauty in improvement signals his exclusion from the bonds of sympathy that Michael Genovese recognizes as central to the way profit is imagined in georgic, and that he finds exemplified in Dodsley’s scenes of “willing servitude” and “mutual wants” (Dodsley 1: 107).<sup>47</sup> Tull is “anti-Virgilian” not just because of his rejection of dunging, paring and burning, but also because he rejects the social ties made possible through georgic labor. He becomes the poem’s representative for an outdated, ineffective practice of husbandry, a figure of immoderation, bad taste, waste, and unproductive idleness because he has, in Dodsley’s words, “Refus’d the dunghill’s aid” (2: 29).

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<sup>46</sup> For example, see Bailey: “Upon the hill-farms around Cheviot, we have been often surprized, to see at the doors of the shepards’ houses, such immense dunghills, the accumulation of unnumbered years, probably centuries: to avoid this increasing nuisance, many of them have *ingeniously contrived* to build their houses near a ‘*Burn side*’ for the *convenience* of having it *taken away by every flood*: notwithstanding they have lands adjoining, upon which, if this manure was properly applied, the greatest improvements would ensue” (113-4 original emphasis). See also Donald Woodward, 260-1, where a portion of this statement is also quoted.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Genovese, 202.

In contrast to the viscous, dangerously liminal yellow mucous of the neglected rural midden heap, urban nightsoil, in Dodsley, is the beauty of agricultural improvement materialized and made fungible. Dodsley praises “the garden’d fields / On Thames prolific bank” (2: 133-4), and expresses their beauty in economic terms. The Thames’ prolific banks “owe to London's rich manure/ Those products which its crowded markets fill” (2: 136-7). Locked in a cycle of regenerative debt reverberating between London’s muck and its markets, these gardeners transform filth to food, and turn the abstract value of waste into a whole new set of saleable products. They do so, Dodsley tells us, by that very labor of mixing that Tull finds so pernicious in city dung. Dodsley suggests, on the contrary, that the Middlesex farmers’ success comes from their willingness to “Join with Culture the prolific strength / of such manure as best inclines to aid / Th[e] failing glebe” (2: 147-9). Thus Dodsley frames the London gardener’s work with urban manures as a kind of nature methodized.<sup>48</sup> “Industry’s rough hand” (2: 144) has turned what was in Tull an indigestible and confounding mixture, into a system where via the aid of the dunghill, nightsoil can pass cleanly from one category to another, from distasteful, indecent, mixed muck into the prolific, various, and distinct matter of “Each esculent the teeming earth / In every changing season can produce” (2: 145-6).

The key to Dodsley’s perfect system is circulation and exchange. Any closed-off system is a breeding ground for sloth, hence Dodsley’s contrast between “teeming earth” (2: 145), “with art improv’d” (2: 138), and the barren monastic “square” that previously occupied land on the banks of the Thames. Dodsley figures this closed “piazza’d square” (2: 141) as foreign, luxurious, and slothful, where “good Martin's lazy monks / Dron’d out their useless lives in pamper’d ease” (2: 142-3). The monk’s droning ease is

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<sup>48</sup> See Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, Works vol. 2, 1:89.

inextricable from their seclusion, they are “embower’d / In solemn sloth” (2: 141-2). Thus, for Dodsley, circulation between the economies of the urban and rural soils is essential to useful and industrious life. Any other configuration is a breeding ground for idleness. If taste in Tull is the ability to tell a nobleman’s food from the products of his intestines, taste in Dodsley is the sensibility to recognize that the teeming profusion of the marketplace is “the joy improvement brings” out of urban consumption and its attendant waste.

For Tull, the farm is a system of inputs and outputs, with the owner’s profit substituting for the “soul” that John Gay, for example, imagined in *Rural Sports* was the proper produce of country land.<sup>49</sup> Dodsley’s ideal market garden is also financially profitable, but that profit is shared in the open marketplace. Moreover, the idea that a kind of aesthetic experience should be part of the gentleman farmer’s or market gardener’s gain from his improvements—even and at times especially when those improvements derive from the city’s carts and laystalls—is a feature of the discourse of a reciprocal urban/rural husbandry of which Dodsley is one champion. Juan Christian Pellicer has made note of Dodsley’s often abortive prospective scenes.<sup>50</sup> Yet this may be, at least in part, because when Dodsley’s “Farmer, with a master's eye, / Surveys his little kingdom, and exults / In sov'reign independence” (1: 238-240), his independence remains intentionally limited through his responsiveness to social ties. The farmer,

Tempted nor with the pride nor pomp of Power,

Nor pageants of Ambition, nor the mines

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<sup>49</sup> See especially *Rural Sports* 1: 122. In this, one of Gay’s three georgic poems, there is no mention of dung at all. In contrast to *Trivia*, in *Rural Sports* it isn’t the kennels that “break their Bounds” (*Trivia* 1: 170) but “My soul” that “overflow[s] in songs of praise” (*Rural Sports* 1: 119). It isn’t feces that circulates through the winding streets but “circling pleasures recreate the soul” of the poet (1: 122).

<sup>50</sup> See Pellicer, “The Georgic” 83.

of grasping Avarice, nor the poison'd sweets  
 Of pampered Luxury, . . . plants his foot  
 With firmness on his old paternal fields,  
 And stands unshaken. (1: 313-318)

Dodsley's farmer's virtuous resistance comes not from his power over the soil of the paternal fields themselves, which separates him from dependence on others, but from the exultation that attends the experience of looking at fields where "sweet prospects rise" (1: 318). This exultation is at once a joy in beauty and a joy in gain. Thus Dodsley iterates and reiterates the concept of the farmer as artist not in the tradition of Pope—where the owner-artist stands in the place of God the creator—and not as a synonym for 'master,' or in the sense that any learned skill may be called an art, but specifically with regard to the idea of the artist as a producer of cultural value.<sup>51</sup> Dodsley exhorts his gentlemanly reader: "Turn to the arts, the useful pleasing arts / Of Cultivation; and those fields improve" (1: 333-334). His plays on "Turn" and "Cultivation," with his use of repetition both in sense "the arts, the useful, pleasing, arts," in sound "the arts . . . the . . . arts," "useful, pleasing," and in his sudden, brief, shift from fairly regular iambs to a crowd of dactyls and trochees, all conspire to create the sense of cyclicity in general, and of ground turning in particular, so that the art of cultivation is the art of turning ground.<sup>52</sup> This might help to explain, to some degree, Dodsley's unimpressively small prospective scenes. Dodsley, uniquely among georgic writers, has his eyes drawn ever back to the

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<sup>51</sup> See Fabricant on Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*, where, she writes, "his images of an agrarian capitalism fundamentally opposed to a traditional country house existence are finally incorporated into a larger vision that affirms the invulnerability of his [Pope's] own 'rural' retreat . . . and heralds the triumph of those 'Who Plan[t] like BATHURST or who buil[d] like BOYLE.'" The actual relationship between a capitalist landowner like Burlington and his property is redefined in light of the imagined relationship between a deity and his creation" (99).

<sup>52</sup> As may be inferred from the discussion of Tull's work above, cultivation and turning would have been legible in context as other words for tillage, that is, turning of the soil.

turf.<sup>53</sup> Here the “art” of cultivation is neither rarified into the art of painting or writing, nor is it displayed as a set of purely mechanical skills. Turning ground itself is an act that produces joy as part of its profit, and Dodsley sees turning, mixing, circularity, and exchange, in the motion of the shovel or share in the field and in the movement of food and dung between market and garden as the fundamental techniques of that art.

Before the middle of the eighteenth century, the idea that engagement with God’s “book of nature” was a benefit of agricultural practice was of primary importance in authors’ apologia for the production of such books.<sup>54</sup> Dodsley participates in this practice, but the experience of joy in his poem is not just part of the experience of communion with the creator, it is directed towards Dodsley’s farmer’s workers, the customers who eat his corn and the consumers who help to produce the ground it grows in. Of particular concern in the mid-eighteenth century is this shift from an early eighteenth-century emphasis on the farmer’s work as labor that represents humans’ recognition of the beauty and value of God’s created soil by using it, to an emphasis on the farmer’s work in tandem with the soil as a material uniquely capable of mediating both physical and sympathetic bonds between people. It is at this time, as Tull’s manual attests, that the virtues of farming for the individual’s soul are no longer, generally speaking, firmly grounded in Christian morality. Even in the handful of novels in the mid- and late eighteenth-century where gentlemen farmers are minor and major characters, the agricultural improver works not primarily to fulfill his post-lapsarian role,

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<sup>53</sup> See Pellicer, “The Georgic” esp. 84-87. Dodsley had been a Footman before he became both a writer himself and one of the eighteenth century’s most successful and important publishers, and his contemporaries and acquaintance never let him forget it. Pellicer suspects that Dodsley’s self-limiting prospect scenes derive from his acceptance of the limits placed on his poetic capacities by his low class status. For another perspective on this poem’s unique vision of labor, see Genovese.

<sup>54</sup> See for an overview of this reasoning, Schaffer 126-7. See for example, Tusser 14-15.



but to facilitate a marriage, or improve his status by way of improving his soil.<sup>55</sup> Where Adam and Eve, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for example, exhibit their pleasure in labor to God as a sign of gratitude, and to the reader as a sign of moral virtue, in Dodsley, the farmer's pleasure in the "joy improvement brings," although it measures the virtue of his exercise, has nothing to do with God.<sup>56</sup> Instead of heaven, the "crowded market" validates and reciprocates this joy. Nightsoil, as matter that cooperates with the farmer's labor to redistribute and multiply fertility, enables an integrated urban and rural economy that benefits everyone.

An author did not have to be a practitioner in the poetic genre of georgic to participate in its celebration of agriculture as a technique for the production and dissemination of the joy that is fertility.<sup>57</sup> William Ellis, a farmer of Hertfordshire who turned agrarian author and produced several tomes of husbandry advice between 1732 and 1756, was not, as far as we know, educated in Latin or a reader of poetry, yet his husbandry manuals describe a practice of husbandry that relies upon and magnifies a reciprocal relation between country and city economies, in part through the mixture of country and city soils.<sup>58</sup> Ellis' works emphasize the cooperative labor of men and matter in the production of wealth and food from "London lay-stall, muck and dung"

(*Husbandry* 120).

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<sup>55</sup> Francis Brooke's *History of Emily Montague* (1768), Arthur Young's *Adventures of Emmera* (1764), and Smollett's *Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771), all contain farming protagonists or minor characters who use their work in the land to secure good marriages and, in both *Humphrey Clinker* and *Emily Montague*, increase their social status. For more on the farming protagonists in later eighteenth-century novels, see Perry. Sayre's *Farming by the Book*, also contains readings of the georgic influence in a number of eighteenth century novels.

<sup>56</sup> See *Paradise Lost* 4: 610-633 and 4: 720-735.

<sup>57</sup> A number of critics, of course, have adumbrated the profound influence of georgic poetry on the authorship of husbandry manuals in the eighteenth-century. See Sayre's *Farming By the Book*. Claire Bucknell and Frans De Bruyn argue for the mutual influence of the two genres in De Bruyn, "From Georgic Poetry to Statistics and Graphs;" and Bucknell, "The Mid-Century Georgic." See also R. Crawford, "English Georgic and British Nationhood" esp. 129-136.

<sup>58</sup> For what we do know about Ellis, see Sayre 382-388; and Woodward 259-263.

For Ellis, as for Dodsley, joy is an essential enticement to draw gentlemen into farming:

It is my Opinion that when the Practice of Husbandry can be made . . . more delightful to the brighter Genius by the true Relations and Practice of Things as they result from Experience, there will be more Gentlemen than ever occupy themselves in a Country life, and then we will find, as one of them was pleased to say, more Pleasure in one Day in the Country than *London* could produce in a Month. (*Chiltern and Vale*, “Preface” n.p.)

Ellis’ joy is explicitly “delight *and* profit” (*Practical Farmer* 1: 137, my emphasis). As G.E. Fussell writes, Ellis takes “a clear delight in rural sights and sounds” (59), and Fussell’s example is a few rhapsodic sentences from *The Practical Farmer* (1733): “What a charming sight is an apple tree in blossom, and after that, when loaden with fruit, enough perhaps to make a hogshead of cyder or perry! A scene of beauty, hopes, profit, and all!” (1: 136).

Ellis, like Dodsley, if more obliquely, responds to Tull throughout his body of writing. He frequently acts in the capacity of a kind of reviewer of agricultural improvements, and at several points evaluates the efficacy of Tull’s new husbandry. His evaluation of the horse-hoe, in *The Practical Farmer* is quite succinct: “Mr. *Tull*’s Way . . . I think to be a good Way, if the Charge of Houghing could be avoided, but that is such an expensive Article, as will not suit with the Farmer’s Mind nor Pocket” (*Practical* 2: 50-1). Ellis is also one of those that Laura Brown Sayre describes, who responded to Tull’s total eschewal of Dung with an emphasis on its varieties and importance (Sayre, *Farming* 148-9). He offers, indeed, immediately after his rejection of horse-hoing

because of its price, a long list of manures comprising everything from oar-weed, to pig's dung, to ashes (*Practical 2: 51*).

More pointedly, town dung for Ellis is valuable precisely for its facilitation of mixture and reciprocity, the same capacities that Tull so deplores. For Ellis, whose farm was just under thirty miles from London, improved farming was to be practiced in a literally reciprocal relation to the city and its inhabitants. "The County of Hertford," Ellis writes, abounds with,

Naturally poor Soils of themselves, but of late greatly improv'd by the Industry of its Farmers, who living within a Days Journey of *London*, many of them have been encourag'd to employ their Teams at vacant times to carry Meal, Bran, Chaff, Corn, Wood, and other Vendables thither, in order to load back again with Sut, Ashes, Hoofs, Horn-shavings, Rags, &c. for dressing their Land (sic *Practical 2: 46*).

The use of dung is in every way a renewal and retrieval of waste—waste matter, waste energy, waste time. Here the trip to London with "vendables" is not even framed as a primarily financial expedition, instead the trip is undertaken "in order to load back again" with waste matter, which becomes part of the profit of the farmer's sale. As with Dodsley, then, Ellis' appreciation for the Middlesex farmer is based on the farmer's perceived industry in the arts of reciprocity and mixture. "When I have sent stack-wood thither," writes Ellis, "my team has brought back a load of these [London ashes] from the town lay-stalls" (*Ellis' Husbandry 1: 81*). While Middlesex farmers are "the best of husbandmen, because many of them fetch their . . . London dirt and ashes, five or ten miles, and so work and mix their heaps by several turnings, as to make them almost fine

enough to pass through a sieve or screen, before they lay it on.” (1: 45). The attributes of diligence and patience are essential, in Ellis, because they are required in order to transform the filth and leavings of the city into earth capable of producing food. In Ellis’ receipt for the use of “Mud” as a manure, for example, he writes that

Mud taken out of Ditches or Bogs, will mend all Sorts of light Grounds, and bring it into a proper Consistence . . . but such a Mixture ought to have a sufficient Time allowed it to be digested in a Heap by the Sun and Air, which will the sooner be done if turned now and then. In low, moist, or wet Grounds, apply a Composition of one Load of humane Ordure grown stale, whereof the strength is gone, seven Bushels of Lime, one Load of Clay, and two of Cow-dung: Mix these together very well . . . then turn it, and so let it lie. (*Practical 2: 29*)

Starting out with euphemism, Ellis is sure to insert clearly that by mud “taken out of ditches and bogs” he means “human ordure,” but for Ellis, ordure’s muddiness is wholly assimilated through time, labor and mixture, into ground. Likewise, the men of Edgware and Hendon, then separate towns in Middlesex,

certainly are the most curious managers of a dunghill in this nation, and yet are at a considerable charge all the summer, to bring their *London* lay-stall, muck and dung, and coal-ashes, three, seven, and ten miles on the wheels, which they most carefully mix with highway dirt, mould, and sometimes chalk, and incorporate them so often till they attain a most exquisite fineness. (*Husbandry 1: 120*)

Ellis' dunghill managers are an incarnation of Lockean labor, too. Their work of fetching and incorporation is the literal mixture of an individual's labor with the land to produce a soil that is his own. Unlike Tull's soil, however, fixed in place and threatened on all sides by the usurping labor of insolent Hands and bits of rank Noblemen's feces, the Edgware or Hendon man's soil is mobile, its value to him actuated by exchange. Ellis' soil gains its value both through mixture and through reciprocity, in the network of neighbors and commercial ties. Nightsoil is valuable to the farmer, Ellis suggests, explicitly because it is urban and human waste matter, because mixture with earth changes dung from filth to more fruitful soil. Like Locke's life-forms, the dung changes state through mixture with other matter, altering from a conglomeration of varied ingredients to an incorporated matter of "most exquisite fineness." The soil's capacity to incorporate nightsoil, along with the farmer's care and considerable charge alters the nightsoil from "London laystall muck and dung" to make it the proper soil of the Edgware and Hendon men.

I am not suggesting that Ellis was necessarily familiar with Locke or with georgic—we know nothing about Ellis' education—but that his endorsements of dung rely implicitly on the positive valuation of that Christian duty to labor in the reclamation of waste that also underlies Locke's treatise. In Ellis, however, these values are translated to fungible substances without bringing with them the moral culpability that comes with the introduction of money in "Of Property". The Edgware and Hendon men's exquisite soil is fertility exchanged for cash, while the "fineness" of discernment associated with the exceptional consumer is made, by the farmer's labor of transport and incorporation, into an inherent quality of the soil itself. Earth and Dung, too, are actants in this process. The dungheap makes it possible for the farmer to recapture corrupt waste matter for the

production of fine goods, while the farmer's labor and the soil's capacity for incorporation reconstitute the natural foundation of taste by totally altering "every ingredient in the composition." Although there is money in Ellis, there is not, as in Locke, any "quarrelling about title, nor any doubt about the largeness of possession" (Locke, *Two Treatises* 121) because there truly is always "enough, and as good left in common for others" in the London laystalls (112). In Ellis, dung produces a something in excess of any plant nutrition, as in Tull, but instead of the excessive otherness of Dung in Tull's *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, it produces the opportunity for participation in an ordered and interrelated society, visible in Ellis in the fact that the "considerable charge" Edgware and Hendon men go to in order to transport and transform dung from the city is not a negative but a positive aspect of their practice.

Of course, their labor is not a mere service done in pursuit of an ethical ideal of waste reclamation, it is a labor that reproduces the act of assimilation, and so the Edgware and Hendon men's appropriation of London dirt adds, as Ellis is fond of putting it, to the farmer's own "estate" (*Chiltern* "Preface" n.p.). Tull's fears are real—the mixture of city Dung and rural soil does create class mixture and class mobility as the common farmer's capitalization on mobile waste creates his mobile wealth. But in Ellis, the agricultural land around London, fertilized with the waste of consumer society's excess, becomes an idealization of the potential efficiency of an industrious commercial system, where the city produces demand for goods from the country. The waste of the city is the impetus and the vehicle, literally and figuratively, for the generation of more and more 'goods'. The system, here, attains an exquisite order that contrasts completely with Tull's "rank" and stinking city muck, which in spite of any ploughing under, rotting,

or processing through the body of a plant, always retains the perceptible traces of the “Nobles” to whom it ultimately and unequivocally belongs. In Ellis, however, the very waste of consumption in urban centers can be transformed, through the labor of mixture or the mixture with labor, into new soil that because it is mobile, can belong to anyone—even Edgware and Hendon men. Recognizing nightsoil as a manure thus posits improvement and exchange as the way to Locke’s fantasy of a new golden age of infinite exploitation of the material world in which there is no remnant of unassimilable subjectivity left over in the dungheap’s stink and savor, and where just as our bodies provide the original means of appropriation through the act of ingestion, they likewise perform the original means of exchange through the elimination that returns what we eat to the world of goods. Ellis’ profit motive, then, does double work as artistic labor that produces a superior product of exquisite fineness, one that also represents the farmer’s contribution to a more general moral and social good.

Ellis and Dodsley use the same Lockean logic of appropriation that underlies Tull’s anxieties and their solution in distinction and separation, but move his idea of ownership past his organic model of appropriation as separation or “accretion” alone, to extend it into an organic model of exchange.<sup>59</sup> Jethro Tull’s theorization of soil nutrition extended the pasture of plants “*ad infinitum*” by making the field of arable into an isolated economy where the soil’s fertility is an effect of the farmer’s labor. But the economy was closed, so that the incursions of hired laborers and foreign muck disrupted

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<sup>59</sup> In this sense Tull’s Lockean labor is actually closer to the labor of Locke’s treatise than Ellis’ is. As Robert Markley has argued, “the key metaphor” in Locke’s theory of appropriation is “removal” (830), since according to Locke, whatever a man “removes out of the State that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property” (*Two Treatises* 111-112). As Markley concludes, Locke’s “accretive model is the basis of a theory of value in which there is no explicit means to describe the prospect of diminishing returns and the potential for social conflict” (830). It is also a model with no means to describe the potential for the return of what one has accrued through bodily processes of excretion and decay.

it, and destroyed the owner's claim to self-sovereignty and his right to exclusively enjoy the profit from his soil. Instead, in Dodsley and Ellis, we find that the farmer's labor with dung capitalizes on its capacity for mobility and transformation to create new opportunities for exchange. Here, instead of potentially disrupting the relation between an individual and his land, the dungheap's rot, rankness, and mixture assimilate waste into pure soil. In cooperation with the body's ingestion, digestion, excretion, and labor, the dungheap reproduces soil infinitely. Because we eat and excrete, arrive and return, because we mix, and the dungheap changes, there is always more waste land to improve. Because cooperative labor reforms waste matter into exquisite soil, there is always, in this system "land . . . enough and as good" (Locke, *Second Treatise* 114).

### III. "Mire of their Own Pollution": Nightsoil in the Later Works of Smollett

A doctor, a historian, a poet, and of course, a novelist, Tobias Smollett was also a reader of agricultural manuals.<sup>60</sup> He would have had to be for his work at the *Critical Review*, but in passages like this lengthy encomium, extracted from his review of Edward Lisle's 1756 *Observations in Husbandry*, one can see that Smollett's interest in agriculture is more than merely professional:

When we consider Mr. Lisle as a farmer and philosopher, surrounded by his family, his friends and dependants, conversing indiscriminately with Cato, Columella, Leantius, Ray, Evelyn, farmers Sartain, Crapp, Farthing, Ruty, and Elton, on the different topics of husbandry; when we view him

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<sup>60</sup> In this he was like his contemporaries. As "D.Y. of Hungerford" comments in his 1764 Essay on the life of Tull, "there certainly never was a time when the study of Agriculture was so universally attended to as the present. Societies in all civilized countries are formed, or forming, for its improvement; and the labours of the most ingenious and learned men in Europe are at this time directed to the cultivation of an art which was formerly abandoned to the most illiterate class among the people" (522).



remote from the troublous scenes of fraud, malice, vanity, and ambition; cultivating the domestic virtues, cherishing the principles of universal benevolence, dispensing happiness to all around him, with looks of cheerful innocence, and words that speak an elegant simplicity; we cannot conceive a human being more blessed; or a character more amiable, more truly dignified. Such a figure stands like an ancient patriarch, commanding love and veneration. All his conduct is upright; all his aims are directed to the purposes of humanity. If we compare him with a statesman; how much happier is he than the first minister of the best monarch! While a minister fleeces a whole people; our farmer is employed in shearing his flock, from which he extracts nothing but superfluity and incumbrance. The first operation produces murmurs and discontent, the last is attended with mirth, happiness, and festivity. The farmer uses no corruption but manure: He hatches not intrigues, but poultry; he brews not mischief, but beer; he fears no blasts of envy, though he dreads the blasts of heaven; and instead of fortifying castles he fences fields, because he has no enemies but vermin. (3: 5-6)

This paragraph anticipates what several scholars have identified as Smollett's last word on the problem of how to live a good life in bad times. Here, as at the end of Smollett's final novel, the posthumously published *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), agriculture allows the despairing gentleman to retreat with grace from the scene of urban corruption, and by energetic participation in the domestic economy that supports his existence and the coherence of his identity, he is finally able to control the matter—both

body and soil—that he has heretofore owned only in name.<sup>61</sup> That control is figured through the reification of value in the farmer’s produce. Instead of intangible and uncontrollable concepts: intrigue, mischief, and envy, the farmer makes tangible goods: fences, poultry and beer.

Even here, however, within such highly artificial rhetoric, Smollett manifests what critics have recognized as a pervasive—even obsessive—attention to the categorical slipperiness of dirt. Since amicable reviewers at his own *Critical Review* declared that Smollett’s *History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769), “unites the happy extravagance of Rabelais to the splendid humour of Swift,” critics have noticed the fact that Smollett’s novels are filled with the art and mystery of dirt balls, inconveniently emptied chamber pots, urine-soaked streets, pineapples raised in dung, plates of sirreverence, and sundry involuntary evacuations.<sup>62</sup> Mid-twentieth-century critics like B.L. Reid and Robert Adams Day analyzed the sordid psychosexual implications of Smollett’s obsession with filth, while John Sekora influentially interpreted Smollett’s entire oeuvre as a rear-guard action against luxury, where a deeply pessimistic Smollett defined his ideal space against the reality of London life: “[i]t’s air is not polluted, its waters not stinking . . . its bread not adulterated, its beer not sophisticated” (286). More recently, critics have read Smollett through Mary Douglas’ theorizations of pollution, and this has let them recognize a more subversive cast to Smollett’s filth obsession.<sup>63</sup> In these analyses, Smollett’s filthy bodies are filthy bodies politic in need of cleansing, repair, and

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<sup>61</sup> Several essays have acknowledged *Humphry Clinker*’s participation in a faddish celebration of agricultural improvement. See Sayre, *Farming* 330-351; Perry 311-12; Frank 90-126; and Sullivan.

<sup>62</sup> See for these references, *Atom* 2: 120; *Peregrine Pickle* 77 and 39; *Travels* 255; and *Humphrey Clinker* 51; Many of these references and a wealth of others may be found in Day’s “Sex, Scatology, Smollett.”

<sup>63</sup> See especially Douglas, *Uneasy Sensations*; and Bowers, “Reconstituting the National Body.” See also Sussman 81-109; Sullivan; Mann; and Sayre, *Farming by the Book*.

protection from a world “of atomistic flux and entropic decay” (Blackwell 425).<sup>64</sup> Smollett’s realism is trained on “the evanescence and contingency of identity” and “the frangible and permeable body” (428), vulnerable to “the cannibalistic nature of the social structures wrought through rank, wealth, race, nationality, and culture” (Cottom 114). Aileen Douglas’ and Charles Sullivan’s readings are especially influential on my own in the emphasis each places on the exposure of individual bodies to the violence perpetrated by poverty and punishment in the interests of the larger economy (42). Only order and distinction can protect the permeable body from the incursions of abject others, and Smollett’s works distinguish for their reader between what should and should not be swallowed or absorbed. In *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766), for example, Terence Bowers argues that Smollett’s “decision to document all the dirt he sees functions as a service” (12). While Charlotte Sussman, Sayre, and Annika Mann note that *Humphry Clinker* figures the threat to the English body politic from foreign commerce as a threat to the individual’s body, which “by purifying and regulating its oral consumption . . . will remain sealed to otherness” (Sussman 106). Sayre observes that Matthew Bramble, the novel’s main character, “obsesses . . . [over] the accumulation and recycling of waste products, processes that make it impossible to determine whose ‘essences’ one might be consuming” (327). *Humphry Clinker*’s marked “agricultural bias” then manifests as a conviction that agriculture can facilitate the expulsion of dirt and disorder. Matthew Bramble, writes Sayre, “voices an old prejudice—and one deeply indulged in by Jethro Tull—against the use of manure and especially the use of night soil in the market gardens of London” (326). In this last novel especially, nightsoil is first among “the corrupting effects of Britain’s commercial ethos” (Mann 378). By withdrawing to an

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<sup>64</sup> See also Daniel Cottom’s materialist reading of *Humphry Clinker*, 99-132.

agricultural economy outside the circulation of London nightsoil, *Humphry Clinker* recuperates the body as inviolable whole, and therefore the basis of both personal and national identity. Meanwhile, through agricultural work that acts as a symbolic retrenchment of waste, as Sullivan particularly argues, the novel recuperates problem characters (431). “*Humphry Clinker* exhibits a faith” Sayre concludes, that if we can resolve lingering questions about soil fertility we might be able to recover a common sense relationship to human health both mental and physical” (337).

In his panegyric on Lisle, however, Smollet exhibits his irresolution with the precise relationship between the metaphorical concept of corruption and the material of manure. Unlike the other syntactically identical pairs around it—“not intrigues, but poultry . . . not mischief, but beer”—the phrase “no corruption but manure” could be either a pair of contrasting categories, with an intangible vice on one side and a material good on the other, or it could be an opposition between a general category and an individual member of that category, in which case “no corruption but manure” would read like “no corruption but bribery” or “no manure but human excrement.” Smollett’s pairing of corruption and manure vacillates between taking manure as a regenerative material, one that, like sheep, poultry, and weather, facilitates the cultivation of domestic virtue, and taking it as a sign, impossible to separate from the rankness of its association with corruption. As such, “no corruption but manure” acts as a pastiche for the problems of waste in Smollett’s later works—a powerful source of regenerative energy, but as likely to mediate corruption and mischief into the body as it is sociable ties.

This section will examine the function of nightsoil in Smollett’s later works. In contrast to readings of Smollett’s ordure obsession that have tended to understand it as

largely symbolic, we begin by considering the ways in which Smollett's career-long obsession with feces as the paradigm of violating otherness was complicated by his idealization of agriculture, which provides a context in which feces is recoverable as genuine, productive soil.<sup>65</sup> Smollett's reviews of agricultural manuals and the scene of nightsoil collection in his *Travels through France and Italy* suggest that he was searching for a way to view waste as mere mode of nutritious matter that might be effectively retrenched and recycled through the soil. This idea of waste would allow Smollett to think of it as a material surplus rather than a physical danger, or a constant reminder that the body is a system that generates excesses it can't absorb. Ultimately, however Smollett's wish to see human excrement as valuable surplus matter buckles under the dangerous materiality of nightsoil as evinced by earlier manuals like Evelyn's and Ellis', which emphasize the need to properly rot nightsoil and mix it with other earths. Nightsoil enables the recovery and recirculation of urban waste, but only given both time to putrefy and the exquisite labor of farmers like Ellis' Hendon men. Otherwise, Smollett recognizes, human bodies do the work of mixture, digesting nightsoil at the risk of physical danger. Nightsoil's capacity to regenerate as new matter and its capacity to pass on a destructive otherness that violates the body of its consumer are both at play in Smollett's satirical it-narrative *History and Adventures of an Atom*. In the later *Humphry Clinker*, Smollett's characters find that some kinds of waste, including waste land, waste people, and waste money, can be redeemed as excess, yet finally, the problem of nightsoil remains unresolved at the end of Smollett's last novel. In a world where the careful recuperation of materials is less common than deception, sophistication, and compulsion,

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<sup>65</sup> See for example Cottom: "Smollett takes care to note that the pollution here is only nominally related to what might be classified as the historical realities of public sanitation, or the lack thereof, in the eighteenth-century" (120).

nightsoil is too dangerous to trade. Its use in urban gardens is therefore not the joy improvement brings, but an example of how unregulated circulation can turn human bodies into mere machines for the remediation of waste that violates their personal judgment as well as their physical health.

In his review of Edward Lisle's *Observations*, Smollett lays down the basis of his enthusiasm for improved modern agriculture. In the process he presents a unique case study for how the eighteenth-century reader who was not a practitioner of agriculture himself might have approached a contemporary agricultural text. The long passage quoted at the opening of this section, of course, represents the farmer as gentleman par excellence, at the center of a network of literary and social "convers[at]ions" that allow him to balance the competing claims of present and past, social and domestic, productive and philosophical labor. Despite his easy converse with Cato and Columella, however, Smollett's farmer is no Cincinnatus reincarnate. Indeed, his review specifically rejects the strictures of the classical agrarian authors in favor of modern and local methods: "It is not from the ancient writers *de re rustica*, that the farmers of our northern regions are to cull their directions for the practice of husbandry" (3: 2).<sup>66</sup> Likewise, Smollett makes a show of familiarity with some of the most important and widely-read theoretical and practical works in eighteenth-century agricultural science. He asserts that, "The world is much indebted to Mr. Tull for his treatise on horse-hoeing husbandry" (3: 3), praises the works of his friend and future-contributor to the *Critical Review*, Philip Miller (3: 3), and asserts that "no person, who has hitherto written on those subjects, as a philosopher, deserves

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<sup>66</sup> This statement stands out all the more when held up in contrast to the remarks of John Armstrong in his review of *A Compleat Body of Husbandry* by John Hill (alias Thomas Hale), in the previous volume of the *Critical*. Here, Armstrong ends a generally unfavorable review with the suggestion that those who study agriculture should turn instead to "a full and at the same time a very concise view of the antient *Roman* husbandry" (2: 299).

such applause as is due to that excellent naturalist the learned Dr. Hales” (3: 2). His choices identify him as a reader of theoretical agricultural texts and as particularly interested in plant nutrition—Miller was the author of *The Gardener’s Dictionary*, and would also be the translator and compiler for the French agrarian Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau. His selected translations from *Traité de la Culture des Terres suivant les principes de M. Tull, Anglais* (1750-1761) and *Éléments de l’Agriculture* (1754) helped reawaken the controversy around Tull’s ideas in Britain after two decades of relative quiet (Sayre, *Prehistory* 854). Hales’ *Vegetable Staticks* (1727), meanwhile, is a foundational text of British soil science. In it, Hales examines the food of plants, questioning, tellingly, whether the nature of the food imbibed by a plant had any effect on the taste of its fruit.<sup>67</sup>

In spite of his reading, and his garden in Chelsea, Smollett is openly unfamiliar with farming in practice, as well as with many of its terms. He assumes that the reader of his *Review* will be just as unfamiliar, and just as interested in spite of that. He gets a great deal of joy out of reading, not just for information, but also for character—Lisle as the paragon of the rural patriarch may also suggest a real-life model for the character of George Dennison in *Humphry Clinker*. Smollett also finds Lisle’s phrasing and diction entertaining in their strangeness. One relevant and also typical example is Smollett’s delight that Lisle “speaking of dung . . . says ‘the richer the grounds near to your *backside* are, the more they will answer in the produce, &c’” (3: 6, Smollett’s emphasis). In spite of his jokes at the expense of the rich produce of Lisle’s backside, however, Smollett’s serious interest in dung as a material is evident in all of his non-fiction writing on

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<sup>67</sup> See Hales 43-44.

agriculture. In this, his first review of an agricultural work, Smollett identifies the classification of soil and dung as ideal areas of investigation for agricultural science:

we wish that chemistry, in particular, was more applied to the purposes of agriculture. It would be no difficult task to analyse all the different sorts of soil, the various kinds of manure, and even the winds and the weather at different seasons of the year; so as to ascertain the nature and properties of each, and more certainly discover the means of alteration and improvement. (3: 2)

Although Smollett expresses admiration for Tull in this review and elsewhere in his oeuvre, this “wish” that chemistry might classify and relate the different kinds of soil and manure is a wish for an alternate means—aside from taste—by which to measure and classify the efficacy of soils and manures. One month later, in his February 1757 review of Francis Home’s *Principles of Vegetation*, Smollett, restating this passage, writes that “Doctor *Home* has exercised his knowledge of chymistry towards the accomplishment of our wish” (3: 107). Home’s book, eighteenth century Britain’s first treatise in agricultural chemistry (Fussell 120), was celebrated throughout the rest of the century, even as the theoretical concepts on which it was based were revolutionized by the work of Joseph Priestley and Humphry Davy in later years.<sup>68</sup> Home rejects Tull’s doctrines of plant nutrition outright, and Smollett acknowledges in his review of Home that “the comminution of the earth by the mechanic action of the plough, is not the chief cause of increasing the vegetable matter, as *Tull* alledges” (3: 107). Not only does Home reject Tull’s idea of earth as the food of plants, he posits instead that that food is manure. Instead of a non-assimilatable alien presence in the soil, Dung in Home’s book is always-

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<sup>68</sup> See Fussell, *Crop Nutrition* 113-150



already food, locked in an economy of recirculation that ensures the total reclamation of each putrefied particle of filth. Smollett quotes Home's "theory of putrefaction" approvingly:

Corruption . . . is the parent of vegetation; . . . Though of seeming disadvantage in nature, as shewing it on the decay; and though highly disagreeable to the external senses, and often dangerous to health; yet is putrefaction of more use than any of the other . . . fermentations, as it provides for our future nourishment, and carries on that beautiful circle, which nature is commanded, by her author and constant supporter, to move in. (3: 109)

Nothing could be more unlike the Smollett of Douglas, Bowers, Sullivan, and Sussman than this rhapsodic sublimation of filth within the ordered cycles of recreation and decay that "though of seeming disadvantage . . . and highly disagreeable to the external sense, and often dangerous to health" is ultimately part of a beautiful circle organized and attended to by the ministrations of God. This is "real unity" in the Hobbesian sense, of a kind that Smollett will only ever parody in his fiction.<sup>69</sup> Still, Smollett endorses Home's vision of the beautiful circle, where the investment of nightsoil in the arable soil of the improved estate is a guaranteed investment in the future.

With its trust in the "use" of putrefaction despite its "disadvantages" to the senses and health of the individual, Home undermines taste as a basis for the judgment of soils. No individual experience of the pestiferous effects of decay counteracts the chemist's certainty that all life begins in rank corruption. Smollett seems, here at least, to accept

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<sup>69</sup> See Douglas, *Uneasy Sensations* 154-6, for Smollett's parody of "Real Unity" in *History and Adventures of an Atom*.

this description, and even brings himself to write in his review, with no comic inflection, that “there are ferments for the putrefactive as well as for the vinous fermentation; namely, stale urine, human ordure, and the putrified carcasses of animals” (3: 109). His “wish,” then, for the chemical analysis of manure is a wish to identify a source of value in manure that functions independently of its symbolic value. Instead of a threatening waste that must be worked and mixed to create soil, Home’s nightsoil appears as a medium for the conveyance of a homogenous, wholly material, and therefore exchangeable, chemical property.

That such a chemical property is the only form of value that can be completely assimilated and therefore exchanged is evident from Smollett’s representations of chemically-identified nightsoil as a fertile and productive manure in *Travels through France and Italy*.<sup>70</sup> This is Smollett’s most famous passage on nightsoil, quoted by agriculturalists and agricultural historians alike as evidence of the efficacy of nightsoil and the potential convenience of its collection.<sup>71</sup> Smollett explains that the Nizzards (inhabitants of Nice) find their natural soil “too scanty for the number of families which are crowded on it” (195). In order to correct the earth’s natural barrenness, they need “something highly impregnated with nitre and volatile salts” (199). For this purpose, Smollett writes, nightsoil “fully answer[s] their expectations” (199). Smollett goes on to describe their method of ordure collection in detail:

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<sup>70</sup>Travels is, of course, highly literary even if it is non-fiction. It is written in an epistolary format, for example, but the letters are a transparent device, not even addressed, for example, as they are in Lady Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1762), to specific people. Aileen Douglas calls *Travels* “the dirtiest, and most rebarbative of his texts,” which is certainly saying quite a lot. For her reading of dirt and filth in this travel narrative, see Douglas, *Uneasy Sensations* 27-42; and for another excellent reading of filth and its redemption in this text, see also Bowers “Reconstituting.”

<sup>71</sup> See Young *Annals* 33: 604; See also Donald Woodward 275.

Every peasant opens, at one corner of his wall, a public house of office for the reception of passengers; and in the town of Nice, every tenement is provided with one of these receptacles, the contents of which are carefully preserved for sale. The peasant comes with his asses and casks to carry it off before day, and pays for it according to its quality, which he examines and investigates, by the taste and flavour. The jakes of a protestant family, who eat *gras* every day, bears a much higher price than the privy of a good catholic who lives maigre one half of the year. The vaults belonging to the convent of Minims are not worth emptying. (199)

Nightsoil here is objectified, exchanged, and investigated for the information that may be gleaned from it: physical evidence of cultural identity manifested in the form of “*gras*,” or fat, that provides information about the consumer habits and religion of the townspeople and the nutritional value of their diet and their dung. As its fat-content indicates, the nightsoil here is a medium of information, but that information is accessed only through an act of tasting that is rendered as both voluntary and classificatory, and is therefore not dangerous and destructive as it was in Tull. The peasant with his casks learns about the religious identities of his constituency from the taste of their dung, but the taste in nightsoil here is merely the benign evidence, not the threatening presence, of a subjectivity that is physically located elsewhere. Though the account is certainly satirical—Smollett mocks the attempts of the Nizzards, whom he has already represented as impoverished in soil, in food, and in culture, to commodify the one thing they do seem to have in plenty—it is satire of a far milder variety than what we found in Tull, or what

we will find in *Humphry Clinker* or in *Atom*.<sup>72</sup> The Nizzards are not luxurious citizens benefiting from the numb imbecility of a population that will swallow anything, no matter how rank, they are improvers, finding a means to get “a greater plenty of the conveniences of life from ten acres, than he could have from an hundred left to nature” (Locke, *Two Treatises* 116). That the joke is also on the use of the confessional (“houses of office”) and on the Eucharistic consumption of the Catholic Nizzards of foods supposed to contain the real presence of a human being, only further differentiates the two forms of satire. The joke is not on a consumer who fails to taste the noblemen lurking in his cabbage, but on an eater who tastes a real presence that is actually *not* there. Smollett’s matter here is Locke’s matter updated to the language of contemporary agricultural chemistry—malleable, renewable, exchangeable, the medium for a wholly assimilable and alienable value that is “nitre and volatile salts” (199). Unlike the mire of London in Smollett’s later *Humphry Clinker*, the nightsoil of Nice produces a fertile soil that passes on only the fat of fertility and not the fat of memory, that is, just “volatile salts” and not, also, particles owned by another subjectivity. Even the comparatively luxuriant consumption of Protestant families doesn’t add the stink of lucre to Nizzard nightsoil, only more fertility—the greater nutritional value that their money can purchase enhances the transmissible fat of the soil.<sup>73</sup> And importantly, therefore, this nightsoil *is* the food of plants. Its chemical properties, its “something highly impregnated with nitre and volatile salts” (199), actually “fully answers expectations” as a dung for the barren soil of Nice.

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<sup>72</sup> Not everyone gets the joke. For example, Young cites this passage in Smollett in a footnote to his 1799 “Essay on Manures,” with the comment that “At Nice it sells high, and every peasant has a house of office for passengers.” See *Annals* 33: 604.

<sup>73</sup> On the link between a high protein diet and nutritive value of manure in the nightsoil trade around seventeenth-century Hangzhou, see Xue 47-52.

It makes sense, then, that this nightsoil is also the only nightsoil in Smollett to successfully produce vegetables that actually look, smell, and taste like food, while Nice is the only urban economy in all of Smollett's oeuvre where the town dung is linked to a genuinely productive rural landscape. Immediately following his account of the Nizzard nightsoil collector and his test of faith, is one of Smollett's most vivid horticultural descriptions. He gives us the methods by which Nice's gardens are raised and watered, creating a picture of ordered industry. Of most note are "The pease and beans" that "appear in the winter like beautiful plantations of young trees in blossom, and perfume the air" (201). Not at all "rank," the pulses of Nice achieve a fully composed aesthetic appeal. Not only are they useful food, they are order, beauty, generation, and a sweet smell, too. The nightsoil at Nice, with its chemical content and its surplus of merely aesthetic information, is ultimately assimilated by the soil and does not threaten the individual's sovereignty over his own body. In his non-fiction writing on agriculture, then, Smollett starts out in sympathy with Tull, but his "wish" is for a system of classification that will allow him to value nightsoil on some other grounds than its reek of corruption, and its capacity to represent the violation of bodily, domestic, and national economies through an excessive savor of alien waste. He sees this wish as realizable through the investigation of agricultural chemistry, which can provide an analysis of nightsoil's content that banishes the presence of an excess subjectivity in the soil, and replaces it with the merely chemical power of nitre and volatile salts, their recirculation guaranteed by the sublime order of God.

Smollett, however, does not appear to have believed in God.<sup>74</sup> What happens when there is no benevolent Author guarding and guiding the process by which what is “disagreeable to the external senses” and “dangerous to the health” becomes food (*Critical 3: 107*)? In *History and Adventures of An Atom* (1769), Smollett’s thoroughly scatological satire on the history of Hanoverian England and the Seven-Years’ War, we find out. In *Atom* (1769), narrative motion is characterized by randomness, insensitivity, and violence. Smollett’s narrator is an atom, the smallest possible articulation of matter, lodged in the pineal gland of an impoverished haberdasher named Nathaniel Peacock. The atom is himself the personification of the bit of identity that Tull imagined was passed on in excess of every exchange of human matter. In an oft-quoted passage from the beginning of the narrative, the atom describes its journey, via digestion, excretion and decay, from ancient Japan to eighteenth-century England and the pineal gland of its human amanuensis:

I was enclosed in a grain of rice, eaten by a Dutch mariner at Firando, and, becoming a particle of his body, brought to the Cape of Good Hope. There I was discharged in a scorbutic dysentery, taken up in a heap of soil to manure a garden, raised to vegetation in a salad, devoured by an English supercargo, assimilated to a certain organ of his body, which, at his return to London, being diseased in consequence of impure contact, I was again separated, with a considerable portion of putrefied flesh, thrown upon a dunghill, gobbled up, and digested by a duck, of which duck your father,

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<sup>74</sup> See Douglas *Uneasy Sensations*, 127-8. She observes that Smollett “[a]lone among major eighteenth-century writers . . . avoids overt religious references” (128). Charles Sullivan agrees, arguing that Smollett’s sense of justice is legitimized by a secular moral system in a way that links him to contemporary Scottish Enlightenment figures such as Hume and Smith (433).

Ephraim Peacock, having eaten plentifully at a feast of cordwainers, I was mixed with his circulating juices, and finally fixed in the principle part of that animalcule, which, in process of time, expanded itself into thee,

Nathaniel Peacock. (1: 7)

A declared “actual, independent existence” (1: 6), the atom possesses the mind of its amanuensis by materializing a principle part of that mind. Irreducible as an atom, revolving through a cycle of assimilations and excretions, it is the most fundamental unit of matter. But as a bit of human, the atom imparts nothing to its owner, since it passes through its owner’s body unchanged, impervious to the loss, disease, impurity, decay, and pain that impel its motion.<sup>75</sup> The atom, of course, was never exactly a human, only a component of many humans, but its eternal and irreducible subjectivity aligns it with the human matter that we saw Boyle imagine passing, barely perceptibly, through cow, milk, butter, and man. Once it announces its presence, however, the atom threatens Peacock’s ingesting body with its own inassimilable substance until at last it is safely excreted, and passed on, surrounded by corruption, but above decay, undiminished and unaltered by the digestive faculties of any cordwainer, dunghill, or duck.

Although there are dunghills in *Atom*, there is no well-digested or exquisite mould. Within the world of *Atom*, matter is mobilized not by the benevolent and intelligent power whom Boyle and Home believed controls the cyclical exchanges of decay, but rather through immediate, often violent, physical engagements of the mouth

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<sup>75</sup> Douglas has shown that the atom’s integrity stands in stark contrast to the vulnerability of Nathaniel’s body, which is at the mercy of the state that the atom satirizes and lampoons: “I might with safety set the convocation and the whole hierarchy at defiance . . . if they should endeavor to reach me through your organs, and even condemn you to the stake . . . I should be a gainer by the next remove” (Smollett 1: 10). See Douglas 138.

and anus.<sup>76</sup> The Japanese king Got-Hama-Baba is imbued with “the spirit, which in the course of strangulation had been expelled *a posteriori* from a goose” (1: 11), while the atom itself is lodged under the king’s big toe and transferred to the “great gut” of his minister, the Cuboy, via the daily ritual of kicking the Cuboy’s breech, an operation which causes the Cuboy to elicit “oral application to the part affected” (1: 17). The lampooned British ministers of Smollett’s imaginary Japanese court relate to their fellow human beings by smelling excrement (2: 129), kissing anuses (1: 17), and eating ordure (2: 120).<sup>77</sup> Indeed, within the first few pages of his narrative, Smollett describes in detail only two bodily locations, one the “pineal gland” (1: 7) or “glandula pinealis” (1: 16) of Nathaniel Peacock, the other the “podex” (1: 15), “perenium” (1: 16), or “posterior” (1: 17) of Fika-ka, the Cuboy, from whose perenium much of the novel’s action is witnessed—Smollett’s use of similar and alliterative words to denote Descartes’ seat of the soul and the Cuboy’s “seat of honour” makes the narrative’s connection, or rather continuum, between face, mouth, brain, soul, anus, breech, and large intestine inescapably clear.<sup>78</sup> Smollett’s mob and ministers alike consume nightsoil without the intermediary of plants.

The mouth-anus continuum, in Smollett’s *Atom*, becomes a metaphor for the coercive operations of capital. In a satire on the Bank of England, for example, Smollett

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<sup>76</sup> Smollett’s *Atom*, exists in a world without God: the atom claims his system of bodily exchange is Pythagorean (1: 10), the drama is stage managed, more immediately, by “Mercury” (1: 11), and the courtiers of the satirical Japanese court worship Fakkubasi, or the Hanoverian “white horse” (1: 11). Even so, Smollett stops short of rendering the full effects of his premise by making the Atom capable of speaking only in the pineal gland and only every thousand years, so that Peacock’s shrill voice is a rare occurrence. The universe of the atom would imply that every single corpuscle of the human body (and any other body) is an “actual independent” existence just waiting its turn in the driver’s seat of the soul, but although another atom is mentioned here or there, the novel never explores that horrifying and sublime vision of a self made of others, instead the atom’s individuality is stressed.

<sup>77</sup> As Mann argues, *Atom* is a tissue of remediated texts (375). In this particular instance, Smollett recalls the *Wonderful Wonder of Wonders* ([Swift] 1720), which also figures farting and defecation as parliamentary speech acts (9).

<sup>78</sup> For Descartes’ “seat of the soul,” see Descartes, “The Passions of the Soul” 1.31-32, page 340.



rehashes a scene from Cervantes and Swift when he figures paper money as a diet of yeast compounded by inflation via the anus:

As the war of Yesso . . . engrossed all the specie of Niphon, and some currency was absolutely necessary to the subsistence of the Japanese, the orator contrived a method to save the expense of solid food. He composed a mess that should fill their bellies, and, at the same time, protract the intoxication of their brains, which, it was so much in his interest to maintain. He put them upon a diet of yeast; where this did not agree with the stomach, he employed his emissaries to blow up the patients *a posteriori*. (60)

The “individuals thus inflated” are “totally freed from those troublesome and impertinent faculties of reason and reflection” (61). Smollett’s cycle of exchange in *Atom* directly contradicts the smooth procession of *Home*’s beautiful circle, focusing not on the eventual reversion of all corruption to food, but on the immediate, individual experience of disease and depravity as coerced citizens and ministers alike fill their bodies with waste, and then waste their bodies in war “to fatten the land of Yesso with their blood” (61).

In his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, Smollett again poses the problem of filth as a medium for the recirculation of value without regard to the danger and disease that nightsoil also bears. Smollett’s protagonist, Matt Bramble, spends most of a five-page letter to his friend Dr. Lewis complaining of Londoners’ tendency to consume their own waste in lieu of “the produce of the natural soil” (120). Within *Humphry Clinker*’s London, nightsoil is, as in *Tull*, the center of an urban economy

where the real value of nutrition has been replaced with the empty waste of feces by a populace depraved in taste. Waste is a luxury in London, “a most absurd gratification of a mis-judging eye” (120), and London’s economy of excess quickly and constantly recirculates “deleterious” matter to the detriment of bodies (120). Here as in Tull, it is not that nightsoil is tasteless, but that the organs of the people have been perverted, and Bramble, echoing Tull’s “[t]is a wonder how delicate Palates can dispense with eating their Own, and their Beast’s Ordure” (1733: 18), cries out, “what kind of taste and organs must those people have, who really prefer the adulterate enjoyments of the town to the genuine pleasures of a country retreat?” (*Clinker* 118). As in Tull, nightsoil is always a “product,” that is, always “artificial” or “adulterate,” never composted fully into soil, and its pollution is linked to urban industry and trade as well as luxury. The water of London contains “human excrement . . . enriched with the putrefying carcasses of beasts and men; and mixed with the scourings of all the wash-tubs, kennels, and common sewers, within the bills of mortality” (119). In London the greens taste of excrement, “[t]hey are produced in an artificial soil, and taste of nothing but the dunghills, from whence they spring” (121). Even pastured animals are tainted by the taste of filth, “gorged in the rank fens of Lincoln and Essex” (121), so that Smollett creates the impression of a composting loop so tightly closed that all food produced within it still maintains the markers of the feces in which it is grown. He does this in part by having Bramble assign intra-city sources for most of London’s food.<sup>79</sup> Instead of a city subsisting on foreign imports, or a London fed by the whole produce of an active nation, like the one described by Daniel Defoe in his *Tour Thro’ the Whole Isle of Great Britain*, Bramble gives us a city that puts

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<sup>79</sup> Even despite the fact that milk, cheese, wheat and butcher’s meat, for example, would have travelled longer distances to get to London at the time (Beckett 33; Fussell, “Science and Practice” 9).

its own excrement directly into its milk, water, bread and vegetables, then eats those vegetables, evacuates them, and starts the whole contracted circle again. In a final grotesque of the broken system, the poultry of London is literally rotted from the inside out by the build-up of its own waste from the “infamous practice of sewing up the gut” (121). Like their chickens raised in confinement, then, the residents of London are fattened on their own feces, mortified by a “cruel retention” (121), which is not figured as compost redeemed via the dunghill to produce new life, but as perpetual waste that whether it is being spewed out, ploughed up, or gobbled down, is always and immediately feces.

As in Tull’s *Horse-Hoing Husbandry*, the isolation and enclosure of the city economy in *Humphry Clinker* is possible because city and country are economically as well as culturally isolated from one another. There is no real rural link in London’s urban food chain because almost all food is derived from within the city’s bounds—or at least within the influence of its trade in urban nightsoil.<sup>80</sup> To eat in the city is to eat the city, a practice which tends to destroy the judgment of the consumer. Like Tull’s city palates, fed on the goût of garlic and silphium, after a regimen of bone-meal bread, rank mutton, excrement water, and dung-hill greens, Bramble’s city dwellers are left without “sense enough left among them, to be discomposed by the nuisances I have mentioned” (122). Importantly, their insensitive palates, as in *Atom*, are linked to their ethical incapacity as citizens, for they can no more choose appropriate laws than they can choose appropriate loaves of bread: “the wise patriots of London have taken it into their heads, that all

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<sup>80</sup> Of which Smollett would have been aware, if by no other means, then through his reading of Dodsley, whose poem “Agriculture” Smollett acknowledges as one of England’s recent celebrated literary productions on agriculture in his review of Lisle. Notably, he liked it, while many other contemporary reviewers did not. (*Critical* 3: 2)

regulation is inconsistent with Liberty” (122). Trusting to his own physical faculties to discern between right and wrong, wholesome and deleterious. Bramble nevertheless insists that taste is no expedient for proper “regulation” of food. Without regulation, unscrupulous producers will feed raw sewage to a populous who think themselves delicate though they cannot, in fact, tell “a plate of marmalade” from “a pan of sirreverence” (51). Taste, for Bramble, is the physical faculty delineated in Hume’s essays, where the delicacy of a person depends on soundness or “defects in the internal organs” (140). Bramble’s own organs are quite sound, in spite of his hypochondria. At Bath, for example, he faints after “an accidental impression of fetid effluvia upon nerves of uncommon sensibility” (*Clinker* 65), while Jeremy Melford confirms, “Mr. Bramble is extravagantly delicate in all his sensations, both of mind and body” (67). Although Melford himself is grateful “for the coarseness of my organs” (67), he recognizes that the delicacy which causes his uncle to faint at the smell of a mob is also the basis of his ethical soundness when he marks that even his uncle’s responses to moral stimuli are physical:

his blood rises at every instance of insolence and cruelty, even where he himself is in no way concerned; and ingratitude makes his teeth chatter. On the other hand, the recital of a generous, humane, or grateful action, never fails to draw from him tears of approbation, which he is often greatly distressed to conceal (67).

Bramble is protected from the physical and ethical depravity associated with urban consumption both by the delicacy of his taste and the location of his feeding. At Brambleton Hall, Matthew Bramble’s family estate in Monmouthshire, Bramble’s body

takes in only that with which it is already identified: “my bread . . . my five-year old mutton . . . my delicious veal . . . my poultry . . . my rabbits . . . my game . . . my trout . . . my dairy . . . [and] my pigs” (119). What makes all of these foods into Bramble’s own is not just his ownership of the land on which they grow, but his oversight of its fertilization, which excludes all other people’s matter from Bramble’s own bodily economy, a point he makes most clear when he characterizes his vegetables as “the produce of a natural soil” (119).<sup>81</sup>

As in Tull, this exclusion is meant to isolate the estate and ensure that all of its production is dedicated to the increase of the owner. Nightsoil’s excess of identity conflicts with the landowner’s claim to total ownership of his estate. When present, Bramble imagines, it makes itself known through its taste and smell. Explicitly rejecting the interlocked economies of rural estate and market town, Bramble insists that the delicacy of his organs allows him to identify appropriate food. The people of London, on the contrary, must eat what they can’t digest because their senses are too mortified, “engrossed” and “sucked into” the city to notice the rank tastes that attest to the otherness of their aliment (123). They “wallow in the mire of their own pollution” (122), while Bramble, his palate educated in its own right nourishment at Brambleton Hall, still has the good taste to hearken to “certain croakings in the bowels . . . which warn me to be gone from this center of infection” (118).

The taste of feces indicates the presence of an indigestible otherness, yet, as several critics have pointed out, certain metaphorically-coded waste substances in *Humphry Clinker* can finally be redeemed. Mann, drawing on the work of Sussman, argues that “by figuring consumerism as a disease spread by infected waters and

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<sup>81</sup> See similar readings of this passage in Sussman 102-3; and Sayre, *Farming by the Book* 326-7.

rapacious women, the novel can enact a purification of them both, when noxious waters are voided and women . . . are married off to men who will re-channel their consumptive desires” (379). Similarly, Michael McKeon suggests that the novel celebrates the excess and class mixture that it seems to decry. In Bramble’s rural idyll, “Smollett holds before us the traditionalistic lamentation of fluidity and excess even as it is replaced by the celebration of Humphry’s . . . expeditious journey of upward mobility” (McKeon 64).<sup>82</sup> Finally, Sullivan, whose reading most informs this one, understands both Lismahago and Humphry Clinker as well as a minor character in the novel, the highwayman Mr. Martin, as waste people whom the novel returns to “active and enterprising” society through a practice identified with Scottish enlightenment ideals of retrenchment (424). He takes the investment of Tabitha’s and Liddy’s savings in Baynard’s farm as an example of “retrenching superfluous expense” as theorized by Scottish political philosophers like Francis Hutcheson (430).

These social and national excesses are coded metaphorically as excrement. At Bath, colonial returnees from the same wars that shattered Lismahago’s body are associated with *stercus* when “clerks and factors . . . discharge their affluence through every channel of the most absurd extravagance” (36-7). Tabitha Bramble, who holds on to money with an avarice marked as anal retentiveness by her maid Win Jenkins, instructs

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<sup>82</sup> McKeon’s argument responds specifically to John Sekora, who reads the return to rural life that ends *Humphry Clinker* as an expression of “social and political pessimism” (Sekora 285), because in what Sekora reads as his “private and nonsocial” retreat to Brambleton Hall, Matthew Bramble “did not project an *alternative* society . . . Rather he posited the values of an *earlier* society—one where life was simpler, and where order, station, and identity were more firmly established and respected” (286). McKeon argues more generally that Bramble, as a member of consumer society and the patron of the upwardly mobile Clinker, is more in line with “the confidence of the end of the 1760s” (Sekora 109) than Sekora admits (McKeon 57).

her housekeeper back home at Brambleton Hall to “be sure to have the gate shit” (6).<sup>83</sup> Baynard’s land has been transformed by his wife’s luxury consumption if not into feces itself, then into its stagnant receptacle: a “bason” and a “bog” (292). Even Humphry Clinker, the novel’s namesake is, as Tabitha puts it “taken from the dunghill” (85), and his name, in British slang, refers to feces (Farmer 2: 125). Yet each of these figurative forms of waste is eventually redeemed. Clinker sprouts into productive growth when, after the purifying rebirth afforded both Bramble and Humphry Clinker in the river where they almost drown, Humphry transforms from a dunghill clinker to “a crab of my [Bramble’s] own planting” (319).<sup>84</sup> The colonial remnant, Lieutenant Lismahago, can be redeemed for Great Britain by a marriage to Tabitha Bramble, while the money Tabitha has hoarded up through illiberality with her brother’s servants is eventually returned to productivity when it is invested in Baynard’s farm, which Matt has “restored to its original use of corn fields and pasture” (343). Though associated with excremental excess, Humphry, Lismahago, Tabitha’s money, and Baynard’s farm are finally just a badly managed surplus that the novel sees its way to redeem as manure for a kind of socio-economic composting loop where the benevolent-patriarchs-cum-gentlemen-improvers, Bramble and Dennison, act as master gardeners. The bodily, domestic, and national economies are all identified in their need to sometimes “increase the motion of the machine, to unclog the wheels of life; and now and then take a plunge amidst the waves of excess” (339). In the end Matt Bramble, himself the manager of a “beautiful

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<sup>83</sup> B.L. Reid notes this line in his analysis of the Bramble family’s constipation and the purgative effects of both travel and epistolary writing. In his reading, *Humphry Clinker* “moves from . . . sickness to health, constipation to purgation, irritability to sensitivity, anonymity to identity, distance to intimacy, doubt to trust, celibacy to marriage, ignorance to knowledge” (550).

<sup>84</sup> The constipated Matthew Bramble, that is, was the dunghill all the time.

circle” in the form of the novel’s plot, endorses circulation as “the very essence and criterion of good health” (339).<sup>85</sup>

But the symbolic renewal associated with manure as a metaphor does not extend to the material of human feces itself as it is represented in *Humphry Clinker*. The composting loop of the retrenchment of expense that redeems all other categories of waste does not ever, outside of London, so much as touch upon the filthiness of shit to transform it into an actual manure. Bramble visits several other farms in *Humphry Clinker* and on none of those farms—even the infertile desert of Baynard’s land—does he find human waste, or any other animal dung, used as fertilizer. At several points he discusses manures directly. Near Haddington in Scotland, for example, Bramble notes approvingly that a plentiful crop of wheat is “raised in the open field, without any . . . other manure than the alga marina, or seaweed, which abounds on this coast” (215), and in Cameron, he suggests that a Scottish farmer who believes that stones in his fields add to the soil’s moisture should use “different kinds of manure, such as ashes, lime, chalk, or marl” (245). Farmer Dennison, the novel’s model agricultural improver, tells Bramble that “my own ground produced excellent marle for manure” (sic 325).<sup>86</sup> What are these potent substances rotted and redeemed towards the improvement of Scotland and the renewal of the soil of the English estate? Seaweed and ashes are vegetable manures,

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<sup>85</sup> Sayre notes that Bramble is presented as the benevolent manager of his estate at Brambleton Hall, as well, although Tabitha disagrees, complaining that her brother’s thoughtless generosity forces her to live “the life of an indented slave” (44). See Sayre 318-19. Sullivan and McKeon also point out that the beautiful circle of the plot is less perfect than immediately appears, particularly noting that the party never make it back to Brambleton Hall in the pages of the book. While I do think that the novel’s five-part narrative often opens spaces of self-reflexivity, it is important to note that the only voice we hear on agriculture generally, or the agricultural use of nightsoil in *Humphry Clinker*, is Bramble’s, so that there does not seem to be a reason to question the novel’s investment in the farm as a space of succor, even if we never see Bramble arrive. As Frank notes, too, the novel effectively replaces marriage as the customary mechanism of closure in the novel, and “reserves the affective charge of its comic closure for the accounts of two estates . . . recovered by improvement” (91). Farming as Bramble represents it in this novel seems to be wholeheartedly endorsed through its narrative mechanisms.

<sup>86</sup> Sayre also notes that Dennison’s farm is not manured with dung. See *Farming by the Book* 335.



while lime, chalk, and George Dennison's excellent marl are all mineral manures.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, once Bramble leaves London, never again, on any of the several estates he visits in Scotland and England, does he—or anyone else in the novel—encounter so much as a turnip nourished by ordure of any kind. Unusually for a novel that uses the epistolary form to refract opinion from the perspectives of five different judges, Bramble's depiction of nightsoil as a dangerous dung, and his isolation of its use in London, is allowed to stand unchallenged. Outside of the self-consuming city, nightsoil disappears.

In the same year that Home published his *Principles* with their beautiful circle, and Smollett penned his admiring review, the horticulturalist, botanist, and controversialist John Hill published a pseudonymous agricultural manual called *A Compleat Body of Husbandry* (1756), with a section on the use of human excrement as a manure.<sup>88</sup> Though Hill's manual endorses several principles of Tullean husbandry, on dung, Hill thinks Tull's "prejudice . . . might carry him too far" (2: 137). Even so, Hill muses, "[t]he using the excrements of our own species for dressing of lands, is in a manner putting them again down our mouths" (2: 157). Though nightsoil is "not without its efficacy," Hill decides that "[a]s to its use, as there is something so distasteful, not to say shocking, in the thought, and as we have every where manures enough, of one kind or another, without it, 'tis more decent and better to let it alone" (158). Seventy years after Evelyn's first edition of *A Philosophical Discourse of Earth*, danger marked by

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<sup>87</sup> "Ashes" are a vegetable manure, but a rather vague reference. In this context, they might be either wood ashes, or used ashes from the soap boiling process, in which case these are the novel's only industrial manure. In the context of urban or cart-dungs, ashes can refer to household refuse, or be a euphemism for excrement, with which they would often have been gathered in the cart and on the laystall. In the context of Bramble's list, where no town is mentioned, they seem unlikely to be these.

<sup>88</sup> Alias Thomas Hale. On Hill in all three capacities, and several more, see the work of George S. Rousseau: *The Renaissance Man in the Eighteenth Century*; *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill*; and *The Notorious Sir John Hill*. All three of these works contain lists of Hill's many pseudonymous publications, including *A Compleat Body of Husbandry*. My thanks to Professor Rousseau for his generous responses to my questions about Hill's research methods and authorship.

distastefulness is transposed to distaste for its own sake. The rank taste of nightsoil is gone, and now it is “the thought” that disturbs “those who are to feed upon the corn” (159), not the material effect, a point underscored by Hill’s cryptic intimations that “[t]his is a practice every where carry’d on clandestinely, for nobody would care to buy that farmer’s corn, who should be known to use it: but there are those in several of our southern counties, who, if they thought proper to tell tales, could say a great deal of the profits rising from this manure” (158). Nightsoil has lost the rank taste indicating its presence in one’s food, but Hill gives no impression that the farmers “in several of our southern counties” are careful dunghill managers in the tradition of the Hendon men. Indeed, nightsoil “is a filthy [manure]; the least manageable of any whatsoever, and, of all others, the most offensive to the servants employ’d in spreading it” (159). This manure is not the result of the cooperative labor of mixture performed by dunghill and farmer, it is a deception practiced by farmers on consumers for “the profits rising from this manure” (2: 158). Hill implies that Smollett is accurate in his description of a city that cannot taste the raw nightsoil in its greens.

As the end of the century approaches, nightsoil reaches the mainstream when Arthur Young becomes its advocate: “I have compared it with all other manures, and found that none of them I could procure equalled it by many degrees” (*Annals* 33: 605). In fact, Young does suggest rotting dungheaps to “a mucilaginous mass . . . black butter, as the farmers call it” (33: 589), but like Hill, Young’s endorsement of nightsoil relies on the “thought” of taste as an insubstantial fancy. Only profit is real, so that it is enough for Young to announce that: “as I conceive it perfectly decent, and admirably efficient, I shall consider human ordure as the very best manure that can be procured” (33: 602).

Equally telling is Young's experiment to prove that nightsoil doesn't alter the taste of plants. Young tells us that he "dressed part of a pasture with it, fed the whole of that year with horses, cows, and young cattle; and I remarked to various gentlemen that saw it, how close into the ground that part was constantly eaten, while there was much longer grass, &c. in every other part of the field" (605). Young "proves" that nightsoil has no taste by watching gentlemen watch cows eat. His experiment appears to prove something material about nightsoil, but in fact it denatures any material basis for taste, which is no longer an indicator of either chemical or pernicious content, since Young's experiment presumes that whatever tastes good to cows, and will therefore contribute to their valuable flesh, is good for them, and good for farmers as well. Taste indicates nothing about matter; only value and efficiency are real, so that Young's evocations of the power of nightsoil dismantle the concrete answer that was Smollett's "nitre and volatile salts" and replace it with a facetious reification of profitability as good taste. Indeed, Young's objectification of nightsoil seems to raise specters of brutality that he then ignores, as when he asserts that, "[i]n the last century, the ordure of the galley-slaves at Marseilles was all saved, and sold for grapes, olives, and figs; the last of which, produced by it, were the best in the world" (*Annals* 33: 603-4). Gone is the identity between nightsoil and the people who produce it—even galley slaves make good figs. Instead the discourse of agriculture is turning definitively away from a concept of soil as actuated by some identity with human matter, away from the rebounding sociability of Dodsley's marketplace, that is, and towards a beautiful circle of putrefaction and regeneration that transforms all qualities into profit, and all physical responses into a matter of purely fantastic taste.

Once the taste of nightsoil is no longer indicative of any real presence within it, the valuation of that taste undergoes a startling reversal. Now, Young writes, “[i]t is a vulgar error to imagine that manuring a field with this substance will give a bad taste to plants” (33: 605). The tastelessness of waste becomes the measure of its value: rank excess is transformed from material evidence of other subjectivities to the material measure of a fertilizer’s power.<sup>89</sup> So Thomas Bayley, Fellow of the Royal Society, writes of town and industrial manures in 1796,

“Let Nothing be lost!” is an injunction of Divine Wisdom, delivered on a very remarkable occasion. This precept, by a fair analogy, may be supposed not only to prohibit all idle and negligent waste of provisions, but also to enjoin the most minute attention and care, in collecting and preserving all such matters, which, together or separately, may operate as manures, and may increase the produce of the fruits of the earth in their season. (5)

Bayley’s remarkable occasion is John’s parable of the loaves and fishes (John 6). Five loaves of barley bread, and two small fish feed five-thousand hungry men on a mountainside. When they’ve eaten, Jesus sends his disciples to “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost” (*King James*, John 6.12). John stresses the fragmentation of the bread through repetition: “they gathered them together, and filled

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<sup>89</sup> Ambivalence surrounding the potential power of capital is of course already legible in texts like Swift’s *Description of a City Shower* (1710), and Pope’s *Dunciad* (1728), both of which, as commentators including Sophie Gee, Laura Brown, and Pat Rogers, in *Grub Street*, have noted, are sometimes misread as positively inflected towards the urban economies they savage because the vitality in their torrents of waste is so irresistible. For Gee, feces represents the dynamic force that moves London, with a lively energy and almost an agency of its own, but as Laura Brown writes, finally “this is a vitality whose source and nature are notoriously difficult to pin down” (20). As Copley and Haywood suggest of Gay’s *Trivia*, in these poems, excrement may be energetic, but it is also a negative signifier, still “established overwhelmingly as an emblem of cultural, moral, and social corruption” (66).

twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained” (6.13). It is the vast quantity of waste that proves the extent of Christ’s miracle; seeing the twelve baskets of fragments, the five thousand men believe: “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world” (6.14). Thomas Bayley, too, writing in the aftermath of the severe corn shortages of 1795, rests his hopes on the miraculous multiplicative powers of the prophets of waste. Of their materials, nightsoil is “by far the most efficacious of all others” (11). In his ideal economy of corruption, capital and nightsoil are collapsed with the product of their miraculous multiplication in a way that erases every sign of Tull’s or Smollett’s disgust. Bayley reduces (at least in theory), feces to future nourishment, and in doing so, he articulates a shift in the model of value, from the stable soil of the estate to the “pulpy substance” or “mucilaginous mass” of putrefied matter (Home 65, Young *Annals* 33: 589), while the landed-man’s well-managed body gives way to a new metaphor: the “beautiful circle,” its power drawn from the transformative and reduplicative value of waste. Such a perspective, which privileges the long-term and collective benefits of circulation over the harms it might cause to the individual asked to digest it and live with it were not new. Over the course of the eighteenth century, new instruments for creating and exchanging value, like long-term credit, had already “implicated the culture in a new kind of narrativity” where value was “verifiable only with time” (Sherman 5). “Specialised, acquisitive and post-civic man,” Pocock writes, “had ceased to be virtuous, not only in the formal sense that he has become the creature of his own hopes and fears; he does not even live in the present, except as constituted by his fantasies concerning a future” (*Virtue* 112).<sup>90</sup> By the end of Smollett’s life, this new narrativity, oriented toward specialization, macroscopic vision, and the future benefit of

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<sup>90</sup> On Credit and a new temporality, see also Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy* 61-85.

present instability, was far advanced: the image of a London citizen gulping down ordure is diminished to nothing in Bayley's seasons or Home's beautiful circle, a circle so complex and so vast it hardly sees what is "disagreeable" and "dangerous" in the light of what that matter will become. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the categories of stercus and soil that Tull—and Matthew Bramble—had worked so hard to imagine as separate, and that Evelyn, Dodsley and Ellis had labored with such care to intertwine, are simply collapsed in the language of agricultural chemistry that answered Smollett's wish by valuing both feces and soil as interchangeable units of fertility and cash. By the time that Young published his *Six Months Tour* of 1770, with its approbation of "[a]ll . . . sorts of manure, such as coal ashes . . . the sullage of the streets, &c &c &c, . . . purchased . . . and spread on the fields to great profit" (163), Smollett wished for something else: a system of management that could genuinely and responsibly remediate both social and material waste. Instead, Britons got the workhouse. In 1796, for example, William Molesworth, a founder of the Board of Agriculture in Cornwall, provided land for the construction of an almshouse with the sole caveat that all the waste produced by its inhabitants should be treasured up for him.<sup>91</sup> The rank smell and taste of nightsoil and its attachment to any sort of subjectivity have been made, rhetorically at least, to disappear by the discoveries of chemists: "if earth, saw-dust, *fine sifted* coal-ashes, but more *especially fresh slaked lime*, were frequently thrown down the privies, all disagreeable and unwholesome smells would be prevented, and the quantity and value of the compost greatly increased" (Bayley 12, his emphasis), while Young convenes a parliament of cows on a field manured with nightsoil and finds "how close into the ground that part was constantly eaten" (*Annals* 33: 605). The collectivity of consumers has spoken. Its smell

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<sup>91</sup> See Cornwall records office, T/1607 24 June, 1796.

and taste banished, nightsoil becomes the most exalted possible investment for the farmer, despite the sensory displeasure and bodily danger it creates. In service of the future, of the economy's beautiful circle, Young writes, if "the farm is within reach of any considerable town . . . , the farmer can hardly purchase it at too high a rate" (603).

## Chapter Four

### Soil Reformed: Improvement and the Buried Past

In his 1795 address to the new Board of Agriculture, John Sinclair aligns the goals of the board with the spirit of his historical moment: “we are laying a foundation for the future prosperity and happiness of the human race; since their prosperity and happiness must ever depend, on the facility with which their means of sustenance can be provided” (*Account* 63). We can note several important changes in the language of agricultural improvement here, as compared to that of its mid-century champions. First, Sinclair’s statement is fully oriented towards the future. This is not Smollett’s improved landlord as “ancient patriarch” revived, with his sphere of influence limited to the dominions of his patrimony, “cultivating the domestic virtues . . . dispensing happiness to all around him, with looks of cheerful innocence, and words that speak an elegant simplicity” (Smollett, *Critical* 3: 6). Sinclair’s improving landlord does not see agricultural improvement as a way to renew his own agrarian paradise in the moment, but creates a foundation for a future good that is universal in its scope. Second, the new agricultural improver sees future happiness as dependent on the mastery of material human needs. The new landlord does not dispense happiness merely to his neighbors and dependents through “looks of cheerful innocence, and words,” but sustenance and *therefore* happiness to the whole human race. For Sinclair and many of his contemporaries, “improvement,” involved the progressive betterment of human experience through the judicious use of new materials, tools, and technologies—better fodder crops to feed cattle, better breeds of livestock that got fatter, faster, better crop rotations to assure larger crops of corn that could then be sold cheaper so that all might have more to eat, better legal tools to ensure the improving



owner's total sovereignty over his land so that he could implement these new means and methods, even better men, more sober, more industrious workers and more meritorious masters, who had gained their power by constant application rather than by birth.<sup>1</sup>

From the conservative, accretive improvements in the metaphorical castle-of-the-constitution authorized by Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), to the diametrically opposed progressive improvement that Joseph Priestley projected, which would lay “gunpowder, grain by grain, under the old building of error and superstition” (Priestley, “Reflections” 40-1), “improvement” was a universal good, at least among the upper classes. Reformists and conservatives, however, were divided on the relative value of the past.<sup>2</sup> The group that Isaac Kramnick labels Bourgeois Radicals (65), and David Fairer calls revolutionaries, “challenged the value, even the validity of history as a connected narrative” (Fairer 2-3).<sup>3</sup> For reformers like Priestley, William Godwin, and Thomas Paine, both the soil and the self were to be cut off from the past and its prejudice. Priestley's gunpowder of science, for example, was to “produce an instantaneous explosion” that would “overwhelm” the prejudices of the past, “so effectually as that same foundation can never be built again” (“Reflections” 41). But

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<sup>1</sup> One example of this attitude might be seen in a short agricultural tour published by Arthur Young in the second volume of the *Annals of Agriculture* (1784). Young is describing the labor at harvest-time on the farm of the famous agriculturalist, Thomas Coke, First Earl of Leicester: “To name Mr. Coke's management in this respect in harvest, will, I hope, be sufficient to excite a general imitation. His men go to church in the morning, and then immediately to the field, where their useful and honest industry will, I trust, be found as acceptable in the sight of God, as the more common dissipation in an ale-house kitchen, to say nothing of the drunkenness, broils, and gaming, which usually take place” (2: 370).

<sup>2</sup> Priestley hoped that an “internal revolution” would lay the foundation for a quick and universal change (42), “And thus the system which had stood for ages, without any visible marks of ruin or decay, may vanish, like an enchanted castle in romance” (39). See also Isaac Kramnick, “Eighteenth-Century Science and Radical Social Theory” (12). On the emblematic castles and estates of 1790s literature, see Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate*; Loraine Fletcher, “Charlotte Smith's Emblematic Castles”; and *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography*, passim; Townshend, “Improvement and Repair”; Schmidgen, “Henry Fielding and the Common Law of Plenitude,” *Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 63-104; and Frans De Bruyn, “States and Estates: Burke's Georgic Arts of Political Husbandry,” *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke* 59-110.

<sup>3</sup> See also Fairer's Chapter, “Organic Constitutions: History,” in *Organising Poetry* 58-94.

technological improvement was not just destructive. Godwin imagined, for example, that through technological progress, humans were “perfectable” (1793 1: 43), and that improvement in agriculture went hand in hand with improvements in ethics, literature, and the arts:

the most ignorant ploughman in civilized society is infinitely different from what he would have been, when stripped of all the benefits he has derived from literature and the arts. Let us survey the earth covered with the labours of man, houses, inclosures, harvests, manufactures, instruments, machines, together with all the wonders of painting, poetry, eloquence, and philosophy. (1: 49)

The progressive effect of such technology presses humankind forward on a teleological line towards moral and intellectual attainment. Better technology means more food, more food means cheaper food, cheaper food means less physical labor, which frees more time for mental labor, which in turn allows all minds to participate in the good work of improvement (2: 846).

The teleology of improvement could even stretch towards man’s transcendence of matter itself. This idea is amply represented in a notorious reverie from Godwin’s first edition of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), where Godwin projects the complete domination of matter—not only the matter of the soil, but also and especially the matter of the body—as the eventual outcome of human progress, beginning with its progress in agriculture. His logic traces a line from improved agriculture to a human transcendence of appetite, illness, and death: “[t]hree fourths of the habitable globe is now uncultivated. The parts already cultivated are capable of immeasurable

improvements” (2: 861), he offers, and if we can gain control “over all other matter,” Godwin suggests,

why not over the matter of our own bodies? If over matter at ever so great a distance, why not over matter which . . . we always carry about with us, and which is in all cases the medium of communication between that principle and the external universe? In a word, why may not man one day be immortal? (2: 862)<sup>4</sup>

Godwin’s questions are only the most succinct statement of the radical hope that is at the center of late eighteenth-century bourgeois liberalism, which, as Kramnick has argued, linked agricultural improvement to “middle-class disdain for the past, for history, and for custom” (Kramnick, “Eighteenth-Century Science” 9). For reformist thinkers, in all areas of human ambition, improvement was articulated as a break with the past and an optimistic orientation towards the future.

Even so, reformers relied on an analogy between human self-ownership and landownership that draws on inherited parallels between human bodily-economy and the social system.<sup>5</sup> Reformers saw an obvious parallel between agriculturally improved land and the human subject, who, cut off by self-reliance from the prejudice of contemporaries as well as the inherited prejudices of the past, could “cultivate” himself towards perfection, so that, as Robert Anderson puts it, “[t]he moral economy and political

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<sup>4</sup> Godwin is answering the objection raised by Robert Wallace in 1761, where he suggests that the best political organization, by introducing security and stability, would lead to an insupportably large human population (*Enquiry* 1793 2: 860-1). Godwin responds by suggesting, in the first place, that agricultural improvement will put this point millennia in the distance. In the second place, he turns to speculations on the possibility of immortality (2: 862). For an excellent discussion of Godwin’s idea of immortality and its relation to the population controversy in which he would eventually become a major actor, see Siobhan Ni Chonaill, “Why may not man one day be immortal?”.

<sup>5</sup> This reading of Godwin finds its basis in the work of Robert Anderson. See “‘Ruinous Mixture’”; For a related reading of the self as “sphere” in Locke, see Schmidgen, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 31.

economy merge in the social and semantic fields covered by ‘improvement’” (630). In the works of both Godwin and Priestley, both subjectivity and soil are divided into discrete properties whose content is to be determined by one and only one owner, protected by the integrity of the individual conscience from absorption into the “common mass” of human thought and opinion (620).<sup>6</sup> Enclosure of both self and soil meant divestment from the influence of history—those ancient patriarchs and their prejudices—as much as from the influence of the rights of commonage. If earlier authors imagined the soil as disseminating ownership of England’s past, bearing it physically into the bodies of nationals, later eighteenth-century reformist authors often render the soil as a failed medium for the transmission of historical experience and lingering subjectivities. Such failure is, paradoxically, reinscribed as improvement. Priestley destroys the “foundation” for the prejudicial thought of the past, and Charlotte Smith, as we will see in the conclusion to this chapter, insists on a failure of communication between the present and an incomprehensible past that is buried well below reach of the ploughshare, and is in any case unworthy of transmission. Smith and Priestley deny the relevance of the past to the present because both prefer to build on a different foundation.

This chapter examines late eighteenth-century reformist representations of the soil primarily in the field of agricultural writing. It offers an analysis, first, of Arthur Young’s writing in support of the enclosure of waste soils in several works of the 1770s and 1780s. In contrast to the revolutionary rhetoric of Priestley, Godwin, and Smith, Arthur Young is usually thought of as a political conservative for his response to the French

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<sup>6</sup> Quoting Godwin, 1798 1: 289.

Revolution.<sup>7</sup> Yet to call Young a conservative is to fail to appreciate common ground he shared with the likes of progressives such as Godwin and Priestley in his advocacy for enclosure and against tithes and poor rates. Moreover, in the field of agriculture at least, Young was hardly an advocate for the careful and conservative restoration of the edifice of the past. For Young, the waste spaces of Britain must be rendered into an inviting blankness empty and available enough to rival the magnetism of America's putatively untouched interior. We start by acknowledging the ways that his arguments for the enclosure of wastelands require the figuration of Britain as Locke's *tabula rasa*, ripe for human improvement, and move on to a specific discussion of Young's descriptions of moor soils as the prototypical waste, where we find him forcibly unearthing and dispersing the evidence of other histories and interests in the soil in order to make the past available for improvement towards a progressively more fertile future. In Young's improvement and enclosure propaganda, we can see that eighteenth-century agricultural writing does not, like Dryden's translation of the *Georgics* and Defoe's *Tour* in this dissertation's chapter two, simply mediate, reframe, or cover up relics that it cannot fit into an acceptable narrative of British history, or, like Powell and Philips, allow the concept of recirculation through the soil to provide an alternative, inarticulate, and immediate relation to the past. Nor does Young, like Smollett or Tull, suggest sequestration from the violating agency of decay. Instead, Young offers an improvement that actively un-earths the past. The coherence of Young's improved Britain is based not on a hermeneutics of repression, where fragmented and conflicting histories are buried out of sight, but on the agricultural improver's active recycling of the past into fertile soil

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman* 2-7. Allen places Young firmly among the "Tories" in his analysis of the politics of agricultural history in England.

that will produce a better future. His texts acknowledge the tangles of historical and legal relics and material and customary restraints in and on the soil in order to enact their exhumation and dispersal. By claiming and controlling the power of putrefaction to break down and disseminate relics, Young's improver takes over the soil's work of decay. He releases the value of the past for the production of future goods.

In fact, Young's program—which became the program of the new Royal Agricultural Society in 1793—was so successful that by the end of the eighteenth century, the landscape of Britain was entirely changed. With private enclosures replacing open fields formerly held in common, it was divided into subdivisions set apart by hedgerows, ditches, walls, and straight(er) roads. Where Godwin imagined a mind that could be enclosed and cultivated like soil through improvements, the poet John Clare asserted that by the first decades of the nineteenth century, that the British landscape had indeed come to imitate the private boundaries of the individual conscience. In this poem on the enclosure of his native village in Northhamptonshire, "The Moors," for example, Clare shows,

Fence meeting fence in owners' little bounds  
 Of field and meadow, large as garden grounds,  
 In little parcels little minds to please,  
 With men and flocks imprisoned, ill at ease. (46-49)<sup>8</sup>

For Clare as for others, the consonance of a private landscape and a private subjectivity came with a sense of loss, both of individual rights, and of continuity with the past,

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<sup>8</sup> These lines are also quoted in Overton 159; and Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* 143. See also on this poem, and on Clare's opposition to enclosure and other facets of "improvement" more generally, Johanne Clare, *John Clare and the Bounds of Circumstance* 36-55; and Vardy, *John Clare, Politics and Poetry* 71-93.

whose paths “are stopt—the rude philistine’s thrall / Is laid upon them and destroyed them all” (64-5). The sense that improvement had turned out to mean the parceling up of experience into discrete and discontinuous blocks led, for Godwin, to his eventual anxiety that the possibility of future progress had also been lost. How can men whose lives are so strongly separated engage in the communication that leads to human perfection? This anxiety motivates Godwin’s *An Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), a text in which Godwin ultimately abandons his advocacy for a historical soil, and proposes that dirt—literally the dust of the buried corpses of great men—could be the foundation of improvement by materializing cultural and historical continuity. Godwin’s *Essay* proposes a different kind of soil-fertility, land that fruits out in knowledge, experience, and sentiment instead of only food. Yet Godwin’s essay is unable to imagine an immediate and therefore open-ended relation between human bodies and the dust of the dead. He strives to secure stable access to corpses that are also subjects, with particular memories and ideas to represent to their living interlocutors. Intent on controlling the legacy that the past leaves for the future, Godwin can only approach the dead through the medium of their representations—both the texts they leave behind and the monuments he wants to erect at their gravesites. Ultimately, his *Essay* offers less a plan for the stable continuity of experience across generations, than a revelation of the limits of what representations and mediums can accomplish when they refuse the immediate agency of soil.

### I. Arthur Young and the Conquest of Britain

The 1760s and ’70s mark a watershed in land management practices in Britain. New crops and new fallow-less crop rotations that had taken hold in particular localities like

Norfolk and Kent, now began to reach farther and faster.<sup>9</sup> The development of societies for the encouragement of innovation and experimentation in agriculture flourished, leading in 1793 to the founding of the Royal Agricultural Society, and over this period enclosure by act of parliament replaced enclosure by agreement as the major method by which landholders obtained sole rights to formerly common fields, pastures, and wastelands (Yelling 15).<sup>10</sup> This last development, though its effects are inseparable from other components in the explosion of late eighteenth-century agriculture, has perhaps the most easily traced significance. Overall, the pace of enclosure rose dramatically after the 1760s as landowners turned to parliament for the legitimization of their claims. Michael Turner estimates that more than twenty percent of the area of England was enclosed by act of parliament between 1750 and 1819, the vast majority of these acts occurring after 1760 (32). A high concentration—twenty-one percent of the whole of acreage enclosed by parliament—was enclosed in the decades between 1770 and 1780 and in the years of high grain prices during the Napoleonic wars (Yelling 16).<sup>11</sup> Although enclosure continued until the end of the nineteenth century, by 1815 only small and discontinuous patches of common fields remained (16).

The percentage of wastelands—forests, fens, sheep walks, and moors—enclosed and improved during the period of parliamentary enclosure was relatively small compared to the percentage of open fields that had already been under cultivation,

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<sup>9</sup> For a full discussion of the changes in crop types, land use, rotations, livestock breeding, etc. see Prince, “Changes in Land Use” 22-71.

<sup>10</sup> For overviews of the acceleration of agricultural change in the last decades of the eighteenth century, see MacLean; and Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape*. On enclosure as the “landlord’s revolution,” see Allen; see also Neeson; E.P. Thompson *Customs in Common*, and *The Making of the English Working Class*. For a concise general overview of agricultural change throughout the eighteenth-century that attends to technological, economic, and socio-cultural factors, see Overton, whose monograph also contains an annotated bibliography of studies related to agricultural development in England up to the mid-nineteen-nineties. See Overton 211-222.

<sup>11</sup> See also Turner 66.



comprising just under two and a half million out of seven million acres in total (Whyte 77). Yet the wastes loomed large in the imaginations of the propagandists responsible for encouraging the expansion of both enclosure and the innovative agricultural practice that it was thought to support.<sup>12</sup> The improvement of Britain's "wolds, downs, forests, chaces, and bogs" (Young, *Observations* 56), represented the promise held out by progressive farming that all of the soil of England might reach its maximum potential production of wealth, enabling Britain to "settle more on the basis of internal resources" during an era in which Britain's imperial power was compromised by revolution and revolt (*Annals* 1: 7), and its decline into the twilight of empire seemed to many to be imminent.<sup>13</sup>

Propagandists for enclosure and "improvement" of the wastelands to make them viable as pasture and arable assured their gentlemanly readers that progressive farming could not only optimize the productivity of lands that were already under cultivation, but could, like the soon-to-be lost Americas, offer up new land to the plough and new income to the support of the nation, "a fund of wealth that did not exist before, and . . . a clear addition to the nation's stock" (Young, *Farmer's Letters* 1771: 397).<sup>14</sup> After the 1760s, British improvers turned the logic and language of colonialism inward, towards the wastes, and directed their gaze at the soil not with the antiquarian's eye to the past, but with the improver's eye to the future, so that with the drive to colonize Britain's domestic spaces came an effort by improvers to rhetorically usurp the soil in its function as a medium for the dissemination of historical matter, and thereby render Britain's soil into a more

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<sup>12</sup> And also in the imaginations of those who resisted enclosure. Raymond Williams notes that though the percentage of wastes enclosed was comparatively little next to the "open-field villages . . . of an old arable economy" (102), "[m]ost records of loss come from these marginal lands: the commons and the heaths" (101).

<sup>13</sup> On the relationship between British fears of decline and the British reconception of center and periphery, see Colley 101-5.

<sup>14</sup> On the "myth of America as a land of freeholders . . . by contrast to Britain's increasing difficulty in feeding [its] population" (143), see R. Crawford, "English Georgic."

perfect foundation for the building of domestic “monuments . . . of profit” (Young *Observations* 46).

The most prominent among the propagandists for improvement, by both contemporary and modern standards, was Arthur Young.<sup>15</sup> Born in London, but raised on a small family estate in Suffolk, Young began his career as a writer by authoring political pamphlets and pot-boilers for a local bookseller during an abortive apprenticeship to a wine merchant at King’s Lynn.<sup>16</sup> After leaving trade for farming, in 1767, he published the first edition of his *Farmer’s Letters to the People of England*, and in 1768, *A Six-Weeks Tour of the Southern Counties of England and Wales* established him as an authority on progressive agricultural practice in England. These performances were followed by additional tours through the North and East of England, Ireland, and France, as well as multiple works on subjects in political economy and agricultural policy, a book of field experiments, with several more on specific subjects in agricultural management such as hog breeding, the *Annals of Agriculture* (1784-1815), which was the first successful and long-running agricultural periodical in Britain, and, eventually, the *General Views* for six counties.<sup>17</sup> Although Young’s status as a reliable critic and reporter of agricultural innovations was questioned in his lifetime, he was also acknowledged with frequency as the leading authority on agricultural improvement by a surprisingly wide

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<sup>15</sup> See MacLean 3.

<sup>16</sup> Young wrote an autobiography, though it was not published until 1898. For Young’s life story, by far the best source is the biography of Young by Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young*. G.E. Mingay provides a less comprehensive but still quite useful biographical sketch of Young in his introduction to *Arthur Young and His Times*, and in the DNB entry for Young, also written by Mingay.

<sup>17</sup> Suffolk (1794), Lincoln (1799), Hertfordshire (1804), Norfolk (1804), Essex (1807), and Oxfordshire (1809). For bibliographies of Young’s works, see Gazley 704-707; Mingay 251-6; and G.D. Amery, “The Writings of Arthur Young.”

range of judges.<sup>18</sup> George III read his works and consulted him personally on agricultural matters (Gazley 156, 411-12), and George Washington held a voluble correspondence with him, requested plans for a barn from Young (199), and during his presidency sent Young an account of farming practices in Virginia and Maryland (267).<sup>19</sup> Burke was Young's correspondent, consulting him on the culture of carrots and hogs and inviting him to tour his farm near Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire (Cone 65), and so was Joseph Priestley, who in 1783, paid Young the high progressivist compliment of telling him that "there is no person whose pursuits are more eminently useful to the world. You alone have certainly done more to promote agriculture, and especially to render it respectable in this country, than all that have gone before you" (Gazley 151).<sup>20</sup> Young trained sons of aristocratic families from Russia and France in the internationally respected practices of English agriculture, and helped to spread their fame (150-1, 173). As Ian D. Rotherham and David McCallam note, Young was so respected internationally, that even as hostilities between France and England were reaching their height at the start of the

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<sup>18</sup> Young was accused of being a poor and financially unsuccessful farmer, and of being a mere tourist rather than an attentive observer. The introduction to his *Farmer's Tour Through the East of England* (1771) contains a lengthy self-defense against "men, who read with no other view than to calumniate" (xii). Mingay's introduction to *Arthur Young and His Times* contains an overview of the criticism; a valuable summary can also be found in Brunt, "Rehabilitating Arthur Young," which also contains a defense of Young, while the objections of William Marshall, Young's contemporary and main professional rival, are summarized in Sayre, *Farming by the Book* 428-30. In general, modern scholarship has been divided on the usefulness of Young's numerical data, but most writing in the last twenty years has focused on the rigor with which Arthur Young approached the collection, if not always the analysis, of his information. See especially Robert C. Allen and Cormac O'Grada, "On the Road again with Arthur Young." Meanwhile, Ruth Perry ably defends Young from charges against him as the ethically destitute champion of enclosure—he came to understand its effects on the lower classes, and to regret his enthusiasm in advocating for their disenfranchisement. See Perry, *Novel Relations* 328-335. See also Sayre, *Farming by the Book* 425-7; Williams 99; Neeson 48-50; and Gazley 415-484.

<sup>19</sup> On Young's relationships with Washington and George III as emblematic of the struggles Britons faced in defining a late eighteenth-century nationalism, see R. Crawford, "English Georgic" 136-148.

<sup>20</sup> For Burke and Young, see Carl B. Cone, "Edmund Burke, the Farmer." For the visit to Beaconsfield, see Young's *Farmer's Tour through the East of England* 4: 69-85. See also Frans De Bruyn, "States and Estates." Priestley's letter is quoted in Gazley 151, and is located at the British Library, Add MS. 35126 ff. 225.

nineteenth century, an eighteen-volume translation of selections from Young's works was published in France as *Le Cultivateur Anglois* (Rotherham 87).

Young, especially before he converted to evangelical Christianity at the turn of the century, is for the most part an author of predictable prejudices. His arguments in favor of enclosure, experimentation in agriculture, and investment in domestic agricultural projects as well as his anxieties around the decline of British civilization, the loss of British population, and the connection between restrictive agricultural policies and despotic governance are repeated in text after text, and passed on to his cohort and disciples. A devotee of the picturesque, Young's five book-length *Tours* and many shorter journeys detailed throughout his *Annals* combine visits to great houses, and critiques of their art and architecture, with statistics related to wages, cost of living, population, land and operating costs, and detailed descriptions of farming practices in every area he visited.<sup>21</sup> His work is often cited by students of the English georgic to epitomize the move, in the late eighteenth century, from didactic poetry to didactic prose, and to show how late eighteenth-century prose works on agriculture take up aspects of the georgic form.<sup>22</sup> Chief among these adopted georgic tropes are his sweeping visual prospects—not just the carefully constructed landscape scenes of hill and valley, dark and light, cultivation and picturesque wilderness analyzed by John Barrell and Benjamin Colbert, but also visionary metaphors that sweep the future of England into Young's

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<sup>21</sup> Young's *Tours* include: *A Six Weeks Tour, through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* (1768); *A Six Months Tour through the North of England* (1769); *The Farmer's Tour through the East of England* (1771); *A Tour in Ireland* (1780); *Travels during the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789, undertaken more particularly, with a View of ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (1793). His *Annals* also contain accounts of numerous shorter trips.

<sup>22</sup> See Frans De Bruyn, "From Georgic Poetry to Statistics and Graphs"; Bucknell; R. Crawford "English Georgic"; and Sayre, *Farming By the Book* 403-427. Young himself recognized the potential for didactic prose to take up the mantle of Georgic, writing in a letter to his mentor, Walter Harte, about Harte's own book, that "[i]t is the only prose Georgic that I know, as agreeable, and I dare say much more useful, in this climate than Virgil" (*Autobiography* 84).

prospective field.<sup>23</sup> Arguing in his first agricultural work, *The Farmer's Letters to the People of England* (1768) that sheep walks would be more efficiently utilized as arable, for example, Young encourages his reader to envision

a prospect far different from flocks of sheep wandering over the sluggard walks, followed each by their one shepherd with a boy and a couple of dogs! Think of the wealth such a cultivation as I have hinted at, pours into the kingdom! Think of the employment given to the best hands a kingdom boasts! Think of this improvement; and then behold in the same country as many sheep as ever! (*Farmer's Letters* 1768: 10)

Even looking at a sheep-walk, Young participates in the visionary culture of the late eighteenth century with prophetic anticipations of the nation's future.<sup>24</sup> But that future might also be apocalyptic. In the *Farmer's Letters*, imperial decline will be the final result of British investment in North American "wastes and wilds three thousand miles off, when we have so many amongst ourselves" (307). Young imagines the development of nations in a cyclical "great year" of civilizations, where "arts, sciences, and empire travel westward with the sun" (310).<sup>25</sup> Young warns that America's

barbarity will wear off in time, and those regions, which now are boundless forests, wastes, and wilds, will one day be peopled with flourishing cities, and adorned with beautiful cultivation; and possessing in all their brilliancy the arts, sciences, and all the consequences of luxury

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<sup>23</sup> See Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape* 64-97; and Benjamin Colbert, "Aesthetics of Enclosure."

<sup>24</sup> On the prophetic and visionary in the radical culture of late eighteenth-century England, see Tim Fulford, "Millenarianism and the Study of Romanticism." On the prophetic and visionary mode in the bourgeois literature of improvement, see Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism* 64-70.

<sup>25</sup> Of the "theme of the passing of empire from east to west," see William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* 310-11. It would also be a major theme in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's last published poem, *Eighteen-Hundred and Eleven*.

and empire. The present flourishing kingdoms of the western parts of Europe will then . . . sink into the same barbarity as Greece or Egypt experience at present (310).

Like other prophets of decline in the later eighteenth century, Young imagines that the cycle may be retarded, if not circumvented all together, if the nation follows a path of reform.<sup>26</sup> For Young, this meant a judicious use of domestic resources. Britain should abandon both corn laws and poor laws, substituting gifts of land or “houses of industry” for parish relief (332).<sup>27</sup> It should conserve its population and invest in underutilized soils at home in order to produce both more goods and more people (305). Colonies can be useful, Young admits, but only once the fertility of the kingdom—the soil’s capacity to support domestic life—is completely realized and exploited (307). For these purposes, the most advantageous colonies we can plant, are on our barren lands at home; the consumption of our manufactures . . . will be as great in a colony settled on *our own wilds*, as in *American* ones: the security of their consuming our own manufactures infinitely greater, and the wealth arising from them to the nation of the most truly valuable kind. Let us people all the heaths of *England, Scotland, and Ireland*, and such increase of subjects will never cost us some thirty, forty, or fifty millions to defend. (305)

Young’s certainty that the wilds of Britain were being neglected in favor of the wilds of America only grew as war with America drew nearer. In his *Observations on the Present*

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<sup>26</sup> On tropes of decline in the late eighteenth century, see the work of Jonathan Sachs. In particular, “The Time of Decline”; and “Decline and Romantic Literary Culture.” Sachs argues that fantasies of British decline often imagined the anticipation of decay as a prophylactic against the actual experience (“Decline and Romantic” 59).

<sup>27</sup> On houses of industry, that is, workhouses, see for example articles in *Annals* 6: 331 and 7: 179. Indeed, there would be several articles per-volume on workhouses in relation to the poor laws until the *Annals* ceased publication in 1815, though most are not written by Young himself.

*State of the Waste Lands of Great Britain* (1773), Young sees the new British settlements in the Ohio River Valley as a strong temptation to British gentlemen of small estates. Such men, Young insists, “are, in this rich and extravagant age, almost beggars” (31), their incomes and influence eroded by war, taxes, and the influx of luxury and monied men.<sup>28</sup> Young warned in multiple works that the population leaving for America would cease to comprise just “the unindustrious poor” (8), and begin to sap from England “numbers of people it wants not to get rid of” (*Farmer’s Letters* 1768: 308). The solution, Young argues, is to make waste land available for settlement in Britain: “We are daily told of the emigrations to the colonies depopulating us; why should not these emigrations be to the moors and heaths of Britain, instead of the swamps and forests of America” (*Observations* 39)?

Young’s domestic colonial program is most avidly articulated in the first number of the *Annals of Agriculture* (1784), where it is a direct response to the loss of the American Revolutionary war. Young offers the inception of his agricultural periodical as an inaugurating act in a new era of peace that will withdraw the boundaries of the British Empire to the “dominion of this little island” (25)—even Ireland is too insecure an investment—but the resources of England and Scotland, Young argues, are sufficient to the task.<sup>29</sup> “With above eight millions of waste acres in England and five in Scotland, and with from 1 to 200,000 able hands discharged by the peace, there appears to be ample

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<sup>28</sup> See *Observations* 31-33. In fact, Young was talking about himself. He considered emigration to America in 1772, but his wife was opposed. See Gazley, 75; and Young, *Autobiography*, 61. Young maintained an interest in American agriculture all his life, but never crossed the sea. For Young’s reputation and correspondence across the Atlantic, see Rodney C. Loehr, “Arthur Young and American Agriculture.” For Young’s novel depicting a fantasy of genteel American homesteading, see *Adventures of Emmera* (1767). For the few discussions of this novel to-date, see Perry; Richards; and brief mention in Perkins 317-18.

<sup>29</sup> See “The Georgic at Mid-Century,” where Pellicer writes that “the shattering loss of America gave Arthur Young his rallying cry in the first editorial essay of the *Annals of Agriculture* . . . . Young rekindles georgic energies in emphatically anti-colonial, even isolationist, terms” (90).

materials for a statesman to work with” (52). His goal is total enclosure of “all wastes of every denomination which are now uncultivated, not because the soil is bad, but because cursed with rights of commonage,” this is “the very greatest object of British policy” (52), and Young suggests a program of reform where the land is disencumbered legally and materially—rights of commonage removed by act of parliament, mole-hills, mosses, and other “rubbish” stripped from the surface of the soil, the soil leveled and its layers mixed.<sup>30</sup> Turning the colonial gaze inward means obtaining a strict knowledge of the nation’s soils, and Young proposes a map in the *Farmer’s Letters* that would “distinguish[] the nature of the soil, by different colours; from exceeding rich, to waste and uncultivated: if such surveys were repeated now and then, they would form the most certain scale, whereby to judge of the administration of the public affairs in any age” (1768: 90). For Young, the amount of land lying waste is a rubric for the failure or success of political administration. His map reflects the present conditions of waste and fertility, while subsequent editions mark the nation’s progress towards a goal of total internal exploitation.

In the opening pages of the *Annals*, the advent of peace affords an opportunity for national self-reflection where the vision of British prosperity is infinitely reproduced, as in a hall of mirrors, by the close cooperation of domestic policies and laws:

If all future wars were out of the question, and we had only to consider the means of drawing from peace the full amount of the blessings belonging to it, we ought certainly to render them the objects of legislation, and direct our domestic policy to the great end of making a flourishing community,

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<sup>30</sup> See for example Young’s altered third London edition of the *Farmer’s Letters to the People of England* (1771) 2: 77-8, quoted below.



supported by the happiness of individuals—reflect its prosperity back to them. (*Annals* 1: 9)

Inevitable future wars, however, break into this hall of mirrors, turning vision outward, so that “this country . . . must have views more extended than the limits of its domestic blessings” (9). Young laments, “The prospects of this country at present are complicated and doubtful” (10). The war leaves Britain in debt, having lost to its former colony, and facing competition from the new American nation, which threatens its domination in trade with a powerful navy and vast tracts of land. “These are spectacles new in themselves, and unexplored in their consequences” Young argues, and “they call for the combined exertion of all the wisdom and talents in the nation to draw into activity every latent resource, and to create new ones equal to the new burthens that are experienced in the present period, and dreaded in the future” (10). Once again these “latent” and “new” resources correspond to the under and unutilized wastes of Britain and Scotland.<sup>31</sup> Here the soil of Britain’s wastelands mediates the relationship between the empire and its future, but that mediation is insufficiently controlled by the agency of human improvers. The waste land would ideally act as a mirror for Young, reflecting the prospect of a future flourishing of British culture through the efficient exploitation of the soil, and like a mirror it must be made flat and featureless. The soil is categorized in terms of any legal obligations that attend it, in terms of its fertility, its soil type, and its status as common fields and pastures, open fields, or wastes, but the prospect it reflects back to Young is

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<sup>31</sup> The example of the American war has confirmed Young’s mistrust of distant colonies as expressed in his earlier writings, while the contemporary spirit of universal human equality influences Young’s sentiments towards seemingly more secure colonial holdings in south Asia and the West Indies. There, “[i]f there is a ruling providence that oversees the conduct of nations, and that ever yet punished them for their iniquities, we must be driven out of India with abhorrence and contempt, and all the people of the globe would rejoice at the event” (17).

always directed towards the future. Soil, for Young, should emphatically not be allowed to transmit the past into the present. Soil should act only as a solid, reflective surface offering an image of continuous British prosperity.

In “Ecological Apocalypse: Privation, Alterity, and Catastrophe in the Work of Arthur Young and Thomas Robert Malthus,” Gary Harrison attends to the language of colonization in the enclosure movement. Young shared his identification of the British wastes with featureless colonial wilderness with his contemporaries, and Harrison argues that Young and his peers at the Royal Agricultural society saw “the commons and the wastes as polluted spaces in need of policing, as well as unmapped colonial territories to be reinscribed with imperial signs of improvement” (Harrison 106).<sup>32</sup> Nathaniel Kent, Harrison points out, calls the wastes “little more than blanks in the kingdom” (1793: 91), while in an oft-quoted articulation of the colonial impulse towards domestic wastes, John Sinclair, president of the Agricultural Society, declares the “sterility” of the waste soils “our domestic foe” and urges Parliament to “subdue Finchley Common . . . conquer Hounslow heath” and “compel Epping forest to submit to the yoke of improvement” (Sinclair *Memoirs* 2: 111).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Young himself cites his mentor in agricultural writing, Walter Harte, as the source for the language and logic of colonialism in his own work. He quotes Harte, for example, in the third London edition of the *Farmers Letters* (1771), drawing from Harte’s *Essays on Husbandry* (1764) to assert that “in proportion as the farmer thrives, the land improves . . . Under such a cultivator, you see in one place, waste lands are rendered arable. Or converted into artificial pastures: this is a true conquest; an acquisition and appropriation which enriches his landlord and himself, but injures no man!” (102). See also Harte 202.

<sup>33</sup> Kent wrote the *General View of Norfolk* for the Agricultural Society, while his *Hints to a Gentleman of Landed Property* (1775) went, in Christine Bolus-Reichart’s words, “through several editions by the 1790s, becoming most famous for its practical instruction in estate management” (205). For this quote from Sinclair, see also Harrison 106 and 107; M.E. Turner 88; and Elie Halevy, *England in 1815* 230, with the original source quoted in Halevy. Sinclair’s and Kent’s ideas about enclosure show traces of the influence of Young, for example, Kent reiterates Young’s arguments regarding depopulation and the negative effects of colonies in his own *Hints to Gentlemen*, lamenting likewise that “such noble tracts of land should be suffered to lie in a neglected, unprofitable state, while lands, of a worse quality, are cultivated, in many unhealthy parts of America” (90).

Kent's "blanks" are slightly misleading, however. The problem with British wasteland is not only that it is waste and thus aligned, as Harrison suggests, with "unmapped colonial territories to be reinscribed with imperial signs of improvement," but that it is already entangled in the legal and social obligations inherited from the past that obstruct its efficient use. Sinclair's statement is, for example, not part of a bid for money to settle or colonize any particular waste, but a speech to parliament in support of an act that would have "reduced the obstacles presented by the existing system to the enclosure of waste lands" by "diminishing the expense of private bills" (Rev. Sinclair, *Memoirs* 2: 110). England's wasteland was not blank because it was the unimproved and undiscovered country of a new world enfolded in the old, but because the waste's tangles of legal overgrowth were painstakingly erased by the advocates of enclosure. In other words, the blankness of the wastes does not automatically align with the dark obscurity of America's unexplored interior. Through acts of parliament and the efforts of authors and improvers like Young, Kent, and their readers, Britain must, in fact, be made to align with that blankness. Therefore, the alignment of domestic wastes with colonial wastes is not just a symbolic othering of underproductive soil, but a political and economic program where policies must clear away the improvement-impeding rubbish of the past in order to create a "blank" out of soil that has been encumbered with legal and human, as well as vegetable, dross. This importance of a preliminary *disinscribing* of waste soil before it can be *reinscribed* with imperial signs is visible if we look at the entirety of Kent's statement about the wastes as "blanks in the kingdom":

The forests, and chases alone, would be a treasure, under proper regulations; they are naturally the finest spots, the best nurseries this

country affords, for the produce of *Timber*; and, if judiciously planted, and well protected, would hereafter furnish almost a sufficient quantity for all the purposes of the navy; but at present, there are so many different interests subsisting upon them, that in point of real value, they are little more than blanks in the kingdom. (90-1)

For Kent then, the wastes of England do not identify completely with the wastes of America. They are blanks not because their lack of history calls for the inscription of imperial signs, but because they are so thickly layered with signs already, with “many different interests subsisting upon them,” that their value is unrealizable. If the soil of America in Locke’s “Of Property” is the paradigm of the tabula rasa to which improvement brings form and purpose, lifting disordered wilderness into the orderly productivity of civilization, the wastes of England are no such blank slates.<sup>34</sup> They are as encumbered with “the rights of commonage” as they are with ling, moss, water, and mole hills, and so they must actually be rendered into “blanks” by language, law, policy, and practice before they can be improved. Like Kent, Young encourages the participation of Parliament in his effort to project blankness over the waste spaces of England. His books also testify to methods that materialize the tabula rasa, literally leveling the ground so as to render it homogenously fruitful:

The moment a landlord begins his works, let him assign a proper number of men to grub up all the spontaneous growth, in so thorough a manner, that the scythe may never after meet with any obstruction: and at the same time set a mole-hill plough to work, to cut off all such hills, and then have them chopped in pieces and spread about the land: if there are any great

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<sup>34</sup> See Markley “‘Land Enough in the World’” 829.

inequalities of soil, such as small hillocks, or pits, &c, they should all be leveled: these works are indispensable...they undoubtedly decide the point of the soil being *waste* or *profitable*. (*Farmer's Letters* 1771 2: 77-8)

It is in Young's language that the waste lands are most effectively divested of their links to a "barbarous" (*Six Months* 1: xii) and wasteful past. In order to colonize England's wastes, Young must reinvent them as "blank spaces" on the map of the nation, divested through policy and physical labor not only of topographical irregularities and legal rights in common—but of all history.

In Young's books, the waste's fertility has no specific origin in the past, so that the soil of the wastes is not a medium for the communication and preservation of history, but instead becomes an instrument solely for the production of value into the future. Recommendations for improvement in his tours and *Observations on the Waste* are arranged around imaginary estates whose inputs and profits Young projects up to twenty years into the future.<sup>35</sup> He reifies on paper the future fertility and the value of the waste's produce, and further multiplies those earnings by the investments they make possible for the nation.<sup>36</sup> All improvable land withholds, in Young's works, this potential energy of future-wealth, but the wastelands are invested with a special concentration of hope and anticipation, for wasteland as compared to merely under-producing land adds exponentially more to the national coffers and the estates of agrarian capitalists, reducing the public debt, and synchronizing the benefits to private individuals with the needs of

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<sup>35</sup> See also Perry, *Novel Relations* 315.

<sup>36</sup> See, for one example, *Observations on the Waste* 58-83. Young's twenty-year projection here is in fact an instance of restraint, for he reports, "I have calculated the increase of culture as far as the thirty-second year" (82).

the national community.<sup>37</sup> The blank space of the waste is transformed into a future-oriented landscape of productivity by the investment of capital and the literal investment of the ground with fertilizing soils and manures. The earth produces, in Young's paeans to improvement, not through its own agency, but because of the capitalist's investment in hedges, ditches, and complementary soils. Even the strata of limestone and marle beneath the sheep-walks that Young encourages gentlemen to reclaim are pure instrumental material, available for exploitation, but sterile without the intervention of the investor:

If we consider that there are very few sheep-walks that have not under the surface a stratum of marle, chalk, or clay; and then such manures dug, and spread on the surface, become a sure and lasting improvement when managed with knowledge and discretion, we must allow that a noble and extensive field is open for private and public gain. (*Farmer's Letters* 1768: 6)

The soil requires the knowledge and discretion of the improver's managing hand to transform this extensive field into private and public gain. Conspicuously absent is not only the biblical history attributed to the strata of the soil in texts like John Woodward's *Natural History of the Earth*, but even the relationship between local history and the sense of place.<sup>38</sup> A landmark steeped in British folk history, like Sherwood Forest, for

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<sup>37</sup> See *Farmer's Letters* 1771: 397. Beyond merely its special potential as "new wealth," Young often stresses the harmony between the national community and the material beneficiary in agrarian capitalism. Unlike placeholders or contractors, Young argues, farmers do not need to rely on corruption and extortion to grow wealthy; their wealth-production adds to, instead of diminishing, national resources (*Observations* 31-2).

<sup>38</sup> See John Woodward, whose global history of geomorphology posited from fossil data the idea that the flood served to correct an overabundance in the earth's fertility that was leading mankind to sin. The present difficulty of farming is therefore a result of God's love towards human beings. On Woodward, see also Schaffer, 130-3; Davies 74-83; Nicolson 242-8; and Levine, *Dr. Woodward's Shield*.

example, is for Young only “the first large and continued tract of *waste* land that I have met with since *Hertfordshire*” (*Six Months* 1: 102).<sup>39</sup>

This orientation towards the potential of the land instead of its past is evident wherever Young allows himself to indulge in rhetorical prose, and particularly in his landscape scenes. For Frans De Bruyn, Young’s landscapes are cultural objects, distinguished from the statistics that Young sometimes privileges in his printed works by producing them in a larger font, and in the body of the work rather than footnotes, but functioning toward the same end—to create an apparently objective survey of the nation’s wealth. Though Young promises that “neither architecture, painting, nor gardening will interfere with rent, crops, and culture,” he retains his descriptions of the cultural artifacts of Britain as proofs of the nation’s present flourishing (*Six Months* 1: x-xi). For De Bruyn, prospect view and political economy serve the same ends: an apparently comprehensive perspective on British prosperity. In the prospect view generally, De Bruyn notes,

the scene before the viewer stimulates a reflective flight through time, as well as a visual one through space: the historical and political associations of the landscape carry the mind’s eye into the past and the future, as though events in time were laid out spatially before the surveyor. (116)

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<sup>39</sup> Young’s recognition of the historical or cultural significance of place is displaced, almost entirely, onto the country houses he visits, yet even these spaces are not framed through the context of a family history, and are most often an account of a present experience, with a present inventory of art. Indeed, Young claims that his house tours are, like his farming tours, quantitative evidence of the flourishing of Britain in the present: “They are a proof, and a very important one, of the riches and the happiness of this kingdom: No traveler can here move far, without something to attract his notice,—art or nature will perpetually catch his eye.—An agriculture that even reaches perfection.—Architecture, painting, sculpture, and the art of adorning grounds, every where exhibit productions that speak a wealth, a refinement—a taste, which only great and luxurious nations can know” (*Six Months* 1: x).

Some of Young's prospects are like this—his vision of the sheep-walk quoted above is one example. Yet in Young's observations, past time is often, so to speak, out of place. Take for example two passages from Young's *Farmer's Tour through the East of England* (1770). In volume one, Young reports that the residents of Northamptonshire

[h]ave a most execrable custom of collecting all the cow dung from the fields, and kneading it up with short straw to burn instead of coals . . . any traveller would suppose the country a colony from the wild *Irish*, who burnt their dunghills. Will ye believe me, ye farmers of *Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, and Hertfordshire*, that this is the constant practice, not only of the cottagers, but of the farmers themselves! *No*; you will say: *it is impossible; there cannot be such an application of manure any where but among the Hottentots*. I looked attentively at the inhabitants, to see if the guts and garbage of the cows were not very capital ornaments of their persons. (1: 48-49)

Young marks his execrable practitioners both as savages and as time travelers, “a colony from the wild *Irish*,” or “*Hottentots*” in Northamptonshire. In the chronology of this passage the nation has only one temporality—that of “improved” agricultural practice—and the Northamptonshire commoners, because they do not participate in this practice, are temporal as well as spatial aliens, violently interrupting the temporality of the nation as representatives of a people who wore cow guts and “*burnt their dunghills*” (my emphasis), but either don't exist now, or have moved on to practices more in accord with those of Essex and Kent. This second epithet, “a colony from the wild *Irish*,” is particularly interesting, however, not just because it displaces execrable custom



temporally, but because it turns the commoners into colonizers. Now it is the past that has anachronistically invaded and colonized the enlightened present with its wildness. To wipe the wastes clean of the past becomes, curiously, an act of restoration. Again, Young's domestic colonial program, like Nathaniel Kent's, is differentiated from the Lockean exploitation of an endless expanse of blank map. Instead of the perpetual discovery of time-less ground, it recycles soil encumbered with colonists from the past, tangles of different interests subsisting on the ground, and renders it into the blank present as grounds of the future.

This is clear again in one of Young's classic prospective surveys in the third volume of his *Farmer's Tour*, where he transforms the very practice of the historian from the practice of recording a vanished past and mediating its relation to the present, to that of recording the future potential of present ground. On the road from Rye to Hawkhurst, Sussex, Young gives us the view of a "prospect,"

over a rich varied woodland . . . through many scattered villages, with numerous single cottages remarkably neat . . . little gardens well kept, the hedges regular, and all clipt; many of the walls white-washed, the paling whole and in order, and even the pigsties tiled, and quite neat and strong.

(3: 125)

This is a fairly typical landscape for Young in its iteration of proofs of prosperity. Not only does the whiteness, order, and restraint of garden, hedge, and paling bespeak the triumph of human effort over nature, it bespeaks financial investment. As Young knew from personal experience, a tiled pigsty represents a significant outlay of capital.<sup>40</sup> The prospect is just such a "proof . . . of the riches and the happiness of this kingdom" as

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<sup>40</sup> See Gazley on Young's experiments in raising and fattening hogs, 46-7 and 450-1.

Young aims to provide in his prospect scenes (*Six Months* 1: x), and like the prospects of *The Seasons*, *The Fleece*, or *Windsor Forest*, the view it takes in calls generically for the national panegyric with which Young immediately follows this enumeration of neat hedges and white walls.<sup>41</sup> Yet Young's scene and its crowning paean to the glories of British prosperity is different from the "past and future" mind's eye of, say, Thompson, or Pope, because it does not look at the evidence as the culmination of either a glorious or regretted past. Instead the landscape is solely a proof of the future's potential. Young goes on:

one's humanity is touched with pleasure, to see cottages the residence of cheerfulness and content. Happy people! Humble Pleasure sparkles in their eye, and Health herself sits enthroned in their cheek—a subject for

‘the *pleas'd* historian of the *cheerful* plain;

But nothing either *sad* or *pensive* in it.’

A country *so* decorated is beautiful indeed, and more entertaining to travel through, than if splendid temples and proud turrets arose on every hill.

Such ornaments [i.e. the happy cottagers] are in the power of every country gentlemen: pity they do not oftener use them. Industrious Britains ought all to live thus, and did our laws co-operate with the blessings providence has showered on this happy kingdom, all *might* live so. (126)

Looking at the landscape of Sussex, Young calls to mind the words of Goldsmith's just-published lamentation of Britain's lost agrarian idyll, *The Deserted Village* (1770), where the empty once-settlement of Auburn is the subject of "The sad historian of the pensive plain" (line 136). But Young transforms Goldsmith's lines. Looking at the orderly and

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<sup>41</sup> See De Bruyn, "Georgic Poetry" 115-120.

prosperous village in Sussex, he not only refuses to grieve for a past he does not see, but neither does he laud a past leading to this point of pleasure. In Young's eye, all is potential, the job of his "*pleas'd* historian of the *cheerful* plain" is not to spy out the absence or presence of the past and describe its relation to the future, but to record the evidence of a possible future in the present landscape, to expose the proof to country gentlemen that through their own efforts both in improving the waste and under-utilized lands of Britain and in sweeping away the tangle of common rights, taxes, and tariffs that keep Britain's laws from cooperating with her natural endowments, "all *might* live so." The domestic colonial program for England, as far as Young conceives it, is oriented away from the clash of interests, towards an as yet empty future to be filled up with grain, grass, and profit. But as Kent and Young both acknowledge, the inviting emptiness of the wastes is a fantasy that has to be realized in the process of improvement—these dark interiors are not discovered, but recycled. The wastes, a shameful prospect at present, offer Britain the chance to compete with its own colonies for the future of empire, but not until the "different interests subsisting upon them" (Kent 91) are rendered null.

## II. Black Deserts: Erasing the Archive in the Moors

Although the wastes encompass a number of soil types, from sheep walks and rabbit warrens to fens and bogs, for Young, moor soils are the epitome of waste land, both in their intimidating appearance of barrenness and melancholy, and in their latent potential to produce enormous profit. "The improvement of such land is a very dubious point," Young concedes on his first look at the vast Yorkshire moors in his *Six Months Tour Through the North of England*; "To view the moors, any person would think it totally

incapable of any; but I must own myself of different opinion” (1: 240). For Young, the moor soil will become the paradigm of improvable soil. In *Observations on the Waste*, two years later, we find him referencing “moors and other tracts of uncultivated land” (42), or urging his reader, in offering a ten-year program for the reclamation of a waste, to “suppose the waste a moor” (47), or to grant, by way of example, a waste land where “the prices [are] those of the *Moor* countries” (80). There is a practical reason for Young’s reliance on the example of the moors—he has extensive data on the successful improvement of moor soils, drawn from his *Six Months Tour*, and especially from his visit with the Marquis of Rockingham in Yorkshire.<sup>42</sup> Yet in many ways, the incredible ambition of Young’s project to reduce all wastes in England to blank, reflective surfaces for the projection of future cultivation is illustrated by his choice of paradigm—for the moors are the archive of the deep past, and in erasing them, Young sweeps away any notion of the soil as a direct agent in the dissemination of history.

The moor soils are a particularly complicated object for Young’s improving eye because of their status as a material archive of the island’s past. Peat has preservative qualities. As older plants decay underneath the bed of growing peat, they create a highly acidic environment that is also totally anaerobic.<sup>43</sup> With an acidity that can be close to that of vinegar, peat bogs preserve the objects buried in them for millennia, from minute grains of pollen that record evidence of the forested landscape of the northern moors in 8000 BC, to tools, ruts and furrows that document the farming activities of iron-age Britons, to Roman coins and weapons, ancient British boats, vast oak and fir trees, the

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<sup>42</sup> See *Six Months Tour* 1: 272-316. Young’s observations here would have been corroborated by information gained in visits to the levels and fens of South-East England recorded in the *Farmer’s Tour* as well.

<sup>43</sup> Scientists are still uncertain as to exactly why peat preserves matter for so long. On the current scholarly consensus regarding the preservative properties of peat, see Gill-Frerking 62.

preserved bodies of animals and the “bog bodies” of human beings.<sup>44</sup> No account of digging in the peat can avoid the mention of objects whose preservation points emphatically to a narrative of the past, objects that surface, unlooked for, in texts devoted to the future.<sup>45</sup>

In particular, throughout the eighteenth century, any mention of the peat soils of England is guaranteed to include a reference to buried forests of blackened fir and oak.<sup>46</sup> Up to forty yards in length, and sometimes sound enough to sell to the navy for fifteen and twenty pounds apiece, trees buried in the peat were so common that the Scottish agriculturalist James Anderson includes in his *Practical Treatise on Peat Moss* (1794) detailed and matter-of-fact instructions for how to saw them apart without causing a collapse should aspiring cultivators hit a trunk (89). The story of these trees and other objects buried in the peat attracted conjecture throughout the century, but the narratives projected onto these objects tell us most about their authors’ attitudes towards the soil itself. John Woodward, for example, who argued in the seventeenth century that the present arrangement of soil strata is exemplary of God’s profound love and care for human beings, thought that the trees were antediluvian specimens displaced by the flood and deposited in the north in order to provide timber to the human beings who lived where no forests would grow, “there being hardly any Countries that are destitute of Timber of their own growth, which have not a very large Supply of these Stray-Trees” (264). Woodward’s Noachian hypothesis was entertained and dismissed by most treatises

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<sup>44</sup> On pollen, see H. Godwin. On the acidity of Peat bogs, as between 3.4 and 3.7, see Rosendahl 33-34.

<sup>45</sup> See McLean; as well as Rotherham and McCallam. Purseglove provides a reading of traditional attitudes towards the moors on pages 22-39.

<sup>46</sup> See, for a few examples, Defoe, *Tour* 3: 128; J. Anderson *Practical Treatise* (1794) 12; N. Turner, *An Essay* (1784) 4; and Forbes *The Improvement of Wastelands* (1778) 21, 32, 36. Defoe also notes that the trees are a subject of “Much Mob-learning” (3: 128).

on the peat, but even the most practical essays cannot avoid reading the trees as evidence of time past and its relation to the present. Anderson, though he rejects the antediluvian flood idea, crafts a theory of the growth of peat that will avoid assigning to the world an age of almost a million years, “a longevity which even the Abbé Recupero would scarcely venture to propose” (59).<sup>47</sup>

Although authors tend to inflect the evocative historicity of the peat with their own ideological commitments, peat bogs were also notoriously resistant to interpretation and control. Bogs are unstable ground, walking is difficult, carriage impossible without drainage. Pocked with deep water-filled holes left from digging peat for fuel, traced by adders in the day light and ignes fatui at night, droning with the buzz of malarial mosquitoes, it is no wonder that the moors were sites of the horror of formlessness. Even for travelers as intrepid as Defoe, Chat Moss near Manchester “at a distance, looks black and dirty, and is indeed frightful to think of, for it will bear neither Horse or Man” (*Tour* 3: 127).<sup>48</sup> The moor will not bear, and its give—its potential to envelop man and beast in an excess of irresistible liquidity—is paradoxically the measure of its resistance both to cultivation and to culture. No bearing means no feet, no plough, no cart, no seeds, no sheaves.<sup>49</sup> As Stuart McLean puts it, “such spaces and their associated cultural imaginaries are distinctively, perhaps uniquely revealing of a materiality in which human cultural expressions necessarily participate but which, at the same time forever exceeds their determinations” (592). They are places of excess—not just excess water, mud, and

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<sup>47</sup> Canon Recupero of Catania, Italy, offered theories of the age of the earth based on lava flows from mount Etna. His ideas, publicized in England by the Scottish travel writer Patrick Brydone, were ridiculed well into the nineteenth-century. See Dean 200.

<sup>48</sup> Also quoted in Purselove 26.

<sup>49</sup> “What Nature meant by such a useless Production, ‘tis hard to imagine; but the Land is entirely waste” writes Defoe (3: 128)

gas, but extra-economic and extra-legal activity took place on the moors, from peasants who used them as grazing ground for cattle, to the thieves and smugglers of Romney marsh (Rotherham 76). On the moors, the difficulty of drainage often cooperated with the efforts of peasant communities to resist attempts at engrossment, enclosure, and improvement—for where legal resistance didn't work, sabotage of the drainage works was often more effective (Purseglove 55). But for their very evocation of excess and incoherence they were privileged targets for improvement. As McLean has noted, efforts at moor and fen reclamation are generally articulated by their advocates as efforts to transcend the muck and mire, the “sticky, formless, viscous, clinging matter” of worldly chaos and barbaric disorder (604). The moors, over everything else, contain an excess of time—relics of past matter and past culture, so that “material transformative powers are not relegated to a past of prehistory but remain available as a potential source of intervention in the present” (McLean 602). Rotherham and McCallam agree; drainage of the moors, they argue, was grounded in “Enlightenment principles” like those of the French naturalist and author of *Histoire Naturelle* (1749-89), George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who held that “their reclamation is to be numbered among those acts which constitute man's dominion over the natural world and a further mark of his progress towards a ‘perfected’ civilized state” (81).

One of the most important eighteenth-century texts on peat bogs is a letter by Abraham de la Pryme, a Yorkshire antiquary and fellow of the Royal Society.<sup>50</sup> Titled “Concerning Trees found under Ground in Hatfield Chace,” and published in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in 1701, this essay continued to be read in the later eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth. It is cited specifically in

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<sup>50</sup> See C. E. A. Cheesman's entry for Pryme in the DNB.

Nicholas Turner's *Essay on Draining and Improving Peat Bogs* (1787), as well as in Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830). Anderson seems to refer to its thesis when he suggests that "[i]t is very generally believed that wherever moss is now found, a wood, at some former period has occupied the same spot" (15), as does Young in a similar statement in the fourth volume of his *Farmer's Tour* (37), and de la Pryme's letter may also be one basis for Young's accounts of the moor soils in his *Six Months Tour* as well, since de la Pryme's is the only other English-language account of the peat I have found that references human bodies in detail as well as trees.

De la Pryme's letter describes the discovery, after the draining and "improving" of 180,000 acres of boggy land at Hatfield Chace in Yorkshire, of "infinite Millions of the Roots and Bodies of Trees of all bignesses great and little, and of most of the sorts that this famous island either formerly did, or that at present does produce" (981). From its first sentence, de la Pryme identifies his investigation as one committed to the connection between history and soil: "It hath been the good Providence of God to settle me in this part of the Country, where near abouts I was bred and born (and therefore may write with more assuredness thereof, than can anyone from a superficial and transitory view and enquiry)" (980). Like one of the antediluvian trees, de la Pryme is "settle[d]" in the "famous Levels of *Hatfield Chace*" by God, and his identity with the place and the trees that are buried there qualifies him to conjecture about their part in the history of his home turf. The trees, in fact, are not just trunks and roots, they carry evidence of human activity: "some have been found chopp'd and squared, some bored through, othersome half Riven with great Wooden Wedges and Stones in them, and broken Ax-heads, somewhat like Sacrificing Axes in shape" (982). The ground contains other objects, too,



Roman coins near one snarl of roots, and at the bottom of a sluice cut by the drainers of the moor

were found old Trees squared and cut, Rails, Stoups, Bars, old Links of Chains, Horse-heads, an old Ax, somewhat like a Battle Ax, two or three Coins of the Emperor Vespian . . . . [B]ut that which is most observable is, that the very ground at the bottom of the River was found in some places to lie in Rigg and Fur, manifesting thereby that it had been plowed and tilled in former days. (982-3)<sup>51</sup>

“Also very strange” is the discovery of a bog body buried in Hatfield Chace:

About 50 years ago, at the very bottom of a Turf-pit, was found a Man lying at his length with his Head upon his Arm, as in a common posture of sleep, whose skin being as it were tann’d by the More Water preserved his shape intire, but within, his Flesh, and most of his Bones were consumed and gone, an Arm of whom one of the Workmen cur off, and brought home to his Master, which is now in the possession of my honoured Friend, and great Antiquary Dr. *Nat. Johnson*. (983)<sup>52</sup>

With its bodies, ax heads, plough marks, and other objects, the bog contains an unmistakable, but inconclusive narrative, and in his letter, Reverend de la Pryme offers to sort and order the evidence of objects into a coherent story of national development. The bogs, he suggests, were formerly forests “all those great and stately Trees flourish’d here,

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<sup>51</sup> “Rigg and Fur” or ridge and furrow, is a cultivation technique for farming wet lands. Ridges are raised over trenched furrows, so that water will drain from the high to the low ground (Purseglove 12-13).

<sup>52</sup> Records of human bodies preserved in the peat exist since at least the fifteenth century. In his *Bog People*, Glob offers the widely accepted hypothesis that bronze-age corpses are often the relics of human sacrifice (147). He quotes Tacitus, who reported in his *Germania* that “cowards, poor-fighters and notorious evil-livers are plunged in the mud of marshes with a hurdle on their heads” (Glob 153). For the original quote see Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania* 82. For an excellent interdisciplinary study of bog bodies in literature and the arts, see Sanders.

and composed one of the Largest and most Beautiful Forests in all the Country” (987). Great, noble and beautiful as the forest was, however, it was also, like the moor itself, a wild and liminal place, and de la Pryme goes on to tell us that the Roman writers and historians report the pursuit of “the Wild Britains” into the “fastnesses of Miry Woods and low Watry Forests” (987). Into these wild spaces, the civilized Romans cannot follow, and the ancient, conjectural forests on the moors harbor Britain’s ancient, noble history of indigenous resistance along with its shamefully wild and uncivilized past. The forests become spaces of insurrection and resistance to colonial control, from which

it was the custom of the *Wild Britains* . . . when opportunity offer’d to issue out and fall upon the *Romans*, who were at length so plagued with them, that they were forced to issue out Orders for the Destroying and Cutting down of all the Woods and Forests in *Britain*, especially those that grew upon Low Grounds and Morasses. (988)

With customary Augustan ambivalence, of a kind we saw illustrated in chapter two, de la Pryme attributes the major changes in the history of Britain to the brilliant military tactics of Roman imperial overlords, fighting an ancient indigenous people that de la Pryme cannot wholly repudiate or identify with his own civilized, providential settlement on Yorkshire’s moory soil:

The valiant *Romans* . . . besides the multitude of *Britains* that they slew, drive the rest back into the great Forest and Wood . . . . Whereupon the *Romans*, that they might destroy it and the Enemy the easier, took the opportunity of a strong South West Wind, and set great Fires therein . . . when the Fire had done what mischief and execution it could, the *Romans*

brought their Army nearer, and with whole Legions of Captive *Britains* chopp'd and cut down most of the Trees, that were yet standing, leaving only here and there some great ones untouched, as monuments of their fury . . . . All which Trees falling cross the Rivers that formerly ran through this Low Country, soon damm'd up the same, turned it into a great Lake, and gave Origin to the great Turf Mores that are here. (989-90)

The Hatfield levels in de la Pryme's eyes are literally a "monument" to the fury of the Roman imperial effort, and like the Roman histories on which de la Pryme bases his account, they narrate events in British history with hardly a trace of the Britons themselves. Their corpses are conspicuously absent among the "infinite Millions of Bodies," all trees with the single exception quoted above. But even in spite of the vast alterations in landscape that de la Pryme attributes to the agency of Roman colonizers, nothing can alter the liminal wildness of the moor landscape. Its stubborn bogginess materializes the antiquary's ambivalence towards the history of the island's soil as a shelter for Britons and Silures, a space of noble resistance and of violent insurrection. Colonial violence haunts the ground, undermining it materially, so that "even now since the Drainage, and since that the Country is laid dry for many Miles round about, yet for all that, [the grounds] are, so surged with Water, and so soft and rotten, that they will scarce bear Men to walk upon" (990).

It is the "drainage" the Reverend speaks of that occasions this whole tale of wild Britons, valiant Romans, fire, water, and rotten ground. An early and well-known example of improvement and enclosure by executive act, the Hatfield Chace Levels were ordered drained by Charles I, who hired a Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden to do the

work in 1626. In exchange, the land was divided into three parts, one to the king, one to the drainers (“Agreement” 2), including the Huguenot adventurers that Vermuyden employed and from whom de la Pryme is descended, and one to the commoners, who, dissatisfied with the work, with encroachment on their rights, and with the quality of the land allotted to them, attacked the foreign workers, destroyed drains and sluices, and rioted, in addition to their more genial remonstrations through legal channels.<sup>53</sup> The protests and lawsuits against the crown and its workman were still ongoing until 1719, and de la Pryme, who was born in 1671, would remember the commoners burning down the Dutch settlement at Sandtoft in 1688, while sabotage of the drainage works contributed to flooding in 1697 (Purseglove 51). His theory of the creation of the moors in the throes of Rome’s imperial expansion into Britain, then, reflects his own idea of the moors as a place of lower class resistance to authority. Interestingly, he extends this theory—not just Hatfield Chace, but all of the buried trees in moors are remnants of original forests across England and Ireland that “have all been cut down in the time of War” (991), specifically as conquerors advanced on indigenous occupants: “As for those that are found in the Bogs of Ireland, many of our Historians expressly say, that *Henry* the 2<sup>d</sup>, when he conquer’d it, cut down all the Woods that grew upon the Low Countries thereof, the better to secure his Conquest and Possession of the same” (991). In de la Pryme’s reconstruction of bog history, the wildness of the bogs is a monument to

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<sup>53</sup> On the history of Hatfield Chace, see Purseglove 46-58. See also Joan Thirsk’s DNB entry for “Vermuyden”; and the anonymously compiled *Cornelius Vermuyden’s Agreement with Charles I for Draining Hatfield Chace &c.* (1794). Unsurprisingly, considering his parentage, de la Pryme is on the side of Vermuyden, who, he writes, “bravely and effectually performed” the work of drainage “to the wonderful surprize of the whole Nation, [and] the vast advantage of the whole Country round about, which before was but Barbarous, thinly Inhabited, Poor, and Beggarly” (980). It should also be noted that Documents from these events bear traces of violence smothered over with legal placations. Charles I’s contract with Vermuyden makes note of “divers Controversies and Differences” between the engineer and the denizens of Hatfield Chace (4), and includes clauses to indemnify the commoners of “all Trespasses, and Damages, done by them, to, or against, the adverse Part” (9).

imperial power. Moors are the result of conquest because the forests they once were had been a breeding ground for the insurrection of conquered inhabitants “who commonly trusting to such advantages, are apt to Rebel; for safe Retreats are commonly observed to make not more Thieves than they do Rebels” (991). The soil preserves evidence of their submission to the fire and sword of civilization even as it “makes” more thieves and rebels in the present day. Bogs, in de la Pryme’s letter, materialize Britain’s history of internal colonization and indigenous resistance, a history that is still played out on their unstable surface, though the woods have long been burned and felled, because they retain their “common” connection to rebellion and theft. Tree “Bodies” and their roots that “lie so lovingly one near another” (986) stand in for missing corpses of slain Britons—while the one evident corpse of the bog man lies “as in a common posture of sleep” (983). History is poised to rise up from the soil for de la Pryme. The drainage of Hatfield Chace, an improvement project meant to render up tens of thousands of acres of new arable soil to agricultural production, is part of a continuum of necessary colonial violence that is domestic to Britain, where rebellious, wild natives must be cut down and destroyed in order to render the soil productive. Even so, insufficiently drained and still unstable, Hatfield’s spungy fields have never entirely been reduced to tractable land. Indeed, Purseglove confirms and compounds de la Pryme’s observation that the moors were still “so soft and rotten, that they will scarce bear men” (990). By 1701, Hatfield Chace was inundated periodically with floods so drastic that the inhabitants had to flee in boats, and so was as much a monument to the failure of engineering as it was a monument to the British effort to colonize its wastes (58). De la Pryme’s account of the waste’s original

wildness exemplify the threat that a repressed history might present to the project of improvement.

When Young first encounters the moors, it seems as if they will resist his dissipation of their history, too. “The greatest curiosity to be met with in this country” (*Six Months* 1: 239), they straddle the line between mere material resource and cultural artifact. Young must eliminate all traces of past culture in order to make the soil available for cultivation, however, and so his effort, in his descriptions of the moors and his suggestions for their improvement, is two-fold. First he has to reduce them from objects of inquiry in their own right, legible archives of a violent colonial past, to blank spaces ready for the cultivation of future rents and profits. Next, he must eliminate their agency as the mediators of historical memory, destroying their capacity to preserve the past and rendering them more like other, more tractable soil. Nevertheless, his first description evokes the ambiguous significance of the moors. He begins with a mundane, forward-looking catalogue of soil type, characteristic of his method elsewhere in its description of texture, color, depth, and subsoil:

the vast moors, which are 3, 4, 5, miles over, and some of them near as long . . . consist of a soft, spongy, loose soil, as if composed of rotten vegetables: It is all what they call turf, and is dug into square pieces for burning; when dried it is light as a feather, and burns excellently; over all the moors it lays in an even stratum, about five or six feet deep, upon a bed of stiff blue and black clay. (1: 239)

So far the moor is not described in terms altogether different from other soils—though his reference to “six feet,” where peat could be as little two and as much as forty feet deep,

taken together with his focus on “stiff blue and black clay” when moors were just as often situated on rock or sand, seems to gesture towards the common figuration of the moor as a grave.<sup>54</sup> As he continues, however, Young indulges in an altogether uncharacteristic description of objects from the past that are lodged in the peat bog’s layers of acid turf:

in digging it [the turf] away they frequently find vast fir trees, perfectly sound, and some oaks, but not so good as the firs; the body of a man was also found, the flesh was black, but perfectly preserved; after a short exposure to the air, it crumbled into powder; the nature of the moor is such as to resist all putrefaction, and no kind of worm can live in it. (1: 239)

Many other improvers discuss the best methods for cultivating peat bogs, although few of these were available when Young was writing. Nicholas Turner, brother to the poet and novelist Charlotte Smith, wrote a dissertation on peat bogs with descriptions of experiments performed on the bogs around their family home at Bignor Park, Sussex. He performs a detailed exploration of the peat bog’s contents, the question of whether the moss that makes them up is alive or dead, and the reasons for their facility in preserving animal and vegetable bodies. James Anderson discusses trees and other preserved vegetables and artifacts in peat at length (c.f. 79-83), and in his essay on the cultivation of timber and corn in moor-soil, Francis Forbes reports that “once I saw the head of a beaver dug up in peat soil, six or seven feet under the surface, which was presented to Mr. Pope the poet” (22). Only Young and de la Pryme, however, mention human bodies, and it is worth comparing their two descriptions here. In both descriptions, the body is presented as an after-thought, “also preserved” in Young’s case, and “that which is also very

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<sup>54</sup> “Six feet” was already the recommended standard for the burial of human bodies. See “Orders Conceived and Published” [7].

strange” in de la Pryme’s. They are presented as “also” objects, like the trees that are the more comprehensible, and central, focus of both men’s descriptions. In de la Pryme, however, the body is described with greater complexity than any of the trees; its gender and posture, “a Man lying at length with his Head upon his Arm,” are given, as is a detailed description of the state of the corpse’s skin, which is outwardly whole, and its flesh and bones, which are decayed and gone. The cut-off arm of the preserved corpse certifies its status as another item, like the “8 Canoos, such as the old *Britains* sail’d in . . . Brass Kettle, Beads of Amber, . . . small Mill-stone, . . . whole head of an *Hippopotamus*, and human Bodies entire and uncorrupted” found in Hatfield Chace and other moors (985). In spite of its objectification, however, de la Pryme’s bog body, though partially decayed, is preserved in shape, the arm lifted from the bog is an arm “of whom” rather than an arm of which, and is not only whole enough to be transported to the peat-cutter’s master, but, de la Pryme asserts, is still in existence fifty years after the fact (983).<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, it is preserved in words—and is therefore what the Dutch archaeologist Wijnand van der Sanden has called a paper body, a bog body with no physical referent “preserved by the embalming power of words . . . from newspaper reports, books, or letters” (Sanders 4). In spite of his objectification of the “strange” body and its collectible arm, de la Pryme’s effort to preserve the “Man” in the bog, not just the man-shaped object, is evident from the detail he includes. Similarly to other paper bodies, de la Pryme’s account displays the observational tools of the archeologist, “restraint in interpretation, and . . . detective-like assembling of clues” (4). Young’s bog body carries

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<sup>55</sup> The arm, de la Pryme announces, “is now in the possession of my honoured Friend, and great Antiquary Dr. *Nat. Johnson*, whose antiquities of this Country are earnestly expected by all ingenious men” (983). They never, however, arrived, as Johnson did not finish this work. See Mark Goldie’s DNB entry on Johnson, which he spells “Johnston”.



no such detail, its “perfectly preserved” black flesh is not preserved at all, but ephemeral: “after a short exposure to the air, it crumbled into powder” (1: 239).<sup>56</sup> This perfect preservation followed by immediate decay and dissipation to powder is a trait it has in common with other objects in improvable wetlands described by Young. In his *Farmer’s Tour of the East of England*, for example, he describes a buried drain made of alder branches that were, “perfectly sound; the greenness of the bark was preserved, and even some of the leaves were sound” (3: 142), yet, Young continues, “on taking them out they presently dropped to powder” (3: 142). Though it is true that some bog-objects crumble if they are exposed to the atmosphere without preservative precautions, immediate dissolution is unlikely except in the case of objects that are already extremely decayed, rather than “perfectly sound.”<sup>57</sup> Young’s accounts, then, seem to carry a particular emphasis on the disappearance of the objects. Young creates an image of coherence instantaneously dissolved by exposure to the material conditions of the present and the eye of the improver. If, for de la Pryme, the trees and bodies are evidence, solid objects preserved from a past that de la Pryme wishes to recreate through his narrative and attach to his present day experience of the soil as a contested colonial space, for Young they are iterated precisely in order to make them disappear—and with them any sense of contest,

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<sup>56</sup>This crumbling, like the inclusion of a human body at all, also has a potential source in de la Pryme. Interestingly, in contrast to the solid pines and oaks “which have been sold to make Masts and Keels for Ships” (981), de la Pryme has also described mascerated trees found in the bog “as soft as Earth . . . which as soon as flung up into the open air, fall away into dust” (981). The soft state of the wood, however, differentiates it from Young’s perfectly sound objects.

<sup>57</sup> Parted from the bog without attention to preservation, bog bodies will begin to decay. See for one example Glob’s description of an exhumed body disinterred in Jutland in 1797: “[i]n the hot summer’s day . . . , the body began to disintegrate, affected by the sun’s rays. Such a peculiar smell arose from it that it had to be covered up again” (68). Nothing that I have encountered in my reading leads me to suspect that Young’s immediate translation to powder would have occurred, but swift disintegration if left to the weather is likely—Young’s emphasis on that disintegration is what interests me here, especially in light of the more usual emphasis on an astonishing degree of preservation when those who discover bog bodies are shocked by their integrity after so long underground.

present or historical, over the matter of the moor soil, which instead becomes tractable the minute it encounters the air, the sunlight, and the improver's gaze.

Young's description of the moor soils provides a template for the improver's relation to the earth. All history in Britain must be recycled for the production of the future, so if soil should "resist . . . putrefaction," and retain any vestiges of the past, it is the improver's responsibility to speed up the process by physically exhuming and dissipating its preserved contents—a process that Young presents as easily accomplished, with no resistance on the part of corpses or buried drains, which almost magically crumble into fertile soil. The privatization of land, Young suggests, is the same kind of process. Indeed, immediately after the bog body is raised and dissolved, Young returns his attention to customary divisions of property on the moors, and in his description of those property divisions he downplays conflict, emphasizing the cooperative nature of traditional property rights. Like the landscape and its buried contents, these properties are "very remarkable," here because of the orderly manner in which they are disposed:

on each side, at the distance . . . of several miles, are many little slips of cultivated land, generally an acre (28 yards) broad, some more, and others less; the proprietors of these possess a right to all the moor which borders on their land in a straight line, until they meet with the opposite possessors. (239)

The strips of cultivated land have "been gained in the course of many centuries from the moors; it is a good rich clay, that yields good crops of corn and grass, but from its situation is liable to be overflowed in winter" (240). Young presents the cultivation of the moors, like the peat itself, as the gradual work of centuries. In this mild and dormant

landscape, the introduction of improved agricultural techniques only speeds up the process of putrefaction, just as enclosure, privatization, and other social and land-use relations introduced by agrarian capitalism will only speed up an already ongoing process of slow accretion by which cultivators have been reclaiming small strips from the moor soil for centuries. Here, Young offers trenching and ditching as the best means of drainage, which he presents as far more effective than it was for de la Pryme at Hatfield Chace. For Young, improvement is effective in destroying the liminality and danger of the mossy soil, and, too, of its inhabitants: “we could walk very firmly within this trench, but on the outside of it not without danger of being swallowed up” (240). The purpose of describing the danger and depth of the peat, and their harboring of ancient objects, then, is not to connect the moor soil to the British past, but to divest it. In his *Six Months Tour*, Young raises a bog body in order to return it to the dust—he describes the “dubious” and dangerous soil of the moors only to affirm his optimism in its eventual “rich[ness]” and solidity. And he gestures towards the wildness of the moor’s inhabitants only to reveal them as mild-mannered farmers already engaged in the slow process of improvement themselves. If in his encounter with the material archive of the moor soils, Young cannot entirely avoid the past preserved in the peat, he can expose it to language, light and air, and insist that this exposure destroys it, leaving behind nothing but powder and “ling of a luxuriant growth”—that is, “a sufficient proof that draining... would be very advantageous” (240). The ling is proof of the moor’s latent richness rather than its ancient past, so that finally, after the improving efforts of the Marquis of Rockingham in Yorkshire’s West Riding, “the same land which before poached at the weight of a man, will now bear without damage the tread of an ox” (276). Instead of the spirit of the

rebellious past that will not bear, the future prevails here, rendering the power of soil in preserving memory into the fuel for an improvement in which people inherit the agency of the earth: “a spirit of culture has brought forth a fertility and richness of pasture beyond any thing I remember to have seen” (277).

Young’s effort to erase the preserved past from the moor soil is if anything even more explicit in his other detailed passage on the peat wastes. This passage is buried in the second volume of the third, and wholly altered London edition of the *Farmer’s Letters to the People of England* (1771). As far as I have been able to discover, the difference between the third and previous editions of the *Farmer’s Letters* has never been remarked, but in addition to the original *Farmer’s Letters*, a series of essays drawn together from Young’s writings for the *Museum Rusticum*, the third edition contains an entirely new set of writings that are not reproduced elsewhere.<sup>58</sup> These are a compendium of comments on wasteland reclamation, heavily influenced by Young’s two recent tours in the North and East of England. Even more than Young’s *Observations on the Waste* or his *Annals*, this series of essays is an explicit call to gentlemen of fortune to take up agricultural improvement for the profit of their estates. It anticipates Young’s *Observations* in its emphasis on waste lands and its detailed plans for improvement of different soils, complete with long-term profit projections, but here, instead of primarily

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<sup>58</sup> G.E. Mingay does note that the third edition is expanded into two volumes, but makes note of no other changes. Young does not mention the alterations in his autobiography, and Gazley follows suit, analyzing the first edition, and noting Young’s announcement that a second was due in 1768, but making no mention of a third. Their silence creates a confusion to which the state of the edition held by the British Library only adds. This is the copy available on *ECCO*. It appears to be bound incorrectly, with the title page to volume one announcing contents identical to the earlier editions of the *Farmer’s Letters*, but preceding the contents of volume two—this is apparent because once one gets past the title page, the headings indicate that this is the second volume, and the contents match those listed on the title page for volume two. Volume two’s title page describes the essays on wasteland reclamation that we find bound as volume one, but its contents are, for some reason, the second volume of the *Six Months Tour*, that is, letters 7-14, and each page, again, carries a heading that accords with that content. Apparently, the title page to volume one was bound to volume two, the title page of volume two was bound to the second volume of the *Six Months Tour*, and the first volume is nowhere to be seen.

emphasizing the need to steel Britain against depopulation in favor of the colonies, Young's goals for the reader are explicitly monetary gain: "I mean not to make any of you *farmers*—but *improvers*. To improve your estates, not to occupy yourselves, but to relet at advanced rents" (B2). This is an unabashed work of salesmanship, but as in Locke's "Of Property," where the individual's reclamation of land from the wastes improves the world by freeing more land for the support of others, Young's gentleman improver profits not only himself, but his community:

the PUBLICK GOOD is intimately concerned in all such undertakings as I have here proposed; indeed the general interests of the State receive as great benefits as individuals from such works, for the riches of the nation are increased; the income;—and also the industrious population. (397)<sup>59</sup>

The second half of the volume deals with "uncultivated wastes," and here again moors are paradigmatic, singled out as "the most extensive wastes in *Britain*" (106). Young provides a more detailed set of directions for reclaiming moor land for "a most extraordinary profit" (108). The moor soils should be drained, fenced, pared and burnt, and where possible, limed, "a practice proved from innumerable experiments" to reduce "the wildest, blackest desert in the space of a single month into profitable crops" (118). Culture tames the wildness of the moors and whitens its blackness: "I have actually seen a fine promising crop of turnips on land, that only a month before was as black as night itself" (118). Here Young takes a different tack to reduce this storied soil to a blank slate. If the moors were a "curiosity" in the *Six Months Tour*, filled with buried trees and transitory corpses, here they are wholly known, and destitute of any artifact: "Turf . . . is

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<sup>59</sup> For comparison, see Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. For example, "he that encloses land, and has a greater plenty of the conveniences of life from ten acres, than he could have from an hundred left to nature, may truly be said to give ninety acres to mankind" (116).

nothing but an aggregate of roots and bulbs” (116), insists Young, while what was dangerous soil one year earlier in the *Six Months Tour*, liable to “presently be on fire, and possibly the whole country” if once pared and burnt, is here tame, and “may certainly be burnt without any reduction of soil” (116). Young further asserts his mastery over the liminal qualities of the moor soil by assuring the reader that he understands its chemical properties:

Many very ingenious men have started objections to liming even moors . . . . They want to have it explained with a philosophical precision how a body that of itself is no food for vegetables, should prove so rich a manure.—Now I am sensible of being very unequal to such speculative points . . . but if we compare the qualities which chymists give to lime, with the nature of the moors, there will, I apprehend, be no difficulty in accounting for the strong effect which undoubtedly accrues from laying the one on the other. (121)

In a move unique among his descriptions of waste soils, to explain the chemical properties of the moor, Young has recourse to its history. That history resembles the one described by de la Pryme. The moors are wastelands, Young asserts, because they were historically battlegrounds:

The moors have scarcely any marks of former culture—no tradition gives the least trace of culture—history to the remotest periods gives no reason to suppose these parts of the country ever in a state of cultivation; the greatest tracts of them are in the mountainous parts of the northern

counties, which, it is well known, were for ages over-run by frequent incursions and invasions of two neighboring but hostile nations. (122)

But Young's similarity to de la Pryme here only emphasizes the vast difference in their goals as writers. In his effort to attest to the improvable substance of the moor, Young emphatically erases all "marks of former culture"—all trees with the marks of the iron-age ax still on them, all signs of rig and furr under the peat, all boats, and certainly all bodies. Instead of blood-fatted fields, where the soil on which a battle is fought is marked by fertility drawn from the matter of ancient soldiers, the moors are preserved from the marks of history by the hostilities of "two neighboring" but unnamed nations—especially odd since Young is generalizing here. He is not on an agricultural tour, and the moors he speaks of are generic, never located anywhere specific within the three kingdoms. The bodies of these unnamed, unlocated nations "over-run," but never sink into the peat. As a result, for Young, the moors are not an earthy display case of ancient British history—not even the history of the two hostile nations—but the only truly pristine and unmarked soil that Britain affords:

In a word, there is much reason to suppose the moors at this day in the condition they were three thousand years ago—with no other alterations than the cutting and spoiling the spontaneous growth by armies, or the poor for firing, and perhaps, in some instances, for building. They maintain some sheep. (122)

Again Young raises the specter of history in the moors only to negate and dismiss it, and what was before the grave of at least one blackened body "perfectly preserved" is now "literally nothing but rotten vegetables, kept loose and open by the roots of the

spontaneous growth” (122). Not a grave, “in fact the moor is a dunghill; an opinion not very contrary to reason, when the crops it yields are considered” (122-3). The difference between a grave and dunghill is the latter’s use-value. By erasing the past, Young turns the soil’s record of time into a store of fertility, and its agency as collector and preserver into instrumentality as soil:

the land that has laid in such a state for a long succession of ages, must inevitably be rich: in the north, men are apt to give a shrug at the very mention of cultivating them: for my part, I consider vast tracts of them as the richest soil in the island of *Great Britain*. (123)

Thus Young transforms a monument into a magazine, an archive into a dunghill, bodies into vegetables, agency into instrumentality, and a mass of information about the past into a mass of fertility banked for the future.

What Young does in words, he recommends lime to do materially: “Lime is a great dissolver of all bodies, both vegetable and animal. In this way it certainly operates in the earth by dissolving all animal and dry vegetable substances, and converting them to the nourishment of vegetables” (123-4). Lime renders the past fit for future consumption, once moor soil is limed: “[t]he grass cannot fail of being incomparable, for it inherits all that prodigious fund of fertility which the farmers bestow on 4 or 5 crops of corn” (129). In the same way that death or the court of chancery releases an estate to circulation and investment, lime releases the fund of fertility in the dead levels. But to release that fertility, the moor must really die—it cannot mummify, it cannot retain agency as a ground of valued antiquities, the dead hand of history entailing the peat. It has to dissolve entirely for the soil and the grass to inherit its fertility. If the moor soils, with their



preservative qualities, their rights of commonage, and their tendency to evince a distinct, if not always coherent, narrative of the British past, present a challenge to Young's identification of the wastes of England with those of America, through language and lime he is able to reconstruct them in his descriptions as blank slates on which the British improver may project the triumphant future of his nation. He admits the idea of the peat as an archive only to destroy the materiality of its monuments, making corpses into powder and the preservative power of peat into fertility banked and dissolved to feed four or five crops of corn.

### III. Conclusion: William Godwin and the "hand of oblivion"

"But . . . we should always remember that in man there is a mind to be fed, as well as a body" (*Essay* 39), wrote William Godwin in 1809. For Godwin, both body and mind were to be fed from the soil. In his *An Essay on Sepulchres: Or, A Proposal for Erecting Some memorial of the Illustrious Dead in all Ages, on the Spot where their remains have been interred*, Godwin proposes what he recognizes is an alternative and contestable use of land: a simple, wooden cross should mark the gravesite of every one of "the genuine heroes of the times that have been" (xiv). Those presently alive above ground could then hold "a sort of conference with these men, by repairing to the scene which, as far as they are at all on earth, *they still inhabit!*" (45). In that it privileges the recognition of human subjectivity in the soil explicitly against agricultural improvement's renovation of the soil into a *tabula rasa*, in that it advocates for the preservation of discrete units of earth that can't be enclosed and cultivated, and in that it suggests that some soil might be best utilized for producing not food or other goods, but ideas and sensations, Godwin's effort

in his *Essay* runs directly counter to the land-use program of Arthur Young and his peers at the Board of Agriculture. Yet Godwin, like them, believed in the progressive development of mankind through the self-reflexive labor of improvement, and accordingly, he imagined an identity between the self and the soil that, because it avoids the chaotic recirculation of human matter as literal nutrition and fertility, can still act as a stable foundation for the progress and eventual perfection of all humanity. In this final section we will look at how Godwin's *Essay* figures soil as both a medium both for the physical matter of human individuals, and as a space of projection on and through which humankind in general might realize an improved version of themselves and the earth. As the latest text we will examine, Godwin's *Essay* ends this study chronologically, but it also brings together the two concepts of human relationships to the value of soil that this dissertation has so far explored. In his *Essay*, Godwin imagines soil as at once the immediate matter of the human body, capable of preserving the qualities of the dead materially, and keeping them available for physical contact with the living after the body's decay; at the same time Godwin offers to represent the dust of corpses in order to make them coherent to living human beings. Human dust, in the *Essay*, is agential only in limited ways. It acts in a specific capacity to realize human dominion over nature and the earth by creating the continuity necessary for improvement over the course of time. Just as Defoe's "whole island" was limited to signifying its wholeness, the acceptable significations of Godwin's soil are also limited. The dead must represent their intellectual and personal attainments to the living in order to fulfill their role in Godwin's project of human perfection. Where the silence of fragmentary and conflicting evidence was helpful to Defoe, who wanted to mediate them himself, Godwin finds the silence of the dead

deeply distressing—it means that human beings lose, at the death of every generation, all the progress that humanity as a whole has made so far. Godwin wants to determine the meaning of the soil so that some soil is used specifically to pass on a message from the dead. But because that message is not available in words—since the dead cannot represent their own meaning by articulating it, Godwin proposes a plan in which living human beings use their agency as mobile, self-reflexive subjects, to meet the dead where they are, in their dust. Godwin’s plan, I contend, turns out to be unsustainable. Godwin tries to conflate human subjects with the soil they own even as he has to acknowledge that a human subject represents more than its matter—it is also memories, ideas, gestures, and words. Without those words, Godwin can only control the way that human bodies signify to the future by representing them himself in sepulchers, books, and maps. In the end Godwin’s *Essay* confirms what he himself desperately wants to deny—that to accept soil’s agency is to accept contingency. There is no way to ensure a stable, certain narrative for the future that is based on the continuity of soil.

While in some ways the *Essay on Sepulchres* is a break with Godwin’s earlier philosophy, the revised 1798 edition of his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* lays the foundation for Godwin’s later conflation of human subjects with the soil that they own. As Robert Anderson has argued, in his *Enquiry* Godwin articulates an idea of the independent reasoning human subject that takes its best analogy from the enclosed and improved earth of the agricultural revolution. Godwin’s commitment to the self as soil starts with his central metaphor of the self as a “sphere,” an image that develops over the course of the work, “into an explicit reference to discrete units of property separating

“neighbors” (Anderson 635).<sup>60</sup> “[T]he right cultivation of all our pleasures, require[s] individual independence” Godwin asserts, and therefore, “the most desirable state of mankind, is that which maintains general security, without the smallest incroachment upon individual independence” (1798 1: xxiv-v). Finally, despite his stated commitment to the equal distribution of all goods and lands, in the eighth book of his *Enquiry*, Godwin explicitly defends the notion of private property on the basis of its metaphorical relationship to the private enclosure of the self.<sup>61</sup> He asserts, at last, that “the degree of respect to which property in general is entitled” is established because “we should recollect the principle in which the doctrine of property is founded, the sacred and indefeasible right of private judgment” (2: 449). Ultimately, Godwin argues that the right to control one’s own property and the right to control one’s own subjectivity are one and the same: “the first idea of property, then, is a deduction from the right of private judgment” (2: 451). And because Godwin’s model for the human species’ eventual transcendence of mutability and suffering is dependent on every person’s freedom to act according to perfect reason and truth (2: 477-8), perfection cannot be achieved unless the integrity of property-as-personhood is sustained. “Without permitting to every man, to a considerable degree, the exercise of his own discretion, there can be no independence, no improvement, no virtue, and no happiness” writes Godwin (2: 451). The exercise of discretion means discretion over both property and judgment:

This is a privilege in the highest degree sacred; for its maintenance, no exertions and sacrifices can be too great. Thus deep is the foundation of the doctrine of property. It is, in the last resort, the palladium of all that

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<sup>60</sup> Quoting Godwin, *Enquiry* (1798) I: 167.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Godwin’s chapter on “Benefits Attendant on a System of Equality,” *Enquiry* (1798) 2: 453-467.

ought to be dear to us, and must never be approached but with awe and veneration. He that seeks to loosen the hold of this principle upon our minds, and that would lead us to sanction any exceptions to it without the most deliberate and impartial consideration, however right may be his intentions, is in that instance, an enemy to the whole. (2: 451)<sup>62</sup>

In Godwin's *Enquiry*, the potential for human improvement, founded, as it is, in the right of private judgment, also relies on "the idea of property," without which "there can be no independence, no improvement, no virtue." From his first articulations of his principles, then, Godwin insists on the materialization of the sphere of personal judgment.

Interestingly, Anderson aligns Godwin's politics regarding the sacredness of the right to private property specifically with Young's. For both men, he writes, "[i]mprovement was not only a technical term for enclosure, but was, along with 'progress,' a 'byword' for middle-class values of reason, order, discipline, commerce and a rejection of the superstitions of traditional culture" (628). Not only is the sphere of the self like an enclosure, but any property, from a cottage to an enclosed field, acts as an extension of that sphere.

At the start of this chapter, I used William Godwin's prospect of immortality to illustrate the perfectionist impulses of the late eighteenth-century reformers. For Godwin, the possible attainment of immortality had been supported by the idea that agricultural improvement would make such efficient use of soil resources that mankind would have time to develop a perfect consonance of action and right-judgment before population rendered life on earth impossible. By 1809, Godwin's expectations for the uninterrupted progress of human kind had changed, however. What had been, in 1798, only a question

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<sup>62</sup> Also quoted in R. Anderson 637-8.

of whether mankind's "inherent tendency . . . to improvement" could "be suffered to operate, and no concussion of nature or inundation of barbarism arrest its course" (2: 475), was by 1809 a certain conviction that it could not.<sup>63</sup> As Rowland Weston has observed, Godwin had lived, by then, through the transition of the French Revolution first into bloody massacre and then into the Napoleonic wars, and through a period of intense conservative reaction to his reformist principles in Britain (651-2), while the 1797 death of Mary Wollstonecraft in particular, made him conscious of death as one repeated and inevitable "concussion of nature" that would always interrupt the progress of reason.<sup>64</sup> In *An Essay on Sepulchres*, death is now, "[t]he greatest of earthly calamities, and the most universal" (23). "It is impossible to calculate," Godwin now offers, "how much of good perishes when a great and excellent man dies. It is owing to this calamity of death, that the world for ever is, and in some degree for ever must be, in its infancy" (26).

By the time of the *Essay*, then, Godwin had accepted an idea that he had rejected with horror in the *Enquiry*: that death places a limiting factor on the improvement of the species. The world is like a school, Godwin complains, where

one set of learners succeed after another, who are no sooner tolerably accomplished, than they are dismissed from the scene . . . while ever-young infatuation, inexperience and temerity perpetually disturb the profoundest designs and maxims that can be framed for general advantage.

(55-6)

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<sup>63</sup> See Weston 658; See also Ni Chonail 36. Godwin's initial rejection of the idea of mankind existing in perpetual infancy is in the 1798 *Enquiry* 2: 476. "If this be true," writes Godwin, "it presents to us a picture, in the highest degree, melancholy and discouraging" (2: 476).

<sup>64</sup> On *An Essay on Sepulchres*, and Godwin's philosophy of historiography more generally, as a direct response to Wollstonecraft's death, see Julie Carlson, "Fancy's History," 169-172. These remarks are also included, along with an expanded discussion of *An Essay on Sepulchres*, in Carlson's *England's First Family of Writers* 162-171.

The only way to surmount this difficulty is to forge links of active sympathy between the living and the “Illustrious Dead,” and Godwin believes that such an intercourse is possible, as long as the living bring their own personal and intimate knowledge—gained through books or experience—to the very spot where the dead are buried.

To facilitate such meetings between living and dead individuals, Godwin suggests what is essentially the installation of his analogy between the inviolable sphere of subjectivity and the inviolable sphere of private property as a literal and permanent feature of the soil. *An Essay on Sepulchres* asserts total identity between the self and the soil into which it decays after death: “The dust that is covered by his tomb, is simply and literally *the great man himself*” (87), and while Godwin does recognize that the implication of this identity between self and soil is that “Perhaps every particle of mould which now exists, was once kneaded up into a man, and thought and felt and spoke as I do now,” he insists that, “[t]his however is not the point” (80).<sup>65</sup> It is not the point because there is no general Resurrection coming in Godwin’s universe of reason, so digestion is not vitally relevant to the problem of personal integrity, nor is every body equally important to Godwin’s eventual goal.<sup>66</sup> Instead of a Resurrection, Godwin is still aiming at human perfection:

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<sup>65</sup> A representation can, Godwin insists, sensibly move the onlooker, and help to more fully realize his experience of the dead person, but the effect at the gravesite will be both more authentic, and in a real sense more complete. On authenticity and the grave as the original of the body, see Westover’s discussion (304).

<sup>66</sup> Godwin’s willingness to value human beings based on their perceived value to humankind without regard either to personal qualities or attachments, earned him a reputation for coldness. See Carlson, *First Family* 24-5. The best example is Godwin’s famous thought experiment on the burning house, where Godwin argued that if François Fénelon and your mother are locked in a burning house and you can only save one, it should be Fénelon (See “Of Justice,” *Enquiry* 1793 1: 80-91). Likewise, the location of everyone’s dust need not be fixed with a marker. Some persons cannot persist even with an expensive monument: “their tombs are infected with the perishable quality of their histories” (51). All dust might well be men, but there is only a public benefit to acknowledging and preserving the knowledge of the identity between some dust and some specific, highly accomplished human beings.

I take it for granted, that man has an understanding to be matured, an imagination, or which is nearly the same thing, a moral sense, to be developed, and even a taste to be refined. If this be true, then we are no longer to confine our thoughts to the mere feeding of the human race, but are bound also to consider and commend everything which tends to unfold and improve the noblest powers of man. (40-1)<sup>67</sup>

Where the subjectivity in Tull's feces or Smollett's *Atom* was an invidious presence circulating through the material world, Godwin's grave-dust maintains its conflation with property. It is what William Blackstone called "real property," or things "such as are permanent, fixed, and immoveable, which cannot be carried out of their place; as lands and tenements" (*Commentaries* 2:16). In this case the "owner" of the grave is the dead body itself. Each sepulcher is land "*inhabit[ed]*" by the dead (*Essay* 45), with the gravestone as signpost—"a strait road to the great man himself" (110). As "the precise spot where the bones of men have been deposited" (105), each grave is an individual's current address, as Godwin makes explicit in a remark about Milton's houses, which by the late eighteenth century had long been popular tourist destinations in London.<sup>68</sup> As far as Godwin is concerned, Milton has three of them: "I am not contented to visit the house in Bread-street where Milton was born, or that in Bunhill-row where he died, I want to repair to the place where *he now dwells*" (98).<sup>69</sup> Even the recorded legacy of the body and mind of the great man is figurative and immaterial in comparison to the grave-

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<sup>67</sup> Julie Carlson notes that "by the mid-1780s, Godwin's 'futurity' ha[d] become divorced permanently from Christian concepts of immortality" (*First Family* 144). For Godwin's religious education and his development "towards deism after he followed the suggestion of one of his parishioners and read Holbach, Helvetius and Rousseau," see Mark Philp's entry on Godwin for *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<sup>68</sup> Westover's discussion of literary necro-tourism before the nineteenth century (305). See also Santesso; and Clymer.

<sup>69</sup> Pascoe also notes Godwin's analogy between grave and house with reference to this line (98).



dust: "Portraits may be imaginary" (86), Godwin writes, "the works of my friend, the words, the actions, the conclusions of reasoning . . . stand, and are the sponsors, for my friend; but what the grave encloses is himself" (35). The grave is the house of the dead, and the dead are physically manifest in the dirt that comprises its contents.

As the quotation that opened this section indicates, Godwin recognized that to effect an ideal future, *An Essay on Sepulchres* must initiate a conflict of interest between agricultural and sepulchral uses of the soil. Godwin in the *Essay* shows that even conventional graveyards are places where the affect attached to dead human bodies is in constant tension with the use-value of the land in which they are buried. If there is no implied immediate threat of graveyards overspreading the earth, this seems primarily to be because the body has been deemed "altogether worthless" (18), and Godwin multiplies instances of its erasure, where bodies, even great bodies, have been disappeared in order to get more use from the same soil. In Godwin's Britain, gravestones are repurposed as pavements (61), and new bodies are frequently buried in old graves, so that if you "Go into any country church yard [t]hree-fourths of the tomb-stones you will find date within the last twenty or thirty years. Yet as many persons died in the years that preceded" (57-8). No body is safe, "Where is Shakspeare? Where is Homer?" Godwin asks in horror,

Can any sensible mind fail to be struck with the deepest regret, when he considers that they are vanished from the face of the earth, and that their place is too probably filled up by some sleepy and lethargic animal, "dressed in a brief authority," pampering his appetites, vapouring his hour, encumbering the soil which his predecessor adorned? (43-4)

The dead are vanished from the face of the earth, and erased from its interior, as Godwin blurs the distinction between generations of the living and generations of the dead. Like crops planted in succession, the old guard of the dead disappear as completely as Young's powdered corpses to make room for more youthful corpses: "Alas! Ordinary tombstones are removed much after the manner that the farmer removes the stubble of this year's crop, that he may make room for the seed of the next" (57). In this already contested category of ground, Godwin proposes that the national community acknowledge an even more restraining significance in the soil: his sepulchers, perpetually committed to the ownership of a single dead body, present many of the same problems as commons and wastes—they are small, fixed parcels of land, distributed irregularly, held in tenure by custom if not law for the use of all Britons, and impossible to consolidate because they are encumbered with the significance of history. Enclosure plans were intended to "turn waste into *arable*. . . allowing every tenant, legal claimant, or proprietor, his due share . . . either in rent or land" (Onley, *Annals* 2: 293), but the proprietors of these gravesites would be every living person, and the value of human dust cannot be abstracted from soil that "is simply and literally *the great man himself*" (87).

Indeed, Godwin sets up men like Young, Kent, and Sinclair as the most obvious enemies to his sepulchral scheme. The preservation of gravesites is "despicable to the literal man and the calculator" (141). The "deed" of marking graves is "remote from the grosser conceptions of the majority of the species, who are too apt to consider man merely as an animal to be fed" (43). Godwin understands that their concerns stem from the scarcity of usable land:

There is but a certain quantity of good, substance, property, in the world; labour is the source of property; and . . . [t]he soundest morality would direct, impartially and in all cases, that the property existing in any society should be employed in such a way, as should more conduce to the welfare of the members of that society. (37)

But taken too literally, the doctrine of utility acknowledges “nothing . . . valuable in the world, but food, lodging, and clothes” (39). That perspective, Godwin insists, is actually counterproductive to the long-term improvement of the human species, because when we privilege the agricultural use of soil over the preservation of the grounds of the dead, we lose the opportunity to “live and sensibly mingle with Socrates, and Plato, and the Decii, and the Catos, with Chaucer, and Milton, and Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas a Becket” (104). These men “are not dead” Godwin writes, “they still have their place, where we may visit them, and where, if we dwell in a composed and quiet spirit, we shall not fail to be conscious of their presence” (104-5). Instead of releasing the inheritance of fertility, Godwin insists that the erasure of corpses in the soil destroys that legacy. As a species “we cut ourselves off from the inheritance of our ancestors; we seem to conspire from time to time to cancel old scores, and begin the affairs of the human species afresh” (55-6). Ironically, in the *Essay on Sepulchres* it is the literal and calculating agricultural improvers themselves who bring barbarity on Britain. It is through their acts of erasure and recycling of the soil that “[t]he affairs of mankind are supposed to be subject to ‘a sort of periodical influx of barbarians’ where ‘new Goths and Vandals will hereafter arise, who will sweep all memorial of our improvements from the face of the earth’ (114). In fact, the very phrase “new Goths and Vandals” is Arthur Young’s—it comes

from an anti-Jacobite essay, “A Farmer’s Letter to the Yeomanry of England” from the 1796 *Annals of Agriculture*.<sup>70</sup> In their enforcement of forgetfulness, Godwin links “the literal man and the calculator” with the revolutionary, both of whom precipitate a kind of cultural “calamity of death” by erasing the vestiges and thereby the progress of past culture, and so keep “the world for ever . . . in its infancy” (26).

Because humans need the food of social contact with the dead as well as the food of corn in order to fulfill their potential for perfection, Godwin implies that efforts like Young’s, which wipe the slate of the soil clean and make it approximate the wilds of America, are misplaced:

[t]here are two sorts of countries that divide the face of the globe *New Countries* and *Old*. One of the hemispheres of which it consists, is emphatically called the *New World* . . . I know not how long these [*New Countries*] may have been inhabited: but I know that the remoter generations of their inhabitants have passed away, without leaving a vestige behind. (77-8)

Godwin recognizes here that the British claim for the newness of the “*New World*” is possibly projected, a factor not of the pristine state of their land, but of the perception that the soil retains no records of their presence there. New countries, with their emptiness and their potential, carry a certain beauty that produces “glorious and admirable contemplations” (79), but this potential, cut off as it is from time by the erasure of all “vestige” of history, is nugatory: “That which has perished and left not a trace behind, I

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<sup>70</sup> The general idea is, of course, widespread. See for example, the entry for “Art” in Voltaire’s *Philosophical Dictionary*, where Voltaire asks his reader to “suppose that a flood of barbarians had entirely swept away the arts of writing and making bread,” and argues that since at any time art could be reduced to its first stages of development, the apparent progress in the development of the arts cannot be used to measure the age of the world (94).

may call barren soil, of no conscious utility to the men that be” (80-1). What Young, or Locke for that matter, saw as the ripest soil for exploitation, Godwin sees as the more unprofitable waste. Where the goal is to grow ideas rather than corn, “*Old Countries*” are the truly fertile field:

the clod (such as it is now) that we know formerly to have been a part of the excellent of the earth, is of the most admirable fertility. It bears, not perhaps flowers, and vegetable perfume, the corn of the granary, and the fruits of the orchard; but it is fruitful of sentiments and virtues, of those thoughts which make man the brother of them “that have none to help them,” and elevate him into a God. (81-2)<sup>71</sup>

Here as in Godwin’s *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, the integrity of the individual is the foundation for the integrity of human history. As Weston has argued, Godwin’s *Essay* offers community with the dead as the only means to pursue the progress of human perfection past the constraint of the death of individuals and generations (662).

Paradoxically, the valuation of mere matter as loaded with the fertile substance of subjectivity is Godwin’s best answer to the problem of how to proceed forward through time towards that moment at which mankind will transcend “the matter of our own bodies” and “one day become immortal” (*Enquiry* 1793 2: 862).<sup>72</sup> Only if the bodily property of great men remains inviolable even after death, firmly attached to a soil that retains and preserves it, can the perfectibility of mankind take place over time without constant, repeated, and calamitous interruption.

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<sup>71</sup> These lines are also quoted in Carlson, within whose reading, “to the extent that it appears wild...nature actually impedes a person’s ability to see, and thus live in, the world correctly” (*First Family* 167-8).

<sup>72</sup> Godwin actually meant that human beings would one day surmount the vicissitudes of matter, stop reproducing, dying, sleeping, and getting ill, and live in their bodies forever. See *Enquiry* 1793 2: 860-872. See also Ni Chonail 30.

As Julie Carlson suggests, Godwin is advocating for the value of material continuity specifically as the basis of progressive development: “Learning to see the dead as existing among the living . . . and therefore of still influencing events—and learning to view this as a desirable state of affairs—is crucial to Godwin’s effort to produce a benevolent and well-focused citizenry” (167). But where Carlson argues that “the advantage of living in an ‘old country’ is that there is no getting around the dead, who compose the earth of such countries and account for its ‘admirable fertility’” (168), I would offer that Godwin’s point is not that experiencing the presence of the dead is inevitable—after all, he is aware that new countries may have as many dead in their earth as old ones—but that in old countries, there is a tradition of history, literature, and other material monuments to represent the precise locations of the dead to the living. The benefit of sepulchers to “improvement” is not a putrefactive/digestive fertility—the soil of these graves is exempted from use for the physical “feeding” of men. It offers spiritual and social food instead. Communing with the dead where they live will allow the living to interact with “the genuine heroes of the times that have been, the reformers, the instructors, and improvers of their contemporaries” (*Sepulchres* xiv). Godwin hopes that by establishing a continuous material intercourse with the sages of the past, human beings can sustain a continuous arc of historical development long enough that they will eventually bring the earth to perfection.

But the stability and integrity of Godwin’s history comes at a cost. Because Godwin’s buried bodies are still subjects, their integrity unviolated by the cycles of decomposition and digestion, enclosed in the sphere of the grave, they cannot, like Smollett’s narrating atom, Powell’s fertile Britons, or Philips’ sanguine Saxon

forefathers, forcibly integrate living bodies with the matter of other subjectivities by infiltrating their flesh. The price for the stable subjectivity and fixed location of the dead is their total and complete passivity. Though subjects, the dead can neither speak, nor move. Soil does only the preserving and being. All active agency in Godwin's *Essay* belongs to the living seeker of their graves. He has to speak for the dead, marking their graves year by year, and reading their books. Only the dead with books

have descended to us, undefaced, undismembered, and complete. I can dwell upon them for days and for weeks: I am acquainted with their peculiarities; their inmost thoughts are familiar to me; they appear before me with all the attributes of individuality; I can ruminare upon their lessons and sentiments at leisure, till my whole soul is lighted up with the spirit of these authors. (133-4)

By studying the written remnants, the seeker can unite the "spirit of these authors" with their matter, so that he "attain[s] the craft and mystery, by which we may, spiritually, each in his several sphere 'Compel the earth and ocean to give up / Their dead alive'" (xii). He also has to move for the dead, "some pains should be taken to investigate the precise spot where the bones of men have been deposited" (105), Godwin suggests, and "to rescue from impending oblivion the graves of those, whose monuments . . . . are either decayed, or utterly subverted; and to mark the places where men of humble merit . . . repose" (126-7).<sup>73</sup> Godwin's plan requires so much action on the part of the living, indeed, that he anticipates a potential set back in the form of a "considerable expense in point of superintendence,"

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<sup>73</sup> See Westover on Godwin's essay as the "early nineteenth century's fullest description of travel as a quest to meet the departed" (299). Other scholars on nineteenth-century necro-tourism mention *An Essay on Sepulchres*. See Samantha Matthews 3-4; and Watson 35-8.

‘Almost every village,’ it might be said, ‘contains the grave of some great man: the remains of departed merit are widely dispersed: might it not require an army as numerous as that of excisemen, to watch over and preserve the frail memorials which were erected for their honor?’ (130)

Not at all, Godwin offers, for the dead would be managed not by the government, but by a widespread list of subscribers, while the job of maintenance—for which “an annual visitation would be abundantly sufficient” (131)—could easily fit within the duties of the local parish curate, who is “usually imbued with such a tincture of literature, and of the knowledge of things past, as not to be averse to the undertaking for so moderate a portion of attendance as is here required” (132). The immediate physical presence of the dead invites superintendence, preservation, pilgrimage, even compulsion. Already, layer upon layer of mediation has grown around these kernels of subjected matter deposited in almost every village in England. Books that act as “signs and sponsors” for the dead (35), men and women that read them and ruminate upon their lessons, subscribers who “draw up the table of the Illustrious Dead” and maintain it year after year and generation after generation (124). Godwin even draws on parish curates prepared with Oxford and Cambridge educations to commit a moderate portion of attendance on the dirt of the great dead as well as the souls of the living. He proposes, then, a vast and “considerably scattered” bureaucracy (131), an “elaborate apparatus” (Pascoe 98), mediating the dust of the excellent of the earth. Unable to speak or move for themselves, the dead beget representative after representative to shore up the precariousness first of matter, then of memory, then of judgment, and then, “if it should be thought that such a scheme as is here suggested, would, from the mere fluctuation and uncertainty of human affairs, be too



precarious in its operation, one further security might be employed” (Godwin *Essay* 136). Of course, Godwin means a map, a soil map something like Young’s that would in its own way “distinguish[] the nature of the soil” (Young *Farmer’s Letters* 1768:90), and would over time, “if such surveys were repeated now and then...form the most certain scale, whereby to judge of the administration of the public affairs in any age” (90).

It would be called “the Atlas of those who Have Lived, for the use of Men Hereafter to be Born” (136-7). Based on those “maps in which the scenes of famous battles were distinguished with a peculiar mark,” the *Atlas of those who Have Lived*, might be plentifully marked with meridian lines and circles of latitude, ‘with centric and eccentric scribbled o’er,’ so as to ascertain with incredible minuteness where the monuments of eminent men had been, and where their ashes continue to repose. (137)

Once the map was made, continues Godwin, the continuity of human progress through time would be assured in spite of any eventuality—even total war:

If this were done, nothing more would be necessary in times of the greatest calamity and devastation, than to preserve one copy of this precious depository of the records of past ages. Though cities were demolished, and empires overthrown, though the ploughshare were passed over the scite of populous streets, and the soil they once occupied were “sown with salt,” the materials would be thus preserved, by means of which, at the greatest distance of time, everything that was most sacred might be restored, and the calamity which had swallowed up whole generations of men, might be obliterated as if it had never been. (sic 138)

Which are the materials and which are the records of past ages? Is it the subjected matter of grave dust that has the power to restore everything sacred, to bridge the greatest distances of time and obliterate the universal calamity of death and total war as if it had never been, or is it the copy of the map that reaches forward across an almost annihilated future to recover monuments not yet lost at its creation, to “ascertain with incredible minuteness where the monuments of eminent men had been, and where their ashes continue to repose”? The whole network of eminent dead have transformed into the articulated ashes of one collective Resurrection body. The map, like a stamen, containing the only part that can’t be lost if the whole is to be reassembled, and the identity of the earth is to be restored across the calamitous gap. Godwin might imagine each body of human dust as a fixed and stable subject, but the map that represents their locations is an object transformed by the potential for its loss into an agential “thing”.

Possibly Godwin intuits that the *Essay* has spun out of his control. Through the quotation embedded in his description of the map with “centric and eccentric scribbled o’er,” Godwin links his *Atlas of those who have Lived* to Raphael’s imaginary map of the universe in book eight of *Paradise Lost*. Here Raphael tries to explain to Adam what will happen when his descendants attempt to understand the structure of God’s creation:

.....or if they list to try  
 Conjecture, he his fabric of the heav’ns  
 Hath left to their disputes, perhaps to move  
 His laughter at their quaint opinions wide  
 Hereafter, when they come to model heav’n  
 And calculate the stars, how they will wield

The mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive  
 To save appearances, how gird the sphere  
 With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,  
 Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb[;] (8:75-84)

Through the proliferation of signs, human beings try to fix an impossible knowledge.

Godwin begins his *Essay* with the certainty that some soil needed saving from the new Goths and Vandals, “the grosser conceptions of the majority of the species, who are too apt to consider man merely as an animal to be fed” (43). “What I plead for,” Godwin writes,

in the present proposal, is that by a simple and perhaps infallible means,  
 we should paralyze the hand of oblivion. Why should Milton, and  
 Shakspear, and lord Bacon, and sir Philip Sidney die? Perhaps yet they  
 shall not wholly die. (sic96-7)

But by the end, the “strait road to the great man himself” has been buried(110), and the ploughshare is passed again over its site. Godwin’s simple and literal identity between the soil and the self has erupted into thousands of signs: wooden crosses, matching plaques, pages of books, maps crossed with centric and eccentric lines, and catalogues to go with the maps (141), all pointing at particles of dust that after all this, still cannot simply and infallibly certify themselves because even if the dust, and the graves, and one copy of the map survive into the future, Godwin with his passive verbs cannot tell us that anyone will read them.

It is the same problem identified by Charlotte Smith, Godwin’s friend and fellow-reformist author, in her poetic masterpiece, *Beachy Head*, published just three years

earlier in 1806. Also alluding richly to Virgil's ploughman and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Smith's loco-descriptive poetic fragment depicts, as Ann D. Wallace has observed, "a world in which all tracing of histories and landscapes seems futile" (88). The "warrior" corpse reaches up through the layers of soil "to register / His glory, and immortalize his name" (lines 424-5), the antiquarian reaches down that

.....He perhaps may trace,  
 Or fancy he can trace, the oblong square  
 Where mail'd legions, under Claudius, rear'd  
 The rampire, or excavated fosse delved. (407-10)

Between them lies layer upon layer of soil and speechlessness, and what the corpse cannot "register," the antiquarian's tracing can no more certify than his allusive counterpart in Milton, the "belated peasant" of book one, who "sees, / Or dreams he sees" the midnight revels of fairy elves can certify their existence (*Paradise Lost* 1:782-3).<sup>74</sup> The antiquarian is also, and perpetually, belated. Too late to trace the coherent "oblong square" of history, he fails to reconstruct what is now disturbed and broken by time and inhumation into some other fanciful shape.

It is against this kind of "conjecture"—with more Miltonic echoes, as per Godwin's quote above—that Kevis Goodman has argued Charlotte Smith's poem

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<sup>74</sup> In another image of human sensory organs that are inadequate to the comprehension of what they see, Milton describes the issuing of the fallen angels into their newly built temple, Pandemonium, in Hell:

Behold a wonder! They but now who seemed  
 In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant sons  
 Now less than smallest dwarves, in narrow room  
 Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race  
 Beyond the Indian mount, or feary elves,  
 Whose midnight revels, by a forest side  
 Or fountain some belated peasant sees,  
 Or dreams he sees, . . . (1:777-783)

stands.<sup>75</sup> Goodman explains how the speaker of the poem called *Beachy Head*, indeed, quite literally stands on the rock called Beachy Head and speaks out its history not in, but as “conjecture,” where “[t]he mixed and aggregated layers making up the rock formation called Beachy Head constitute a giant conjectus of physical nature” (996). Goodman shows that “this composite quality of the earth” (996), its

mixture of local and global matter—chalk, fossil shells, foreign bones—  
displays traces of Beachy Head’s mediation of and by historical forces at  
once beyond immediate experience and manifest in such experience, even  
in the very ground one stands on. (998)

Through its description of *Beachy Head* as a poem (and a rock) that registers the present as an accumulation of fragments, remediated rather than recovered in its soil, Goodman’s comments on Smith fit with her other explorations of the ways that Romantic poets find the material world mediating historical experience, as in Wordsworth’s *Excursion*, where “self-renewing artifacts—indeed, seeds . . . convert the past into a series of present passings and future repassings” (*Georgic Modernity* 125). This is an effect that David Fairer, in his *Organising Poetry*, also recognizes in works by members of the Coleridge circle, and especially, again, in Wordsworth’s “The Ruined Cottage,” which he sees as “organized around a persistent tracing and retracing” (281), where against “the systemic moral reasoning of Godwin” (268), meaning, and even life, is created through “an image of vital growth linking past and future, one embedded in decay and death” (282). Both scholars ground their observations on Romantic poetry in an earlier eighteenth-century tradition that finds matter mediating across gaps and fissures of time and consciousness.

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<sup>75</sup>See “Conjectures on Beachy Head: Charlotte Smith’s Geological Poetics and the Grounds of the Present.” My thanks to Professor Goodman for her kind permission to consult this article prior to its publication.

I have tried to offer, in this dissertation, an account of how that tradition developed in eighteenth-century representations of the soil, in tension with an impulse to erase from the earth all uncertain fragments of the past and all traces of other human subjects. These eighteenth-century ideas resurface through ensuing centuries, as Victorian sewage authorities and projectors try and fail to monetize London's waste matter in order to finance urban sanitation reform in the mid-nineteenth century, or when British soldiers of the first world war imagine themselves as seeding foreign fields with English bodies that will "in that rich earth a richer dust conceal[]," and "give[] somewhere back the thoughts by England given" (Brooke, "The Soldier" 5, 11).<sup>76</sup> British authors return to the soil for its power to materialize for us the processes within which we are, and keep becoming, a part of time.

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<sup>76</sup> On the use of urban sewage in agriculture in the nineteenth century there is a relative abundance of information and analysis available. For background and further resources, see Goddard; Stupski; and Tarr. In relation to Brooke's famous poem, an excellent work on other images of partition in World War One poetry and other media is Bourke.

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