THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE TIMES OF THE SEASONS:

MEDIATIONS OF CLIMATE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2020

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of my exceptional advisors Frances Ferguson, Heather Keenleyside, and Benjamin Morgan. The idea for this dissertation came long before I knew it, and from one of Frances's astute comments regarding an Alexander Pope quote that I brought up almost haphazardly. Frances was able to see the value in the quote and remind me to hold onto it. I have benefited so much from her prophetic ability to highlight things worthy of my attention long before I even know their significance. I am quite sure I will be still be deciphering and learning from her bits of wisdom in the years to come. I thank Heather for her mentorship as she is truly a mentor in every sense of the word. I am a much stronger writer, scholar, and pedagogue thanks to her. I am so grateful for all of the time she spent reading drafts (even when her time was so thin and divided) and her skillful eye at editing. She pushed me to make my ideas clearer, my sentences better, and I hope that this dissertation reflects that. Benjamin came to this project in an official capacity a bit later, but it was his class during my first year at the University of Chicago that prompted many thoughts about ecologies of time and space.

The influence of the English Department at the University of Chicago can be found throughout this dissertation. In coursework and in the development of the project, I have benefited from wise and brilliant thinkers like Lauren Berlant, Tim Campbell, Jim Chandler, Elaine Hadley, and Jo McDonagh. For their administrative support, I am grateful to Angeline Dimambro, Jessi Haley, Katie Kahal, and especially Lex Nalley Drlica.

To my M.A. thesis advisors at the Miami University of Ohio, Mary Jean Corbett, Madelyn Detloff, and Tobias Menely: thank you for your mentorship early on in my academic career. Mad was formative in my years as an undergraduate, introducing me to queer theory and

theory in general in a very powerful course that blew my mind as a twenty-year-old. She was the first professor who encouraged me to pursue graduate school. Mary Jean has always embodied the kind of pedagogue I aspire to be: brilliant, perceptive, and tough in the best and most supportive way possible. Tobias's class on temporality and Romanticism sparked my interest in the period and in ecocriticism, and had an obvious impact on this dissertation's goals and direction. His encouragement and mentorship at Miami pushed me to continue my academic career and our conversations since then have continued to inspire me.

This dissertation was supported by the Nicholson Center for British Studies at the University of Chicago for my research in Britain. I want to thank the Chawton House Library and Catherine Ross and Mark Beswick at the National Meteorological Library & Archive in Exeter, England for their help and hospitality. I am also the grateful recipient of a University of Chicago Dissertation Completion Fellowship, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

I want to thank my colleagues at University of Chicago. My 2014 cohort will always have a special place in my heart. Many thanks go out especially to Jacob Harris, Jennifer Yida Pan, Brandon Truett, and Shirl Yang for moments of levity during stressful times. To Hannah Brooks-Motl, thank you for your friendship, your brilliance, and your wisdom over the years. Thank you also to Allison Turner for your friendship, your willingness to exchange work and ideas, and for being the best person to have around at a NASSR or ASECS conference. I also want to thank the participants of the 18th/19th Century Atlantic Cultures Workshop. You all have my profound gratitude for reading various and often inchoate parts of this dissertation.

Two colleagues and now dear friends, Steven Maye and Carrie Taylor, have made a considerable impact on this project. Steven Maye's keen eye was so very helpful on drafts of the third chapter as well as his ear on our daily walks to and from the Regenstein library as I tried

out various ideas and thoughts. Carrie Taylor deserves as much credit as I can give her for the endless hours she spent reading drafts and for being the best colleague and friend a person could ask for. I could not have gotten through this program without her and I'm forever grateful for her knowledge regarding Romanticism and all things coal or mineral related.

Lastly, I want to thank my family for their endless support over the years. My mother instilled in me a love of books at an early age. I think my parents had no idea just how much that love would take over my life, but they have always been my biggest fans and supporters. To my sister, Kim, who is the paragon of fortitude and determination, thank you for being my favorite sister. Completing this dissertation was difficult, but you are a true warrior and forever my role model and inspiration for strength. To my pups, Penny and MacGuffin, thank you for your companionship, your licks, and for our daily walks when I needed fresh air and a fresh perspective. Thank you especially to MacGuffin for sticking around long enough to see this project through. I will forever miss our interspecies communications and love; you were a true companion for the past fourteen years. To the invisible being who is expected to soon become visible, thank you for accompanying me during the project's final stages in rather chaotic times. You were a driving (and a kicking) force to keep going amidst the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. And last, but certainly not least, thank you, Oscar, for your unfailing support and empathy, for your wit and humor when I needed it most, and for embodying the appreciation I have for seasons—you punctuate my daily life with such significance and are my perennial partner.

Introduction

"Perhaps no poems have been read more generally, or with more pleasure than *The Seasons* of Thomson," wrote Percival Stockdale in 1793.[1] James Thomson's four-part georgic *The Seasons* (1726-1746) was one of the most influential poems of the eighteenth century. Many writers and thinkers alike praised the poem's ability to attend to both "the vast" and "the minute."[2] Or, as Stockdale wrote, "peculiarly in *this* Poet, a little natural object, apparently insignificant of itself, takes consequence, from its association to others, and very much heightens and enforces the awful or beautiful assemblage."[3] Despite its seemingly trite and rather unremarkable subject matter—seasons—Thomson's poem was unique because it made "insignificant" natural objects worthy of attention and also emphasized how they were connected and related. The natural world was an assemblage, or, to put it in more contemporary terms, an ecology of phenomena. Samuel Johnson, too, praised Thomson's "peculiar" "genius," writing: "The reader of 'The Seasons' wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses."[4] *The Seasons* had a profound impact on eighteenth-century readers because it revealed the natural world in a new light through an ordinary lens: seasons.

In general, seasons have a long history as a trope throughout art and literature. From William Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* (1623) to Claude Monet's haystacks (1890-91) to the recently published seasonal quartet of novels by Ali Smith (2016-2020), seasons seem to appear

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[1] Percival Stockdale, ed., "Notes to *The Seasons*," *The Seasons by James Thomson* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793), n.p.
[2] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on their Works*, Vol. 4 (London: C. Bathurst, [etc.], 1783), 266.
[3] Original emphasis. Stockdale, "Notes to *The Seasons*," n.p.
[4] Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 266.

everywhere. They can divide a movie or musical into a four-part act as they do in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) or *La La Land* (2016). They can symbolize human life from infancy to old age as they do in John Keats's poem "The Human Seasons" (1818). They can also produce a kind of mood based on their humoral designation. For example, as Robert Burton writes in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), "of the seasons of the year, autumn is the most melancholy."[5] What is it about seasons that make them so suitable for aesthetic, or, more specifically, literary expression? How can they be so ubiquitous, long-standing, and conspicuous, while still allowing readers to see things anew as they do in Thomson's poem?

For Northrop Frye, seasons are not just commonplace tropes, but useful symbols because they represent cyclical movement, which he defines as a vital part of literary criticism and analysis. In Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), genres of narrative can be divided into four seasons: spring as comedy, summer as romance, autumn as tragedy, and winter as irony. As cyclical symbols, seasons represent a "fundamental form of process" of narrative movement.[6] Frye explains:

> The cyclical symbols are usually divided into four main phases, the four seasons of the year being the type for four periods of the day (morning, noon, evening, night), four aspects of the water cycle, four periods of life, and the like.[7]

In Frye's argument, seasonal recurrence represents life and death cycles of the divine, human, animal, and vegetable worlds; it epitomizes the ways in which narrative generally moves in a

[5] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 172.
[6] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 158.
[7] Ibid., 160.

recurrent "rhythm of process."[8] Genres such as comedy represent upward movements of life and innocence, and are thus associated with spring's sanguine period. Tragedies symbolize a "falling from innocence toward hamartia," and a downward trend to the underworld or death, much like the autumnal period of the year when leaves fall and vegetable life dies.[9] As Frye observes, seasonal cycles convey narrative movement and are intricately connected to literary expressions of both myth and realism. They portray life's rhythms, or vital and active processes, which are an essential component for reading literature.

Similarly, Alexander Pope saw the value of seasons in that they could best represent human life in all its variety to readers. In 1704, Pope wrote four pastorals and dedicated each one to a season. In line with Frye's identification of four-phase cyclical symbols, each pastoral also takes place during a specific time of day: "Spring" in the morning, "Summer" at midday, "Autumn" in the evening, and "Winter" at midnight.[10] Pope's pastorals feature seasonal and quotidian temporalities to emphasize how life is connected to multiple temporalities. Yet, for Pope, seasons are an ideal temporal frame for representing the variations of vital processes. As he writes in his essay on pastoral poetry almost a decade later, seasons expose readers to "a view of the great and little worlds" of "human Life" because "the year has not that variety in it to furnish every month with a particular description, as it may every season."[11] Seasons, in other words, are better suited for descriptions of natural objects and for portraying life both great and small.

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[8] Ibid., 158.
[9] Ibid., 162.
[10] Thomson's *The Seasons* also follows, for the most part, this diurnal cycle.
[11] Alexander Pope, "A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry," in *Selected Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. Paul Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 156.

Like Frye, Pope acknowledges the importance of cyclical movement when he links "elegant turns on the words" in what he defines as an exemplary pastoral form to the variety exhibited by the seasonal calendar.[12] In this same essay on pastoral poetry, he writes, "variety is obtained, in a great degree, by frequent comparisons, drawn from the most agreeable objects of the country; by interrogations to things inanimate; by beautiful digressions, but those short; sometimes by insisting a little on circumstances; and, lastly, by elegant turns on the words, which render the numbers extremely sweet and pleasing."[13] In Pope's eyes, rhetorical techniques of frequent comparisons and "elegant turns" achieve a poetic form more agreeable to readers because they capture the variety and rotational movement of nature. Even digressions, or detours in time, are preferable because they more accurately capture the diverse natural world.

Early eighteenth-century fiction also emphasized seasonal cycles as well as their important role in observing and documenting climate. For example, in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Crusoe observes the importance of seasonal cycles after he is shipwrecked. In an attempt to sow the limited grain he has, he realizes that seasons are not the same on his "Island of Despair" as he experienced in Great Britain. He documents his new climate for roughly a year, reaching the conclusion that the seasonal cycle on his new island is not based on four seasons, but rather rainy and dry ones: "I found now that the seasons of the year might generally be divided, not into summer and winter, as in Europe; but into the rainy seasons, and the dry seasons."[14] His "experiment" teaches him "when the proper season was to sow" and that he "might expect two seed-times and two harvests every year."[15] Crusoe's account indicates how

[12] Ibid., 154.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: W. Taylor, 1719), 124.
[15] Ibid.

seasons are connected to periods of sowing, or a *saison* as the word's etymology confirms, but also phenomena.[16] That is, there are not just the four seasons, but seasons that come to be recognized and understood by the likelihood of a phenomenon—like a hurricane, rain, turtle eggs hatching, fires, hunting, etc.—occurring. Crusoe's year-long observations also underscores the importance of using seasons to document climate.

Although Frye's classification of genre based on seasonal cycles does not concentrate on eighteenth-century literature in particular, in my dissertation I take seriously the prevalence of seasons in British literature throughout the eighteenth century—from Pope's pastorals, to Thomson's *The Seasons*, to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Partly because of their conspicuous and enduring nature, seasons have long been taken for granted as a straightforward theme or motif, but the eighteenth century, housed two particularly unique moments that featured seasons in a new light: the rise of amateur naturalists and weather diaries, and poetry of natural description.

The growing interest in the study of weather and climate during the eighteenth century demonstrates the period's unique turn to weather and seasons as a matter of public concern. As Vladimir Janković argues: "meteors, weather, and seasons were among the most powerful forces informing the physical, moral, financial, and political landscapes of the eighteenth century."[17] Weather diaries by Thomas Barker and Luke Howard as well as naturalist journals by Thomas Pennant and Gilbert White became the foundation for a modern understanding of meteorology. Thanks to eighteenth-century works like these "meteorology became a science of weather, not

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[16] "season, n.," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/174349?rskey=ghGphK&result=1.
[17] Vladimir Janković, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3.

individual meteors."[18] Jan Golinski also traces "weather as a topic of continued public interest" to the eighteenth century, when: "hundreds of individuals began to compile daily weather journals. They downplayed extraordinary episodes in favor of quotidian regularity; they built up comprehensive annals of the weather in their own locality in an attempt to discern long-term patterns."[19] As Golinski notes, weather in the eighteenth century began to be perceived as no longer the effect of some extraordinary divine force, but rather as something that could be observed, tracked, and, hopefully, predicted by citizen scientists. Private weather diaries kept by numerous individuals throughout England, like those of Nicholas Blundell and Samuel Winter, began to take notice of what was "seasonable" or not as a way of distinguishing long-term patterns.

Alongside the increasing number of weather diaries and naturalist calendars arose poetry concerned with describing nature. From the revival of the georgic in the early eighteenth century to the beginning of Romantic poetry by the century's conclusion, nature was poetry's primary source of inspiration and description throughout the eighteenth century. Drawing from Virgil's *Georgics*, which "was the most reliable source of weather signs and agrometeorological knowledge in the ancient period," poets like Thomson took to descriptive passages of nature as a way of representing the ever-expanding world around them.[20] Yet, natural description in eighteenth century poetry was criticized, perhaps most famously by William Wordsworth, for not using "real language," thus revealing the limits of language, or using "stock diction" as a way of

[18] Ibid., 75.
[19] Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4.
[20] Janković, 21.

depicting a stable and ordered nature.[21] More recent critics of Thomson's georgic such as W. B. Hutchings argue that *The Seasons* acknowledges the constraints of language and "uses the temporality of language to create landscapes which are vitally experiential."[22] For Hutchings, the movement inherent in language, or as Frye argues of narrative, is what allows Thomson to present nature as simultaneous and successive scenes of vital processes. As Hutchings writes: "The poetry of *The Seasons* strives for a formal equivalence, in the temporal mode of language, of what nature presents both simultaneously—as in a single scene of landscape—and successively in the cyclical roll of the seasons."[23] In other words, poetry of natural description like Thomson's *The Seasons* illustrates how nature is not as ordered and stable as it might first appear to be, but is instead temporally diverse and heterogenous. It also reveals how one's experience of a world of numerous interconnected natural objects can be complicated by multiple spatiotemporalities.

These two movements demonstrate how keenly aware eighteenth-century writers and readers were of the ever-expanding and changing world around them, but also how complicated that world was. When it came to describing one's experience of it in either poetry or prose often what was revealed was a dialectic of order and disorder. Although Carl Linnaeus's invention of binomial nomenclature did in some sense create an order to nature through classification,

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[21] See the Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads* for his critique of eighteenth-century poetry's use of "philosophical" language and John Arthos's argument that the "stock diction" of natural description in eighteenth-century poetry can be linked to scientific terminology because both sought to describe nature as ordered and stable. William Wordsworth, "Preface," *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1800*, ed. Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008) and John Arthos, *The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949).
[22] W. B. Hutchings, "'Can Pure Description Hold the Place of Sense?': Thomson's Landscape Poetry," in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 49.
[23] Ibid., 53.

Thomson's seasonal georgic illustrates how the natural world was chaotic and confusing, or representative of a world of "sensory and affective discomfort."[24] As Kevis Goodman argues, Thomson's georgic mediates the natural world by showing how one's experience of it is often what exceeds description, turning up "sensory discomfort" and the "noise of history." [25] Descriptions of the natural world were not seamless and uncomplicated transmissions to readers. In my second chapter on the georgic, I argue that much of what exceeds description in Thomson's poem, in particular a hurricane, is ostensibly indescribable and unthinkable. Yet, seasons can mediate the complex spatiotemporalities of natural disaster because they designate parameters of expectation. They organize the flux of phenomena and can even be used to predict the likelihood of an event occurring, as is the case with hurricane season.

In the midst of these two historical moments in the eighteenth century, seasons became important tools for discerning changes in climate. They were ideal temporal parameters for tracking long-term patterns in daily, but highly variable weather and they could also mediate climate when it came to be understood as a felt experience in the later part of the century. Across my chapters, I aim to show how seasonal temporalities, especially their recurrent or cyclical movement, aided eighteenth century readers, revealing everyday environments and their interconnected objects, or ecologies, in novel ways. Ultimately, this dissertation's objective is ecocritical and has a presentist agenda in that I hope to show how eighteenth-century ways of reading climate can be applied to our contemporary time of climate change.

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[24] Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13.
[25] Ibid., 3, 64.

1. Seasonal Temporalities

This dissertation sees temporality as connected to climate, or more specifically weather and seasons. As the philosopher Michel Serres writes:

> Time is paradoxical; it folds or twists; it is as various as the dance of flames in a brazier—here interrupted, there vertical, mobile, and unexpected.
>
> The French language in its wisdom uses the same word for weather and time, *le temps*. At a profound level they are the same thing. Meteorological weather, predictable and unpredictable, will no doubt some day be explainable by complicated notions of fluctuations, strange attractors [. . .] Some day we will perhaps understand that historical time is even more complicated.[26]

As Serres observes, time and weather are not just correlative, but, on a linguistic and conceptual level, the same thing. Yet, the concept of *le temps* reveals a paradox: it can appear to be linear or chronological, but it is simultaneously composed of "complicated notions of fluctuations" and quite "mobile" and complex. In other words, temporality and weather depict the chaotic movement inherent in everyday and historical processes. Fortunately, as Frye observes, these same processes can be organized by cyclical symbols of both nature and narrative, i.e. seasons. Although time and weather might be in a constant state of flux, seasons organize these fluctuating components of climate into legible patterns based on repetition. For example, weather becomes significant, as eighteenth-century weather diarists noted, when it is deemed seasonable or unseasonable.

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[26] Michel Serres, with Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 58.

Seasons have a unique ability to reveal everyday occurrences as representative of something remarkable because they are connected to multiple temporalities. Seasons and their tropes can signify the course of a solar year, the span of mortal life on earth, and their cyclical movement designates a perennial temporality based on repetition. All of these temporalities are uniquely tied to life's processes and even to what one might define as lived experience, or a kind of experience that emerges from the everyday. As William Galperin has argued in his book, *The History of Missed Opportunities: British Romanticism and the Emergence of the Everyday* (2017), the concept of the everyday emerged in the late eighteenth-century as an abstraction, or rather as something that "comes to consciousness as a missed opportunity."[27] Taking his cue from Maurice Blanchot's definition that the "everyday is what we never see a first time, but only see again," Galperin stresses how the everyday is something that is overlooked.[28] It is a proximate world, but one that can only be seen or thought of in retrospect. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argue that Anna Letitia Barbauld uses seasons in her didactic works for children in order to show young readers how to perpetually read their everyday environments. They must not only learn to read, but also re-read their surroundings for what they missed. The everyday might be comprised of flux and variation, but seasons punctuate daily life, making the forgettable occurrences of the everyday discernable to readers both young and old.

Seasonal recurrence, or the perennial temporality of seasons, allows one to perceive the variability of climate, a variability that often obscures an understanding of the present. Like Frye observes, seasonal cyclicality is a valuable pattern for reading literature, but the recurrent movement of seasons is also a useful temporality for reading the world and its phenomena that

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[27] William Galperin, *The History of Missed Opportunities: British Romanticism and the Emergence of the Everyday* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 6.
[28] Ibid.

seem to exist beyond human perception. As Galperin and Blanchot observe, the everyday is often overlooked. Everyday weather is also something that is often lost to us. Yet, as the increasing popularity of weather diaries throughout the eighteenth century shows, people did try to record it and see its significance. Weather became an important object of empirical study and seasons were particularly instrumental in this movement because they could convey an accumulation of time as well as long-term change and patterns. In this way, seasons give form to variable weather. Their repetition and duration create the expectation that temperature and weather will conform to a certain set of parameters. If they do not, then those variables are understood as an anomalous season, or as a backward spring or a mild winter for example.

I connect this perennial or recurrent sense of seasonal time to Walter Benjamin's concept of lived experience, or *Erfahrung*. Benjamin, who saw in Baudelaire's poetry the ability to convey a heightened form of experience, which he terms *Erfahrung*, would arguably be able to find this same recurrent form of experience, one "that accompanies one to the far reaches of time," in seasons.[29] Benjamin's concept of *Erfahrung* provides access to a longer time that "is possible only within the realm of the ritual."[30] *Erfahrung* requires repetition and an accumulation of a certain span of time: the time of a season for example. For Benjamin, *Erfahrung* stands in opposition to *Erlebnis* or the rush of experiences that cannot be recorded or acknowledged; they are the forgotten moments of everyday experience that could be categorized as unlived. Seasonal repetition, or perennial temporality, creates *Erfahrung*, or a kind of lived experience that allows one to perceive what one normally cannot in the constant barrage of change in one's daily life.

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[29] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Selected Writings, 4:1938-40,* ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 331.
[30] Ibid., 333.

Recent literary studies on temporality demonstrate not just the importance of rethinking temporality in terms of literature, but also the significance of temporality in eighteenth-century literature in particular. As Thomas M. Allen writes in his introduction to the anthology *Time and Literature* (2018), "literature enables us to envision time, to imagine time as something tangible" but also as "a strange object."[31] For Allen, the recent "temporal turn" in literary criticism demonstrates how complex and interdisciplinary the study of time in literature can be; it has become "an arena in which some of the methodological debates of the field are conducted: formal analysis of the structures of texts vs. historicist approaches, canonical vs. noncanonical texts."[32] Similarly, in a special issue on temporality in *The Eighteenth Century*, Jesse Molesworth observes that "temporality has emerged as a favored topic for interdisciplinary research on the long eighteenth century."[33] Recent works like Amit S. Yahav's *Feeling Time: Duration, the Novel, and Eighteenth-Century Sensibility* (2018) and Jonathan Sachs's *The Poetics of Decline in British Romanticism* (2018) offer compelling new perspectives on how temporality can be read as "felt duration" in eighteenth-century literature and philosophy or as slow.[34] Sachs, in his argument, traces slow time to the eighteenth century, defining it as a contradictory temporality that, similar to deep time, "refers to related human attempts to grasp imaginatively a pace of change that cannot be seen and that leaves few if any visible traces [. . .] it is about how we imagine change occurring within such an expanded scale of time and the

[31] Thomas M. Allen, "Introduction," in *Time and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1-2.
[32] Ibid., 4.
[33] Jesse Molesworth, "Introduction: The Temporal Turn in Eighteenth-Century Studies," *The Eighteenth Century* 60, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 135.
[34] Amit S. Yahav, *Feeling Time: Duration, the Novel, and Eighteenth-Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 4.

significance of the accumulation and development of such changes."[35] In conversation with these recent texts concerning temporality, "The Times of Seasons" offers new ways of perceiving time and change in relation to recurrent seasonal cycles that were prevalent in various kinds of eighteenth-century literature.

2. Climate Change Then and Now

The temporal turn in literary criticism is particularly timely with regard to contemporary concerns of climate change. In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), Amitav Ghosh writes: "the Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity."[36] We have now entered an age where human impact is not just global but geological, and the irony of this large-scale human impact is that it is so often unacknowledged or even denied. Climate scientists James Hansen, Makiko Satoa, and Reto Ruedy put the problem this way: "The greatest barrier to public recognition of human-made climate change is probably the natural variability of local climate. How can a person discern long-term climate change, given the notorious variability of local weather and climate from day to day and year to year?"[37] The current problem of registering changes in climate and the prevalence of climate change denial is directly connected to the often overlooked or imperceptible nature of the everyday. And, as some reports claim, even if humans drastically reduced their CO^2 output today, the average global temperature would continue to rise. In other words, corrective action would initially seem

[35] Jonathan Sachs, "Eighteenth-Century Slow Time: Seven Propositions," *The Eighteenth Century* 60, no. 2 (Summer 2019):186-7.
[36] Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 62.
[37] James Hansen, Makiko Sato, Reto Ruedy, "Perception of climate change," *PNAS* 109, no. 37 (Sep 2012): E4515, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1205276109.

inconsequential due to this temporal delay, thus making the cause, human activity and the production of CO^2, seemingly unrelated to the effect of rising global temperature.[38] This ostensible break in a link between cause and effect, combined with the fact that people don't experience an average global temperature on a daily basis, but rather the variation of daily weather conditions, demonstrate the obstacles to climate change acceptance.

In my dissertation, I argue that the seasons were already a way of attending to climate change. Eighteenth-century writers and readers used seasons to register the variability of daily weather over the long term, shifting between temporal scales to discern quotidian variation as the possible effect of large-scale change. For example, snow in April or May can indicate a late spring much like it does in Barbauld's poem, "On the Backwardness of the Spring 1771," where the speaker observes a snowfall in May. The weather's significance, in particular its untimeliness, is primarily understood in relation to spring and the "new-born year."[39] The snowfall and cold temperatures in May are anomalous and because Barbauld titles her poem with the season *and* the year she also indicates the weather's historical importance. She records it like a weather diarist would for future readers. Depicted as a "lone pilgrim" whose sad "chilling dews" mark the "pensive hours," personified spring calibrates the atypical weather, thus correlating the weather and its large-scale climatic implications with an embodied individual perspective.[40] In other words, the poem showcases how literary representations of seasons can

[38]See Gerald A Meehl, Warren M. Washington, William D. Collins, Julie M. Arblaster, Aixue Hu, Lawrence E. Buja, Warren G. Strand, Haiyan Teng, "How Much More Global Warming and Sea Level Rise?" *Science* 18 (March 2005):1769-1772, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1106663.
[39] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "On the Backwardness of the Spring 1771," *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 68, l. 5.
[40] Ibid., ll. 13, 10, 11.

mediate between varied levels of abstraction like that of the immediate weather in everyday life and climate on a historical scale.

Ultimately, I see this period's literary preoccupation with seasons as rich ground for addressing our current problem of climate change, even its denial. As writers such as Jesse Oak Taylor have recently observed about climate change, climate is "an abstraction that cannot be experienced firsthand," while "weather is immersive and immediate."[41] However, as Taylor aptly observes, "on some level we do experience climate every time we correlate weather with broader patterns."[42] Involved in this correlative process is the work that seasons do in helping readers connect instances of direct experience to more abstract concepts like that of climate change. Humans might experience weather firsthand, but they often need to put it in relation to a season to determine its significance. As I argue in my second chapter on the georgic, even disastrous and anomalous weather events like hurricanes can be anticipated during the Caribbean's well-acknowledged and fearful hurricane season. In this example, seasons are spatiotemporal parameters that translate extraordinary events into terms of regularity and expectation.

In this dissertation, the concept of climate is related to the eighteenth-century book of nature, but it is also connected to time, weather, and mood more generally. It is also ecological in that it is often housed in numerous interrelated objects and phenomena. As the first chapter demonstrates, climate can be comprised of everyday environments and based in small objects and phenomena that surround a child's intimate surroundings, like in Anna Letitia Barbauld's didactic series *Lessons for Children*. Or, as the second chapter shows, climate can be connected to large-scale natural disasters and hurricanes. In the final two chapters, climate can be

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[41] Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of our Manufacture: The London Fog in British Fiction from Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 10.
[42] Ibid.

understood in relation to moods and species activity; it is related to more contemporary understandings of climate and atmosphere as producing a kind of affect. In all of these cases, climate impresses upon everyday experience, but it is also an abstraction that is mediated by seasonal temporal parameters.

Across all four chapters and seasons, this dissertation aims to show how climate can be mediated by seasons. Yet, as each chapter shows, this mediation is often not a simple transmission or clear communication. As I argue in the first chapter, one's everyday environments, no matter how intimate or familiar they are, must be repeatedly read because of what is constantly missed. Georgic poems, too, reveal how especially large-scale natural disasters like hurricanes exceed description and thus seem to operate in the world of affect rather than description. Charlotte Smith's poetry reveals how that world of affect comes to be dominated by care, or a burdensome attachment to the earth and life that cannot be shed. Similarly, Wollstonecraft relies on seasonal moods to reveal how seasonal migrations and species movement redefine static notions of climate propagated by Montesquieu in the eighteenth century. In each of these chapters, the process of mediation is something akin to what Goodman defines as that which "governs relations between quite different domains of reality or terms of thought, levels marked by incommensurability, contradiction, or indirection—in other words, those that cannot be well described by 'communication.'" [43] Mediation is therefore a vital process for negotiating that which "exists beyond sense perception, even beyond complete conceptualization, yet paradoxically seeps into everyday experience." [44] In other words, mediation is a correlative process for abstract concepts—like incommensurable and variable

[43] Kevis Goodman, "Conjectures on Beachy Head: Charlotte Smith's Geological Poetics and the Ground of the Present," *ELH* 81, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 1001n10.
[44] Goodman, "Conjectures," 984.

everyday climates—that punctuate everyday life; it defines the work that seasons do in connecting climate to lived experience. Significantly, this process is not always seamless; instead seasonal mediation acknowledges the difficulties in reading climate and why there might be climate change denial.

In this dissertation, I focus on the multiple temporalities of seasons—often their perennial or recurrent cyclicality—and the ways in which climate can be understood as a text or "book of nature" to be read and mediated. I dedicate each chapter of the dissertation to a season—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—and turn to several genres—didactic literature for children, georgics, sonnets, and an epistolary travel narrative—to show how seasons helped readers and writers examine climate and concepts that seemed to exist beyond human experience, but are still very much connected to it. Although each chapter is dedicated to a specific season, my goal in each chapter is not to focus on how each season aligns with a certain theme. That is, I don't choose poetry that is dedicated entirely to spring for the first chapter or a novel that is tragic winter's tale for the final chapter. Instead, each chapter concentrates on aspects of seasonal tropes, including their long history of being related to humors and moods, or in contemporary terms, affects, and how seasonal recurrence influences the mediation of various aspects of climate.

In my first chapter, I concentrate on spring and early childhood—the sanguine and vivacious period of human life often associated with spring. I focus here on Anna Letitia Barbauld's pioneering literature for children, *Lessons for Children* (1778-9) and *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), and demonstrate how she teaches "perpetual" reading to young interpreters of nature. In this chapter, I analyze how Barbauld uses seasons, and spring in particular, to educate young people on how they should read, and re-read, the book of nature. Although

Barbauld's goal is to ultimately teach children how to read God in nature, her didactic method underscores how vital seasons are to the process of apprehending an abstract entity or concept by way of a smaller, intimate scene of reading. In this sense, Barbauld's works make the book of nature come alive to children, turning their surrounding environments into legible scenes that they should continually read.

My second chapter moves from Barbauld's perpetual reading of the book of nature to the mediation of climate and natural disaster in James Thomson's popular georgic poem, *The Seasons* (1726-46), and James Grainger's "West-Indies Georgic," *The Sugar-Cane* (1764). Drawing on Kevis Goodman's argument that the georgic can be understood as a medium, I argue that the georgic and seasons are both mediums for translating the unknown: torrid climates (the West Indies) and disastrous and yet seasonal events (hurricanes). Ultimately, I show how Thomson's georgic is self-aware of the difficulties in trying to capture a disaster in real time; it is always too late. Whereas "Art is too slow" in Thomson's poem, Grainger's georgic emphasizes future temporalities and the portentous quality of seasons.[45] Depicting an early form of forecasting, *The Sugar-Cane* demonstrates how seasons can alter human behavior in anticipation of a future event.

In my third chapter, I turn to the "distant climes" and affective aspects of autumnal melancholy in Charlotte Smith's hybrid *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784) and her topographical poem *Beachy Head* (1807) to focus on care. In Smith's sonnets the word "care" appears over twenty times. It is often modified by negative adjectives like "corrosive," "officious," "hopeless"; or, care is personified as a "pale spectre," or a vulture that feeds upon the heart. In most cases,

[45] James Thomson, *Summer*, in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 64, l. 998.

"care" has a sense of earthly weight and a melancholic mood; it defines what it means to live in a world with numerous attachments. Drawing on the work of twentieth-century care feminists, I argue that Smith's poetry extends care beyond the gendered domestic labor of a mother; for Smith, care defines what it means to live on this planet. Next, I show how Smith uses seasons to expand this universal condition of care temporally as well; care is shown to be an unceasing melancholic condition that defines adult life. Ultimately, I argue that Smith's poetic cases of care represent a melancholic and inescapable condition that arises from being terrestrially bound to other living beings.

The final chapter focuses on Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Upon reading Wollstonecraft's letters, Robert Southey wrote to his friend and publisher Joseph Cottle: "Have you met with Mary Wollstonecraft's [travel book]? She has made me in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with northern moonlight."[46] Significantly, Southey's praise is not for a picturesque landscape or for nature, two more commonly used terms for the period, but rather for climate. In her *Letters*, Wollstonecraft constructs a version of climate that departs in important ways from the influential climate theory of Montesquieu in the mid-eighteenth century, which characterized entire peoples and nations according to temperature and location. For Wollstonecraft, climate involves much more than temperature or latitudinal positioning—it involves movement both in space and time, mood, and, most importantly, seasons. Traveling to a northern climate in summer, Wollstonecraft followed the naturalist Gilbert White in emphasizing the ways that migration—or the movement of bodies—stresses the numerous connections a person has to the various "objects

[46] Robert Southey, "April 28, 1797 to brother Thomas," *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1861), 309.

and occurrences," as well as species, in their environment. Like White's *Natural History of Selborne* (1789), Wollstonecraft's *Letters* incorporates a newly ecological sense of climate, a sense that was evolving during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

In my coda, "Unseasonable Seasons," I turn to our contemporary world of climate change and how the changing and disappearing seasons signify grave consequences. Although the four-part division of this dissertation is based on a four-seasonal cycle, one thing that it does not consider is what would happen if the four seasons as we know them cease to exist. Romantic writers like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley saw the potential dangers of "unseasonable" and "ungenial" seasonal cycles. In Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), the character Asia recounts the dismal time of humanity after its fall, when "ghastly death unseen before" affected all and "unseasonable seasons drove / With alternating shafts of frost and fire, / Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves."[47] Similarly, in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), a plague based on fatal seasonal cycles wreaks havoc on the human population. In the heat of the summer, the plague spreads, while winter is the season of hope, the "season of breathing time," during which Lionel Verney and his family and close friends have a reprieve from the spread of disease.[48] Shelley's apocalyptic novel draws attention to how seasons regulate vital processes, even the processes of a devastating plague. These Romantic novels remind us how important eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century literature is to reading seasons; they remind us of how vital seasons are to interpreting climate change.

[47] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama* (London: C. and J. Ollier Vere Street Bond Street, 1820), 2.4, l. 454-57.
[48] Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Hugh J. Luke, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 195.

I. Spring and Perpetual Reading: Anna Letitia Barbauld's Season for Knowledge

There's no getting away from children in a book called *Spring*.
It's the open eye of the year, and children are the open eyes of the world.
—Ali Smith[1]

In 1703, Alexander Pope wrote four pastorals, each one on a season. Pope was only sixteen years old at the time he wrote his seasonal pastorals, but almost a decade later he would justify his use of seasons in his essay on pastoral poetry. Criticizing Edmund Spenser for dividing his own series of pastorals, *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), into months rather than seasons Pope writes: "[Spenser] compares human Life to the several Seasons, and at once exposes to his readers a view of the great and little worlds, in their various changes and aspects. Yet the scrupulous division of his Pastorals into Months has oblig'd him to repeat the same description [. . .] the year has not that variety in it to furnish every month with a particular description, as it may every season."[2] Pope suggests that seasons are an ideal temporal frame for representing life because, unlike months, they allow readers to see animated changes with the right amount of variety. As he puts it, "great and little worlds" appear more clearly to readers if they are represented by way of an appropriate stretch of time: the time of a season.

Pope's observation draws attention to the classification of time in literary representations of nature in the eighteenth century. Although the Calendar Act of 1752 caused widespread upset over a loss of eleven days in September due to England's switch to the Gregorian calendar, there is another temporal tension of note in this century: whether to use months or seasons when

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[1] Claire Armitstead, "Ali Smith: 'This young generation is showing us that we need to change and we can change,'" *The Guardian*, March 23, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/23/ali-smith-spring-young-generation-brexit-future.
[2] Alexander Pope, "A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry," *Selected Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. Paul Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 156.

writing about nature.[3] Despite Pope's critique of Spenser, some writers followed a monthly structure. For example, John Aikin used months to portray the "grand system, the economy of nature" in his *The Calendar of Nature* (1784).[4] Yet, scattered throughout Aikin's calendar are many passages from *The Seasons* (1726-46) by James Thomson, a Scottish poet whose seasonal interpretation of the four-part georgic quite literally made seasons more famous. In Aikin's preface to his calendar, he also mentions his sister, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and how his "borrowed" plan finds one of its "models" in her "little books, where, in a very entertaining manner, [she] gives a brief description of the several months, formed of some of the most striking circumstances attending each."[5] Similarly, this chapter takes for its case study Barbauld's "little books," or didactic works for children, but unlike Aikin I read them as strikingly seasonal.[6] For although Barbauld utilizes monthly descriptions in her early work *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old Part 1* (1779), she relies heavily on seasons for scaling down the book of nature for children and teaching young readers how to perpetually read their environments.

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[3] William Hogarth's "An Election Entertainment" (1755) has a banner in the right-hand corner with the phrase: "Give us our eleven days," referring to the public's consternation over the decision that Wednesday, September 2, 1752 would be followed by Thursday, September 14, 1752. See Robert Poole, *Time's Alteration: Calendar Reform in Early Modern England* (London: UCL Press/Taylor & Francis, 1998).

[4] John Aikin, *The Calendar of Nature; Designed for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young Persons* (London: J. Johnson, 1784), v.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Aikin more directly acknowledges the importance of a seasonal temporal parameter in his explicit appreciation of *The Seasons* a few years later. In *An Essay on the Plan and Character of Thomson's Seasons* (1787) he observes the "striking analogy" between the "perfect period" of sun's revolution and the "progressive stages of this circuit," i.e, the four seasons, and "the course of human existence" (James Thomson, *The Seasons: A New Edition Adorned with a Set of Engravings from Original Designs to which is Prefixed and Essay on the Plan and Character of the Poem, by J. Aikin, M.D.* [London: J. Murray, No. 32, Fleet Street, 1792], x).

As I have discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, one way seasons can be characterized is by scale; they help scale down an abstract concept of climate by placing weather in relation to a duration, which, like a circadian rhythm, living beings can interpret corporeally and also understand as lived experience. As writers such as Jesse Oak Taylor have recently observed about climate change, climate is "an abstraction that cannot be experienced firsthand," while "weather is immersive and immediate."[7] However, as Taylor aptly observes, "on some level we do experience climate every time we correlate weather with broader patterns."[8] Involved in this correlative process is the work that seasons do in helping us connect instances of direct experience to more abstract concepts like that of climate change. Humans might be able to experience weather firsthand, but they often need to put it in relation to a season to determine its significance. For example, a span of fifty-degree days in January is what can define a mild winter in Chicago. Similarly, snow in April or May can indicate a late spring much like it does in Barbauld's poem, "On the Backwardness of the Spring 1771," where the speaker observes a snowfall in May. The weather's significance, in particular its untimeliness, is primarily understood in relation to spring and the "new-born year."[9] The snowfall and cold temperatures in May are anomalous, and, by titling her poem with the season *and* the year, Barbauld characterizes the irregular weather as historically important; she records it like a weather diarist would for future readers. Depicted as a "lone pilgrim" whose sad "chilling dews" mark the "pensive hours," personified spring calibrates the atypical weather, thus correlating the weather

[7] Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of our Manufacture: The London Fog in British Fiction from Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 10.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "On the Backwardness of the Spring 1771," *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 68.

and its large-scale climatic implications with an embodied individual perspective.[10] In other words, the poem showcases how literary representations of seasons can mediate between varied levels of abstraction like that of the immediate weather in everyday life and climate on a historical scale.

Although the eighteenth-century concept of the book of nature was more religiously inflected than our current understanding of climate, it nevertheless demonstrates a model for reading our surrounding environments that are comprised of weather and seasons. Premised upon the idea that immaterial concepts like God could be read in material natural objects, the book of nature transformed a large-scale abstraction into something that could be experienced directly. As a Dissenter, Barbauld recognized the importance of using the study of nature to teach religion and she uniquely utilizes a direct, more intimate aspect of reading in order to teach both literacy and devotion in exceptionally young readers.[11] In her preface to *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), Barbauld outlines its peculiar design: "to impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind; fully convinced as the author is, that they cannot be impressed too soon" because "to feel the force of the idea of God" a child should not remember a time when they had "no such idea."[12] For Barbauld, early exposure is key for not only learning how to read one's

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[10] Ibid.

[11] One recent example of how Dissenters in particular connected the study of nature to the study of God is in Melissa Bailes's book *Questioning Nature*. In this book, Bailes shows how Barbauld follows a tradition begun by late-seventeenth-century British naturalist and Dissenter, John Ray. Bailes writes, "Ray, like Barbauld, had been a Dissenter who viewed science as 'a means to the worship of God' and he was recognized by eighteenth-century naturalist, Thomas Pennant, as the 'father of British natural theology' for his enduringly popular text, *The Wisdom of God manifested in the works of Creation* (1691)" (Melissa Bailes, *Questioning Nature: British Women's Scientific Writing and Literary Originality, 1750-1830* [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017], 31).

[12] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children*, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 238. Hereafter referred to as *Hymns in Prose*.

immediate surroundings, but also for learning how to apply the activity of reading to a lifelong endeavor: faith and devotion for an immaterial deity. Infancy, or the spring of one's life, becomes the season ripe for epistemology, the season that primes one for a series of cycles, or a *longue durée* of a vital education.

This chapter focuses on Barbauld's use of seasons in her early didactic series, *Lessons for Children* (1778-9), and work, *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), as well as her later poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), in an effort to link reading the book of nature in the eighteenth century to reading climate in our own time. I turn to Barbauld's works for children in particular because of how she aligns the metaphorical book of nature with the material book, thus revealing a model for interpreting and organizing everyday environments and surrounding phenomena that is grounded in the activity of reading. More specifically, I argue that Barbauld scales down the book of nature by using seasons to frame her hymns in order to reveal how environments are composed of ecological relations. Furthermore, I argue that these familiar scenes of reading are uniquely connected to a seasonal temporality: perennial time. Based on the continuity of seasonal revolutions, perennial time might be housed in firsthand experiences, but it is ultimately the perpetual repetition of these experiences that form the basis of knowledge. Barbauld uses "perpetual spring" as a trope in order to illustrate this didactic method, a method that is not based on linear progress or chronological time, but instead housed in intimate and animate environments that stress failed perception. By showing young readers that a scene in the book of nature is never the same upon a reader's return precisely because of what they missed in prior readings, Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose* emphasizes a kind of reading that pursues comprehension in spite of the empirical gaps of the everyday. In the coda to this chapter, I turn to Barbauld's well-known, to some even infamous, poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* to explore

its "lofty verse" and poor reception with readers. [13] In particular, I analyze the poem's ending and prognosis of "no second spring" for England, as a final example of how Barbauld uses seasons to underscore how a nation's failed perception can have global and political implications.[14]

1. Barbauld's Everyday *Lessons*

As children's literature emerged alongside the rise of the modern novel in the eighteenth century, one of the genre's most influential figures was Anna Letitia Barbauld. Barbauld's contemporary, and arguably her first imitator, Sarah Trimmer, identified Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* books as "best adapted for the purpose of teaching them [children] to read [. . .] being written in a style of familiar conversation."[15] As Trimmer observes, literacy for Barbauld developed from everyday and familiar experiences; she was concerned with connecting objects on the page to what small readers would hear and see in their quotidian environments. Like Barbauld, Trimmer wanted "to prepare the minds of Children for higher degrees of knowledge" and thought that the best method "to open the Mind by gradual steps to the knowledge of the Supreme Being" was one that used "the Volume of Nature in order to discover his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*."[16] What Trimmer finds particularly desirable about Barbauld's method, and ultimately copies, is an attention to scale that helps merge young minds with their environments through a process of reading.

Much like other writers of children's literature during the late-eighteenth century,

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[13] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, A Poem*, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 171, l. 278.
[14] Ibid., 173, l. 316.
[15] Sarah Trimmer, *An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature and Reading of the Holy Scriptures* (London: J. Dodsley, T. Longman, G. Robinson, and J. Johnson, 1781), x.
[16] Ibid., viii, vii, viii.

Barbauld emphasized reading, but unlike her contemporaries, Barbauld paid particular attention to scale by making adaptations to the physical book itself.[17] In her first publication, *Lessons for Children Ages Two to Three Years Old* (1777), the advertisement proclaims its key differences from "the multitude of books professedly written for children": it is "adapted to the comprehension of child from two to three years old" and written with the "eye of a child" in mind, with "good paper, clear and large type, with large spaces."[18] No bigger than a child's hand, these first four volumes were the first large print books for children.

With such attention to even the minute details of the material pages of her books, Barbauld's didactic model is essentially about attention to pages in the book of nature, or rather the little worlds of her readers. Not only does she meet the immediate, physical needs of small young learners, altering the material book before their eyes, but she also keeps her textual world small by continually referencing objects that were familiar in a child's little world. From objects like bread, milk, a stool, a chair, etc., Barbauld recreates the everyday world that she and her adopted nephew, Charles, as well as many other young children, inhabit. And while some imperatives are directed to "Charles" specifically, many lessons feature directions to an anonymous reader. An early lesson demonstrates how the text relies heavily on imperatives and an everyday routine.

> Little boys must always come when mamma calls them.
>
> Blow your nose.
>
> Here is a handkerchief.

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[17] As Alan Richardson argues, "reading is made a common theme from the beginnings of the juvenile book trade" (Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 133).
[18] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1787).

Come and let me comb your hair.

Stand still.

Here is a comb-case for you to hold.

Your frock is untied.

Pray clasp my shoe.

Somebody knocks at the door.

Open the door.

Come in.

Reach a chair.

Sit down.

Come to the fire.

How do you do?

Very well.[19]

The daily interactions between a mother and child as well as its objects like a comb, a chair, a shoe, clothes, and a fire together make up the lesson. Yet, the fictional world is also interactive, expanding beyond the parameters of the physical book to link the child reader to the described environment. Through the proliferation of imperatives and second-person questions, the lesson connects readers to not only the physical book in their laps, but the experience of reading. In other words, the lesson is not only a page to be read, but rather an environment full of surrounding phenomena. As Frances Ferguson argues, what is unique about Barbauld's conversational method is not only the way it can attend to the "world of a character's experience," but also the way in which Barbauld's characters, or the "conversation that recruits

[19] Ibid., 13-15.

them," "become part of one another's environment."[20] Uniting the physical book with a child's familiar environment, *Lessons for Children* introduces the idea that everyday objects and life forms in one's surrounding environment are material objects that can be read.

This key concept—reading one's surrounding environment and its objects like a book—is made possible by the familiar and intimate scenes in Barbauld's books for children, or the way Barbauld uses everyday life in order to teach children lessons. As others have acknowledged, Barbauld's didactic method draws from John Locke's and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theories of graduated knowledge and view that the mind was a material object, or a *tabula rasa*, respectively.[21] Barbauld, too, believed that experience was vital to the production of knowledge, but she also saw the importance in everyday, even mundane, interactions. Barbauld's later essay, "What is Education?" (1798), draws from Rousseau's theory that people are educated by their life experiences, but diverges from his by expanding the notion of who, or rather what, can be considered education. Education is not surrounding a child in "an artificial world," but is "part of a more comprehensive system."[22] More importantly, it is often insensible or acknowledged. Addressing her anonymous readers in second person, she writes:

> You speak of *beginning* the education of your son. The moment he was able to

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[20] Frances Ferguson, "The Novel Comes of Age: When Literature Started Talking with Children," *differences* 28, no. 1 (May 2017): 43, 44.

[21] See Dahlia Porter's argument for how Barbauld "equates textual and cognitive development" "by embedding cognitive processes in the physical layout of the page and the sequence of the lesson" (*Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018], 171). See also Joanna Wharton, "Inscribing on the Mind: Anna Letitia Barbauld's 'Sensible Objects," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (2012): 535-550 and Frances Ferguson, "Educational Rationalization/Sublime Reason," in *The Sublime and Education*, ed. J. Jennifer Jones, *Romantic Circles* (August 2010), https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/sublime_education/ferguson/ferguson.html.

[22] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "What is Education?" *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 330, 331.

> form an idea his education was already begun; the education of circumstances—insensible education—which, like insensible perspiration, is of more constant and powerful effect, and of infinitely more consequence to the habit than that which is direct and apparent. This education goes on at every instant of time; it goes on *like* time; you can neither stop it nor turn its course.[23]

In Barbauld's revised account of education, she defines it as a "whole process" that begins at a very young age.[24] Knowledge is being unconsciously absorbed at all times in a variety of circumstances. This "education of circumstances" demonstrates how vital a child's surroundings or environments are to their education and emphasizes how much can be learned from ordinary, everyday experiences. Significantly, too, Barbauld aligns this kind of education with temporality. It goes on like time itself—it is perpetual—making it hard to manage and control. One of the dangers of the insensible nature of a perpetual education is that so much can get lost in the everyday. How does a young child sort through all of the occurrences and abstract nature of the everyday? What about all of the things they might miss?

As William Galperin has argued in his book, *The History of Missed Opportunities: British Romanticism and the Emergence of the Everyday*, the concept of the everyday emerged in the late eighteenth-century as an abstraction, or rather as something that "comes to consciousness as a missed opportunity."[25] Taking his cue from Maurice Blanchot's definition that the "everyday is what we never see a first time, but only see again," Galperin stresses how the everyday is something that is overlooked.[26] It is a proximate world or opportunity,

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[23] Ibid., 323. Original emphasis.
[24] Ibid., 322.
[25] William Galperin, *The History of Missed Opportunities: British Romanticism and the Emergence of the Everyday* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 6.
[26] Ibid.

environmental, but one that can only be seen or thought of in retrospect. Similarly, Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* takes up the everyday as an environmental concept, a little world that children inhabit, but cannot quite fully comprehend or organize. They often miss things at first glance or fail to see the significance, which is why the lessons focus so much on repetition. Once children read their little books, i.e. little worlds, repeatedly, they can begin to sort through what they missed at first glance.

This kind of repetition was also emphasized by associationism, which was highly influential for Barbauld. Barbauld's friendship with Joseph Priestley, the man who made David Hartley's associationist philosophy ubiquitous, influenced Barbauld's didactic project by showing her the importance of embodied repetition.[27] Hartley emphasizes repetition in the first part of his book on associationism. He writes: "It seems reasonable to expect, that, if a single sensation can leave a perceptible effect, trace, or vestige, for a short time, a sufficient repetition of a sensation may leave a perceptible effect of the same kind, but of a more permanent nature, i.e. an idea, which shall recur occasionally, at long distances of time, from the impression of the corresponding sensation, and *vice versa*."[28] Repetition makes ideas more permanent, revealing the value in the repetitive nature of Barbauld's didactic method. As Joanna Wharton has shown, associationism reveals itself in Barbauld's poetry through "the material world" and "habitual association."[29] Linking the habitual repetition involved in devotion to the natural objects that can

[27] As Isaac Kramnick notes, "Hartley, thanks to Priestley, was everywhere" ("Eighteenth-Century Science and Radical Social Theory: The Case of Joseph Priestley's Scientific Liberalism," *Journal of British Studies*, 25, no. 1 [January 1986]: 29).
[28] David Hartley, *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind on the Principle of the Association of Ideas with Essays Relating to the Subject of it by Joseph Priestley,* ed. Joseph Priestley, Second edition (London: J. Johnson, 1790), 13.
[29] Joanna Wharton, "Inscribing on the Mind: Anna Letitia Barbauld's 'Sensible Objects,'" *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (2012): 538.

be seen and smelled, i.e. "read" in nature, in Barbauld's poetry, Wharton argues that "sensing nature is equated with reading" and thus provides an "early intimation of how she [Barbauld] conceptualised both reading and devotion as embodied acts."[30] Everyday habits were important for inspiring religious devotion and the repetition or ritual involved in those habits made certain activities more important. Similarly, Barbauld's early didactic works for children, in particular *Lessons for Children*, emphasize reading as beneficial repetitive activity, one that would help a child find significance in the face of an overwhelming flux of everyday objects.

One primary way *Lessons for Children* helps child readers sort through their everyday circumstances is by surrounding the child reader in a world of everyday objects that eventually come to be organized by seasons. The first part of the first volume of *Lessons for Children Ages Two to Three Years Old* features many everyday objects, but hardly any temporal markers. The text mentions breakfast and dinner, but aside from these words, there is no concept of a day or time except through the continuous change of objects. The second half of the volume progresses to show how these numerous everyday objects come to be organized by a parameter of time: the time of a season.

> It is winter now, cold winter.
>
> There is ice in the pond.
>
> It hails.
>
> It snows.
>
> Will you run out in the snow?
>
> Go then.
>
> Let us make snow-balls.

[30] Ibid.

Pretty snow, how white it is,

And how soft it is.

Bring the snow to the fire.

See, see how it melts. It is

all gone, there is nothing

but water.[31]

Here, winter features prominently through its initial framing of the lesson and with its presence as the temporal now of the text. It is a familiar scene, but one that contains plenty of new objects—like ice, hail, and snow—for a two-year-old to learn. By beginning the lesson with the temporal "now" of winter, the text shows how a season can categorize these new weather objects in real time for young readers. The lesson is interactive, ordering readers to run out and experience the elements of weather by making a snowball. This tactile firsthand experience becomes a lesson for teaching children about changes in states of matter, or how a solid can change over time with regard to temperature. Instructed to apply heat to the snow as one would in an experiment, readers observe the snow melt. With the repetition of "see," the change is accentuated, but the reiteration also implies a redirection of a child's attention to the object. A reader, especially a young reader, might fail to see the significance or variation upon first observation. In Barbauld's pedagogical project, as I'll expand upon in a later section of this chapter, part of the lesson is in its repetition, which defines the process required to build strong habits and ideas like Hartley's associationism stressed. In this particular winter lesson, the text prompts young children to reread the scene, to return what they might have missed because

[31] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children, from Two to Three Years Old* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), 34-35.

empirical evidence requires second, third, etc. readings. Here, rereading also implies a return to the beginning of the lesson when and where the frame of winter takes precedence, or when and where a season might hold a temporal presence, to show readers how objects can be organized by a season.

The first volume of *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old* follows this winter lesson with an additional seasonal lesson in order to educate readers about another kind of time: the future. In this particular case, spring is used to teach young readers about the future tense as well as how knowledge can build over time. In this vernal section, the verb tense is mostly future tense and marks a drastic shift from the present tense and use of imperative that dominates most of the book.

> When spring comes again
> There will be green leaves
> And flowers, daisies and
> pinks, and violets, and
> roses; and there will be
> young lambs, and warm
> weather. Come again
> spring.
> It rains hard.
> See how it rains.[32]

Due to its future tense, spring is not a temporal frame for the "now" of reading. Instead it is a frame for what "will be." In this vernal scene, the imperative is no longer addressed to Charles or

[32] Ibid., 36-37.

readers, but instead to spring. Spring is directed to "come again," emphasizing on the one hand anticipation for its future return, but on the other hand the season's past completion.[33] This imperative introduces not just the temporal form of the future, but also the recurrent temporality of seasons. There has been a previous season of spring that revealed "green leaves," the various flowers, as well as the birth of young animals, and this creates an anticipation for it to "come again." In this way, the lesson is still about repetition, encouraging readers to take notice of certain phenomena, to "see" just how hard it rains. But it also encourages these observations because they will be the foundation for future knowledge. In this way, readers are taught that things can and likely will repeat in the future and that knowledge is based on cumulative experience.

It is important that seasons are a child's first introduction to divisions of time in Barbauld's books because one of the first lessons of her next volume, *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old Part 1* (1779), features a lesson on time that is full of repetition, but is actually quite abstract. The child reader needs some prior knowledge to make sense of it. As Barbauld writes to her reader at the beginning of the book: "I hope you have been good boy, and read all the pretty words I wrote you before. You have, you say; you have read them till you are tired, and you want some more new lessons."[34] The earlier books provide a foundation for the knowledge that is to come, and the lessons that they learned from seasons, in particular the way seasons organized natural phenomena and represented present and future temporalities, will be the basis for an understanding of time in this lesson. In essence, the child reader applies the very

[33] I will return to these two temporalities later in the chapter, but I want to highlight Barbauld's use of spring in this dual temporal mode—one that highlights the season's promissory potential as well as its cyclical return from the past.
[34] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old Part 1* (Dublin: R. Jackson, at the Globe No. 20 Meath-Street, 1779), 4.

lesson of spring from the first volume: knowledge is cumulative. In the very first lesson of *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old Part 1*, Barbauld bombards the reader with various categories of time. The first lesson is also based on a question and answer format, demonstrating again how the experience of reading is meant to be interactive.

> What is to day, Charles?
>
> To day is Sunday.
>
> And what is to morrow?
>
> To morrow will be Monday.
>
> And what will the next day be?
>
> The next day will be Tuesday.
>
> And the next day?
>
> Wednesday.
>
> And the next?
>
> Thursday.
>
> And the next?
>
> Friday.
>
> And the next?
>
> Saturday.
>
> And what will come after Saturday?
>
> Why then, Sunday will come again.
>
> Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. That makes seven days, and seven days make
>
> A week.

And you know how much four weeks make?

How much?

A month. And twelve months make a year—January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December.[35]

The reader, or Charles, is prompted with each question and it is here, as Ferguson argues, "one can see Barbauld deploying a technique that is fundamental to much of her writing for children: she draws out from Charles an observation that shows the pressure of his thought [. . .] Moreover, subsequent lessons pick up on the same basic topics, recasting the days of the week in terms of past, present, and future."[36] The conservational style of Barbauld's lesson demonstrates how thought comes to be represented by way of speech in real time, but the lesson is also on temporality itself. At the start of the lesson, the child reader begins by repeating days of the week, only to soon learn how these days will turn into weeks, and then months, and so on. It is a graduated lesson that reveals how everyday time can be divided and measured, even scaled up or scaled down. It can have various durations that make up one's past, present, and future, but the divisions appear somewhat arbitrary and abstract. The child has not yet learned what all of these terms of temporality mean. They only learn from this lesson that the everyday time that they frame in terms of Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays repeats, but there are no objects or phenomena in the lesson to be learned. The child has no way of attaching meaning to the divisions of time and as a result time, especially everyday time, feels very abstract.

Yet, the next lesson, or rather the next twelve lessons help readers make sense of everyday time through a series of "striking circumstances" that make up a natural calendar. [37]

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[35] Ibid., 5-8.
[36] Frances Ferguson, "The Novel Comes of Age," 48-9.
[37] Aikin, *The Calendar of Nature*, v.

The abstract temporal lesson is followed by monthly descriptions that are filled with objects, thus helping readers ground the everyday in natural settings. Indeed, these are the same monthly descriptions, or "striking circumstances," that inspired Barbauld's brother's natural calendar. It is a monthly calendar, one that Pope likely would have found too repetitive, but the repetition is punctuated by seasonal descriptions that occur throughout the calendar. For example, when the month of April is described, birds, flowers, and trees fill the scene and seasonal time reenters:

> April is come, and the birds sing, and the trees are in blossom, and flowers are coming out, and butterflies, and the sun shines. Now it rains. It rains and the sun shines. There is a rainbow. O what fine colours! Pretty bright rain-bow [sic]! No, you cannot catch it, it is in the sky. It is going away. It fades. It is quite gone. I hear the cuckow. He says, cuckow! Cuckow! He is come to tell us it is spring.[38]

Although this is a lesson supposedly about April, the lesson ends with a heralding of spring signifying the season's importance; it is ultimately the temporal frame that can house all of these natural objects and phenomena. But the very beginning of the lesson also cues the child reader as "April is come" echoes the "When spring comes again" of the earlier lesson on spring. In this way, all of the descriptions of the natural phenomena that follow—the birds singing, the blooming flowers, the blossoming trees, the rain, and rainbow—are organized by the reader's prior knowledge of spring. Although time can be divided into days, weeks, and months, seasonal frames are better suited to organize the various phenomena of the everyday, especially the natural phenomena of a child's little world. As the cuckoo proclaims at the end of the lesson, even birds, too, know the time of the year, the time of spring, thus demonstrating how seasons organize not just human life, but all kinds of species life. Other categories of time, like days of

[38] Barbauld, *Lessons for Children of Three Years Old Part 1*, 14-15.

the week and months might be important for humans to learn by rote, but seasons determine the actions of all creatures. As if to stress the significance of seasons, the natural calendar or the monthly lessons end with December's final line being again about spring: "Well, Spring will come again sometime."[39]

As Barbauld's *Lessons* show, seasons are an ideal temporal parameter for negotiating and sorting the everyday flux of objects. Nature had long been organized around agricultural movements, but these agricultural periods did not matter to children. It was their quotidian worlds and the daily objects that they encountered that were in need of organizing as well as the comprehension of those objects. Barbauld's utilization of seasons in *Lessons for Children* fulfills this need by showing young readers how everyday objects and daily life can be organized by seasons because they made circumstances all the more striking. For Barbauld, this significance would ultimately have a religious undertone, but in her early lessons, seasons taught readers valuable lessons about how everyday life could be significantly less abstract and more noticeable.

2. Scaling Down the Book of Nature: Seasonal Ecologies and Perpetual Reading in *Hymns in Prose for Children*

A few years later, Barbauld published *Hymns in Prose for Children*, another didactic work for children, but one that was noticeably more religious. In *Hymns in Prose*, seasons are even more prominent. The original 1781 publication had twelve hymns, but it was not a monthly calendar. Instead seasons are dispersed throughout the collection, with the second hymn describing spring, the seventh hymn summer, and the final hymn returning to spring, or rather a

[39] Ibid., 40

promised land of perpetual spring. In 1814, three hymns were added after the ninth hymn, making the seasonal rotation more explicit as one hymn featured a description of autumn and one of winter.

Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose* uses seasons as way of mediating God for young readers, scaling down an abstraction to correspond to their small worlds. It also uses seasons in order to teach children about perennial time. In this next section, I connect the organizational work that seasons did in *Lessons for Children* in terms of the abstractness of everyday temporality to Barbauld's desire to teach children about a religious, and abstract, grand design of nature in *Hymns in Prose*. I also demonstrate how Barbauld's trope of an "eternal" or "perpetual" spring utilizes the perennial temporality of seasons in order to encourage readers to perpetually read their environments.

Barbauld intended for *Hymns in Prose* "to impress" upon "infant mind[s]" as early as possible by "connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects; with all that he sees, all he hears, all that affects his young mind with wonder or delight."[40] Spring, or infancy, is the time in a person's life when they are primed for education. Barbauld extends this aspect of spring's trope to her collection of hymns, making spring prominent from the very beginning. She also uses the hymns to show young readers how seasons house various young creatures and beings that will activate their senses. In this way, the hymns become intimate environments themselves, highlighting the relations creatures have with one another and their settings; they are ecological.

Beginning with the second hymn of *Hymns in Prose*, Barbauld introduces the seasonal structure for her hymns with spring. The hymn commences with the familiar imperative, "Come,

[40] Barbauld, "Preface," *Hymns in Prose for Children*, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 238.

let us go forth," from her previous works, but also grounds its descriptions in spring's small and emerging life forms. Hymn II runs through a number of "young animals"—from "young goslings," to "young chickens" and "lambs"—to effectively situate young readers in a small world of baby animals like themselves.[41] The hymn further encourages these ecological connections by describing these infant animals' fledging environments.

> The young goslings are running upon the green, they are just hatched, their bodies covered with yellow down; the old ones hiss with anger if any one comes near.
>
> The hen sits upon her nest of straw, she watches patiently the full time, then she carefully breaks the shell, and the young chickens come out.
>
> The lambs just dropt are in the field, they totter by the side of their dams, their young limbs can hardly support their weight.
>
> If you fall, little lambs, you will not be hurt; there is spread under you a carpet of soft grass, it is spread on purpose to receive you.[42]

Each young animal's immediate, postnatal surroundings are described. From these intimate settings of a "nest of straw" and "a carpet of soft grass," the text frames these tiny worlds as distinctly vernal environments. Like the various young animals newly born, young readers, too, are in the spring of their life. They can relate to the scene because the vernal world mimics their own world, a world seen through fresh eyes and felt by fledgling limbs.

The vernal hymn effectively situates young readers in a postnatal world much like their own in order to lead young readers to an idea of God, or an abstraction that can eventually become knowable through the hymn's vernal ecology. By ecology, I mean the way in which the

[41] Ibid., 239.
[42] Ibid., 239-40.

described environment in the hymn stresses the relations between living beings in a given setting. The plethora of young animals described in the hymn "are glad to be alive" and this allows them to "thank him that has made them alive."[43] Like the other young animals, children, too, the hymn instructs, should be glad to be alive. Children and various species are connected because they are all alive. In other words, being alive or being created unites all living things, essentially defining an ecology, or rather an environment that stresses the relations between living beings. As the hymn makes clear, there is no way of knowing God directly except through the mere fact of feeling "glad to be alive" and in this way the ecological web of all living creations is what points to a divine creator. Although this might be a reductive ontological argument for God, it still attempts to show young readers how they might read an abstraction like the idea of God in the various species they encounter during the season of spring. With its abundant representations of young life and the relations among them, the vernal hymn provides the spatiotemporal frame for connecting young readers to a creator. In other words, spring mediates the experience of being alive in order for readers to feel connected to an entity that exists outside of their direct experience.

Similarly, another hymn uses the seasonal time of the year and its ecology, or the relations between life forms and various phenomena, to scale down the abstract notion of God. Hymn VII begins with the familiar imperative and a description of the time of the year and day:

> Come, let us go into the thick shade, for it is noon of day, and the summer sun beats hot upon our heads.
>
> The shade is pleasant, and cool; the branches meet above our heads, and shut out the sun, as with a green curtain; the grass is soft to our feet, and a clear

[43] Ibid., 240.

brook washes the roots of the trees.[44]

In a scene highly reminiscent of James Thomson's *Summer* georgic, young readers are escorted to a location that is multisensorial.[45] Highly tactile, the description of the heat of the sun and the refreshing cool temperatures of the shade situate readers upon a "soft" grass, listening to a nearby "murmuring" brook. Cattle, too, "lie down to sleep in the cool shade."[46] With senses awakened, the reader is then shown how "all of these things that we see are his work."[47] The various flora and fauna of summer, the sights, smells, and sounds—in essence summer's ecology—all signify a creator. There is no firsthand experience of a deity, the only firsthand experiences are a child's sensory encounters with aestival phenomena. As the hymn goes on to remind readers, "We that are so young, are but lately made alive; therefore we should not forget his forming hand, who hath made us alive."[48] Being alive is again what connects the child reader to other living things as well as a higher form, and being alive means being able to smell, hear, and see one's surroundings. In other words, the hymn's seasonal ecology connects young readers to a more abstract deity. Summer reminds children that God can be read and sensed in its seasonal vitality and environment.

In the 1814 edition of *Hymns in Prose*, autumnal and winter hymns are added to make the collection's seasonal cycle more complete. The autumnal hymn teaches readers about the importance of scaling up from their scenes of "little observation."[49] Hymn XI begins with a description of autumn:

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[44] Ibid., 246.
[45] See lines 431-500 specifically. James Thomson, *Summer*, in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 49-50.
[46] Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children*, 246.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 254.

> The golden orb of the sun is sunk behind the hills, the colours fade away from the western sky, and the shades of evening fall fast around me.
>
> Deeper and deeper they stretch over the plain; I look at the grass, it is no longer green; the flowers are no more tinted with various hues; the houses, the trees, the cattle are all lost in the distance. The dark curtain of night is let down over the works of God; they are blotted out from the view, as if they were no longer there.[50]

Much like Alexander Pope's pastoral "Autumn," the time of day, evening, also represents the time of year.[51] The year has faded, the world is no longer green, and it is fast disappearing from view. The passage is melancholic in tone, drawing its initial mood from autumn's trope, but the tone shifts to remind young readers of the vast opportunities of knowledge that exist beyond the dark world.

> Child of little observation! canst thou see nothing because thou canst not see grass and flowers, trees and cattle? Lift up thine eyes from the ground shaded with darkness, to the heavens that are stretched over thy head; see how the stars one by one appear and light up the vast concave.[52]

Autumn frames the time of year for gaining new perspectives of phenomena that exist outside a child's world. It is a time for scaling up and achieving greater heights of wisdom, wisdom akin to that of a middle-aged adult, or a person in the autumnal period of their life. Unlike the grass,

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[50] Ibid.
[51] As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Pope's pastorals begin with early morning in "Spring," afternoon in "Summer," evening "Autumn," and end with "Winter" at end of day or near midnight. This timeline also follows Northrop Frye's four-phase cyclical symbol structure. See Alexander Pope, "Pastorals," *Alexander Pope: The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1-16.
[52] Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children*, 254.

flowers, and cattle of that populated the ecologies of the spring and summer hymns, this autumnal hymn stresses an ecology that goes beyond terrestrial forms to more abstract cosmological forms. Yet, these abstract forms are still grounded in very human forms as the description of autumnal constellations illustrates: "Now Orion heaves his bright shoulder above the horizon, and Sirius, the dog star, follows him, the brightest of the train."[53] The constellation, in essence a personified form, makes the "infinite space" of the vast universe relatable to young observers. They are encouraged to see how the "various forms and natures and senses and occupations of the peopled universe" are all the work of a "Maker of so many worlds."[54] The hymn encourages the sage reflection that the trope of autumn evokes; it teaches young reader to see how worlds, no matter how minute or vast, are interconnected.

The winter hymn, or Hymn XII, echoes the earlier winter lesson of *Lessons for Children* by beginning with the season's temporal presence: "It is now Winter, dead Winter."[55] Yet this hymn's version of winter features a bleaker landscape. There is "desolation and silence" and all the vivacious sights and sounds of the previous seasons have disappeared.[56]

> No singing of birds is heard, no humming of insects. The streams murmur no longer; they are locked up in frost.
>
> The trees lift their naked boughs like withered arms into the bleak sky; the green sap no longer rises in their veins; the flowers and sweet smelling shrubs are decayed to their roots.
>
> The sun himself looks cold and cheerless; he gives like only enough to

[53] Ibid., 255.
[54] Ibid., 255, 256.
[55] Ibid., 256.
[56] Ibid..

show the universal desolation.[57]

The winter hymn's ecology appears at first to be distinctly dead. There is no life to connect the child reader to other species. No sights or sounds or smells to awaken their senses. How can God be sensed in this environment that appears to have no life, no ecology of living beings? Yet, the hymn enlivens this barren scene with an apostrophe, "O Nature."[58] This is the first time the literary device of apostrophe enters *Hymns in Prose* and its repetition four times throughout the twelfth hymn makes it even more significant. Like *Lessons for Children*'s winter frame that demonstrates a temporal now, Hymn XII uses apostrophe to illustrate, as Jonathan Culler famously argues of the rhetorical device, the "temporality of writing," or a "special temporality which is the set of all moments at which writing can say 'now.'"[59] Winter's presence in this hymn is fully felt through the absence of all living things. Like, as Culler describes, the embarrassing or uncomfortable apostrophe that turns away from readers to address a nonliving form, the apostrophes to nature in this hymn signify the dialectical nature of winter's dead forms. For "children shall live again," and "their winter shall pass away," thus demonstrating that life, or a deity's presence can still be found in this winter ecology.[60] The hymn uses the trope of winter to demonstrate how the time of year both denotes an end to mortal life as well as a deferred rebirth.

Hymns in Prose does not end with this winter hymn, but instead returns to spring in its final hymn. In fact, Barbauld appends a special significance to spring by bookending *Hymns in Prose* with this particular season. Spring becomes a trope for depicting the educational process

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Jonathan Culler, "Apostrophe," *Diacritics* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 66.
[60] Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose*, 256, 257.

of perpetual reading, or a kind of reading that continually tries to read through the abstract nature of the everyday. During her trip to France in 1785, Barbauld wrote of a "climate of perpetual spring."[61] Dated October 13, 1785, in a letter written to her brother from Noyon, France, she states: "We are not yet, however, in the climate of perpetual spring;—like an enchanted island, it seems to fly from us."[62] A later letter written from Carcasonne, France in February 1786 refers to this leg of her journey with almost the same wording: "At Lyons the winter was still at our heels, so down the rapid Rhone we sailed in search of the climate of perpetual spring, but like some enchanted island it seemed to fly from our pursuit."[63] In these letters, spring exists as a prospect of the future, worthy of pursuit, but always just a bit beyond one's reach. Although Barbauld is writing of her travels throughout France several years after *Hymns in Prose* was published, her treatment of spring in these letters mimics the trope of an "eternal spring" with which she concludes *Hymns in Prose*. In the final hymn, spring represents the process of reading that must be continually enacted; it is an object of pursuit that cannot ever be fully achieved on earth.

The final vernal hymn begins by describing a life cycle on earth, or the path that a "child of mortality" would expect to follow.[64] "Spring is pleasant, but it is soon past: the summer is bright, but the winter destroyeth the beauty thereof."[65] This is a revolution of an annual cycle of seasons on earth, but it is also metatextual in that it refers to the seasonal cycle of the collection of hymns. Coming full circle, *Hymns in Prose* completes its cycle of seasons, beginning in spring again. By bookending the hymns with spring, readers return to spring, leaving winter's

[61] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "Letters," in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld: With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 34.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 76.
[64] Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose*, 257.
[65] Ibid., 259.

ostensibly dead forms behind, thus demonstrating the perennial temporality of seasons. The final hymn accentuates this perennial temporality by describing a land where there is "eternal spring" and "perpetual hymn."[66] This is the promised land of heaven, but the hymn locates this promised land in the climate of perpetual spring, or rather "eternal spring." It is where "the cold of winter shall not wither us, nor the heats of summer scorch us."[67] Spring again is used to frame the future or what will happen, but the hymn also stresses perpetual time in what readers should do "now on earth." It concludes with:

> We cannot see him here, but we will love him here: we must be now on earth, but we will often think on heaven.
>
> That happy land is our home: we are to be here but for a little while, and there for ever, even for ages of eternal years.[68]

Significantly, the reader's temporal "now" is accentuated as well as a lack of perception of the present. The everyday, or the present, has not revealed God through firsthand experience, but instead reminds readers that they must return to what they missed. They must occupy their "now" on earth, their everyday, by rereading the hymns again. It might be the end of the book, but the seasonal cycle has begun again and they, too, must reread the hymns and their ecologies; they must read the collection of hymns again to find out what they missed.

Upon rereading the hymns, they might find that the middle hymn, Hymn VI, stresses this same lesson and process of perpetual reading. Like the repetition for the child to "see" again in the winter lesson of *Lessons for Children, Hymns in Prose* stresses perpetual time and more specifically the perpetual reading of one's surroundings when it comes to reading the book of

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 260.
[68] Ibid.

nature. Hymn VI begins with a question directed to the "Child of Reason" and "What has thine eye observed, and whither has thy foot been wandering?"[69] With its attention to eyes and sensory data, the hymn underscores what can be verified empirically, but also what it means miss things at first experience. The hymn then prompts the reader after its descriptions of wandering in the "thick grass" of meadows or "thick forests," scenes that are "bright with summer" with questions: "Didst thou see nothing more?" and "Didst thou hear nothing more?"[70] The questions are then followed by a repeated imperative: "Return again, child of Reason, for there are greater things such as these."[71] The child of reason returns again in the active verb of the imperative because of what she failed to perceive. Steeped in the Enlightenment tradition, Barbauld's didactic lesson emphasizes rationalism, but also how reason and logic are insufficient when it comes to the everyday flux of experiences. In these commands to return again, the hymn encourages the child reader to reread against the grain of the "thick forests" in order to find what they missed in summer's ecology. These imperatives emphasize the gaps in human perception by showing readers that a scene, however small, in the book of nature is never the same scene upon a reader's return—its seasonal ecologies, its hymns, require repeated or perpetual readings.

3. Coda: No "Second Spring" for England

Nearly thirty years, many of them filled with war and revolution, separate *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* from Barbauld's early didactic works. Despite these years, the poem's inclusion of seasons in its final turn shows how seasons in Barbauld's oeuvre continue to mediate between the small and large worlds of immediate experience and abstraction. Recent

[69] Ibid., 245
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

arguments about *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* reveal the poem's keen ability to render the "present unfamiliar" and how "Barbauld's representation, her history of the future, provides a medium for critiquing present policies of Britain.[72] Utilizing complex temporalities in an attempt to critique Britain's present, Barbauld does not just render the present unfamiliar, she shows how the present is always already something unfamiliar and often misread. Therefore, she again turns to seasons in the final part of the poem in order to reveal the dire situation of the present and to attack Britain for its arrogance.

When Barbauld writes *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, she is frustrated with England's participation in almost twenty-year war with France, a war that was also being fought on an intercontinental level. By this time in her career, after writing several political essays and discourses in the 1790s including an epistle to William Wilberforce in favor of his bill to abolish the slave trade 1791, she was a more firmly established proponent of political action. She believed in a poem's ability to "rouse" others.[73] As Laura Mandell argues, "*Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* does not simply present a theory of personified power; it also enacts it in its personifications."[74] Hopeful that the animating properties of personification will affect readers similarly, Barbauld desires to "produce a community of active, responsible citizens" in the poem's "vivifying" personified forms.[75] Yet, contemporaries of Barbauld did not receive the

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[72] Emily Rohrbach, "Anna Barbauld's History of the Future: A Deviant Way to Poetic Agency," *European Romantic Review* 17, no.2 (April 2006): 185.
[73] As Barbauld writes in her early poem "To Mrs. P," poetry can rouse others: "by well set syllables, and potent sound / Can rouse, can chill the breast, can sooth, can wound; / To life adds motion, and to beauty soul / And breathes a spirit through the finish'd whole" ("To Mrs. P[riestley] With Some Drawings of Birds and Insects." *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 44-49, ll. 13-17.
[74] Laura Mandell, "'Those Limbs Disjointed of Gigantic Power': Barbauld's Personifications and the (Mis)Attribution of Political Agency," *Studies in Romanticism* 27, no. 1 (1998): 37.
[75] Ibid., 41.

poem well. Many criticized the poem harshly, most notably John Wilson Croker, who wrote, "We had hoped, indeed, that the empire might have been saved without the intervention of a lady-author."[76] Croker's attack was not just on Barbauld's gender. He also lambasted her use of "satire" and saw her "phraseology [as] somewhat quaint and obscure."[77] He thought her personifications tried to do too much. As Croker wrote of the personified Genius that turns away from England at the end of the poem, "there is nothing good, bad, or indifferent that this Genius does not do."[78]

Croker's critique is worth close reading in order to see how the everyday present is often obscured and misread. In his well-known critical review of Barbauld's poem, Croker takes particular interest in lines 55-66 of the poem that describe England in a "fallen state" and the market districts and streets of England as "sad" and with "altered looks."[79] These lines speak of England's wealth dissolving and "the golden tide of commerce" leaving its shores and are apt poetic observations after the numerous merchant bankruptcies in 1810 and depreciation of British currency in 1811.[80] But Croker deems them improbable and unrealistic:

> We do not know where Mrs. Anna Letitia now resides, though we can venture to assert that it is not on Parnassus: it must, however, be in some equally unfrequented, though less classical region; for the description just quoted is no more like the scene that is really before *our* eyes, than Mrs. Barbauld's satire is

[76] John Wilson Croker, *The Quarterly Review: March & June, 1812, Vol. VII*, second edition, (London: John Murray, 1814), 309.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 312.
[79] Ibid., 310.
[80] See E.J. Clery's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven: Poetry, Protest, and Economic Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

like her 'Lessons for Children," or her 'Hymns in Prose.'[81]

For Croker, the description of England seems foreign; it is as though Barbauld is writing from a different place and time. He is unable to see the present state of things and also incorrectly assumes that Barbauld's poem for adults doesn't have a didactic intent like her earlier works. The scene that Croker critiques is one in which the poem describes a speculative scene in London. The streets and outdoor markets are empty and merchants and friends can't bear to look one another in the eye as the "the tempest [is] blackening in the distant West."[82] It is in some sense a projection, but it is also one that reveals the actuality of the present economic crisis through the very "mists" or fog of the present. Or, as the poem depicts it: "Thy baseless wealth dissolves in the air away/ Like mists that melt before the morning ray" (53-4). England does not realize that "Ruin, as with an earthquake shock, is here" and Croker's review reveals his misreading of not only Barbauld's use of satire, but the present economic crisis; it does not even register as a scene before his eyes (50).

Much like the empirical gaps that *Hymns in Prose* highlights, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* reveals how the present is often overlooked and misread. Croker's inability to see Britain's present economic crisis demonstrates how the abstractness of the everyday needs to be mediated through another temporal parameter. Barbauld plays with temporality via prophecy, a role that has been well covered by critics like William Keach and Daniel Watkins, but she also uses prophecy in order to educate readers about their current time.[83] Emily Rohrbach has also

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[81] Croker, 310.

[82] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, A Poem*, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 163, l. 60. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically.

[83] See William Keach, "Regency Prophecy and the End of Anna Barbauld's Career," *Studies in Romanticism* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 569-577 and Daniel P. Watkins, *Anna Letitia Barbauld and 18th-Century Visionary Poetics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

argued that Barbauld's projects a vision into the future that "unsettles the present's familiarity" and makes the present become "something other than a given."[84] But, much like she did in her earlier didactic works, Barbauld also uses seasons as a way of accentuating how the present can be felt through embodied, sensory experiences and an ecology of living things—all which can also be connected to climate.

Mary A. Favret reads the opening of Barbauld's poem—its storms, tempests, and earthquakes—as indicative of "the climate of war."[85] The poem begins with the drums of war, a rhythmic movement that insinuates not only how time beats on, but how war seems at a distance: "Still the loud death drum, thundering from afar, / O'er the vext nations pours the storm of war (1-2). As the "still" implies, the poem begins in medias res, in the midst of the present state of things that seem to be happening from "afar," but are actually "here," in Britain. The poem continues a few stanzas later:

> And think'st thou, Britain, still to sit at east,
> An island Queen amidst thy subject seas,
> While the vext billows, in their distant roar,
> But soothe thy slumbers, and but kiss thy shore?
> To sport in wars, while danger keeps aloof,
> Thy grassy turf unbruised by hostile hoof?
> So sing thy flatters; but, Britain, know,
> Thou who hast shared the guilt must share the woe.
> Nor distant is the hour; low murmurs spread,

[84] Rohrbach, "Anna Barbauld's History of the Future," 181, 185.
[85] Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 124.

And whispered fears, creating what they dread;

Ruin, as with earthquake shock, is here.

(39-49)

The poem brings destruction forcibly into the present, attempting to connect detached Britons to an urgent and immediate cause. Favret's influential reading of war at a distance in the Romantic period demonstrates how the present came to be illegible during this time of war. As she writes, "distant war unsettled basic temporal experiences of the British population."[86] The everyday experience, or one's experience of the present, was often mediated and "clock time" could not fully resolve the "tumult" of war as William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), and Favret's reading of it, illustrates.[87] Time was unsettled and clock time, or its Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, etc., did not help readers in this midst of this temporal turmoil. Attuned to the political and economic crisis of her time, Barbauld turns to seasons to depict the present climate.

It is in the poem's final turn where the poem lodges its most bitter attack of England, and it does so with seasons and a focus on seasonal temporality that isn't perennial, but instead terminates with winter's dead forms. The end is highly climactic and also climatic. A personified Genius looks to leave England, and personified forms of Science and Art will soon follow. Even the ingenuity of a greenhouse, the product of "Science and Art" cannot save England, because "While crystal walls the tenderer plants confine, / The fragrant orange and the nectared pine," eventually "to other climes the Genius soars" (299, 295-6, 321). "London Art and "Her summer ices and her winter rose" eventually are depicted as an empire in decline.

[86] Favret, 11.
[87] Ibid., 55-56.

Science and Art urge on the useful toil,
New mould a climate and create the soil,
Subdue the rigour of the northern Bear,
O'er polar climes shed aromatic air,
On yielding Nature urge their new demands,
And ask not gifts but tribute at her hands.
London exults:–on London Art bestows
Her summer ices and her winter rose;
Gems of the East her mural crown adorn,
And Plenty at her feet pours forth her horn;
While even the exiles her just laws disclaim,
People a continent, and build a name:
August she sits, and with extended hands
Holds forth the book of life to distant lands.
But fairest flowers expand but to decay;
The worm is in thy core, thy glories pass away;
Arts, arms and wealth destroy the fruits they bring;
Commerce, like beauty, knows no second spring.

(299-316)

The greenhouse rose in winter and the ice during summer stand as symbols for England's superiority and imperial domination, testaments for the country's triumph over nature, but these victories are not perennial. England's outlook is bleak. Unlike the flowers that return in spring in her books for children, or a perpetual spring, this poem depicts no "second spring" for England

or return of economic power. There is no second youth or second spring for England as the poem closes the "book of life" on it. England's "glories [will] pass away" and end like the "fairest flowers."

No "second spring" for the personified English commerce is a stark contrast from the motif of perpetual spring in Barbauld's works for children and it comes at a time when she felt English citizens were arrogant about their current state as a nation. In a letter to Judith Beecroft, Barbauld wrote of her opinion of the poem after Croker's review:

> I acknowledge it to be gloomy and I am sure I do not wish to be a true prophet, yet when one sees the continual change, the astonishing revolutions which have changed and do change the political face of the globe, what nation as the right to say 'My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved.[88]

Continual change, or perpetual change in the everyday, is what prompts Barbauld to write *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. Our current time of climate change has also been described as a time of not only perpetual change, but ubiquitous change. In a 2017 *South Atlantic Quarterly* special issue on climate change and the production of knowledge, editors Ian Baucom and Matthew Omelsky not only identify a new epistemological landscape in "these times of ubiquitous change," but they also argue that our current "order of knowledge [. . .] has been deeply affected by the climatic shifts that we live and experience each day."[89] The way we come to know things, especially abstract concepts like climate change, through our everyday encounters is itself being affected by an omnipresent force. In Barbauld's time, she desires to

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[88] Anna Letitia Barbauld to Judith Beecroft nee Dixon, 19 March [1812]; cit. William McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 48.

[89] Ian Baucom and Matthew Omelsky, "Knowledge in the Age of Climate Change," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, no. 1 (January 2017): 2, 3.

upset an island nation's false sense of invulnerability that results from a nation-at-large's inability to perceive its present political climate. England's summer ice and winter roses represent England's arrogance as well as a sense of seasonal disorder that will result in in a gloomy forecast for England, its commerce, and its Plenty. Nature's cornucopia is not boundless. England might now have "Plenty at her feet pours forth her horn," but the harvest ends with no return of spring for its "Commerce." The poem's turn to seasons in its final lines demonstrates a desire to represent the climatic disorder of the globe and the obscurity of the present.

Climate change in our current time requires a different kind of reading for registering its impact not only on future events, but also on our present actions. When combined with the geological epoch of the Anthropocene, climate further pushes the limits of human thought and experience and, as Amitov Ghosh writes, "the Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity."[90] Furthermore, Timothy Clark writes of how the Anthropocene comes to be understood as "an emergent 'scale effect.' That is, at a certain indeterminate threshold, numerous actions, insignificant in themselves (heating house, clearing trees, flying between the continents, forest management) come together to form a new, imponderable physical event, altering the basic ecological cycles of the planet."[91] With their attention to the small-scale environments that are housed in seasonal frames, Barbauld's didactic works anticipate such a need to redefine our ways of reading. Like the "child of little observation" in Hymn XI we must learn to connect the smaller, everyday, even ubiquitous scene to the more abstract concept of climate, and this form of reading is not close or distant—it is perpetual. For in that "return again" we encounter the

[90] Amitov Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 62
[91] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 72.

limits of the present and our empirical gaps of perception, perennially striving to uncover what we might have missed.

II. Summer, or The Georgic's Hurricane Season: Mediating Natural Disasters in the Torrid Zone

On the night of November 26, 1703, a hurricane blew through much of southern England. Thousands of chimneys were destroyed, and the death toll was high—around 8,000 people are estimated to have died, many of whom were British naval officers at sea.[1] The Great Storm of 1703, as it was later named, was an unprecedented and highly irregular meteorological event for England. As Daniel Defoe wrote:

> In short, Horror and Confusion seiz'd upon all, whether on Shore or at Sea: No Pen can describe it, no Tongue can express it, no Thought conceive it, unless some of those who were in the Extremity of it; and who, being touch'd with a due sense of the sparing Mercy of their Maker, retain the deep Impressions of his Goodness upon their Minds, tho' the Danger be past: and of those I doubt the Number is but few.[2]

The storm was indescribable and unthinkable, but try to describe it is exactly what Defoe did. In the weeks following the hurricane, he sought firsthand accounts and compiled them into a book called *The Storm* that was published in August 1704. He also published a pamphlet in verse, *An Essay on the Late Storm* (1704), in his efforts to depict "the Greatest, the Longest in Duration, the widest in Extent, of all the Tempests and Storms that History gives any Account of since the Beginning of Time."[3] Many writers and poets published their own works on the storm, like John Crabb's "A Poem Upon the Late Storm and Hurricane" (1704) and Anne Finch's "A Pindarick

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[1] See Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 45-6 and Vladimir Janković, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 61.
[2] Daniel Defoe, *The Storm* (London: G. Sawbridge, 1704), 70.
[3] Ibid., 11.

Poem: Upon the Hurricane in November 1703" (1713). Despite being indescribable and inconceivable as Defoe wrote, the storm produced a lot of prose and poetry in its aftermath.

Hurricanes are spatiotemporally complex weather events so it makes sense that they would be difficult to describe. As Defoe observed, they are massively distributed in time and space. [4] They appear to exist outside of normal parameters of space and time. Hurricanes form out of the variations and intensities of temperature difference and pressure that in turn create air flow and winds that go in all directions. Because of their highly irregular form, it is also difficult to determine their exact duration. As one Nevis inhabitant wrote of a hurricane that passed through the Caribbean islands on June 30, 1733:

> It began on the 30th of last Month about Break of Day, at the North-East, where it continued till near Ten, when it was at the Height from that Point; then, shifting for a little Space into the East, it suddenly pass'd with prodigious Force to the South-East, from whence it raged most furiously till Twelve; at Twelve there was a Clap of Thunder, which here is deem'd a sure Sign of the breaking up of a Storm; accordingly it respited till Two, and then began again with a louder Thunder-Clap than the first, but with less Fury than before; and between Three

[4] Hurricanes could be considered hyperobjects in how I'm describing them here, using Timothy Morton's phrasing: "Hyperobjects are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans" (*Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013], 1). But, one major critique of Morton's theory, in particular his classification of global warming as a hyperobject, is that climate change remains outside the purview of human perception, but also action. See Mark B. N. Hansen's essay for this critique: "Medium-Oriented Ontology," *ELH* 83, no. 2 (2016): 383-405. For the eighteenth-century poems that I analyze in this chapter, climate and natural disasters are difficult for humans to perceive. However, georgic poets actively sought for a way to mediate these spatiotemporally complex weather events in their poems. As a way of making sense of the complex weather events, they used seasons, or a frame of temporality that revolves around organizing human activity and species life in general, and thus saw action as intricately connected to these weather events.

> and Four it ended. The Accounts you will have of this Hurricane from the several Islands must needs differ widely; in one, it was perhaps the worst they ever felt in another, nothing considerable.[5]

In this anonymously published account, the islander tries to track the storm through time and not just through space. The winds change direction and the noontime thunder is supposed to toll the storm's conclusion, but the hurricane "begins again," ending instead at an approximate time, some time "between three and four." The storm's duration cannot be precisely described and its path is not entirely clear. The only thing that is a determinable is a hurricane's anomalous form in both time and space, which the variability of firsthand accounts makes visible. Or, as the passage puts it: "Accounts [. . .] must needs differ widely." Hurricanes seemed unknowable and even unthinkable "unless" one was "in the extremity of it," but even those accounts were highly variable and inconstant.

The sheer number of accounts of the 1703 storm and other weather disasters throughout the eighteenth century might rival the number of trees that were said to have fallen in the great storm of 1703 in England.[6] The increasing number of weather records emphasizes the eighteenth-century shift toward a more modern form of meteorology. Although many descriptions attributed the Great Storm of 1703 to an act of god, hurricane accounts were also part of a growing number of naturalist calendars and weather diaries that showed how, as Vladimir Janković has argued, "meteorology became a science of weather, not individual meteors."[7] Weather diaries in the early part of the eighteenth-century started off as journals that

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[5] *A Short Account of the Hurricane that Passed Through the English Leeward Caribee Islands on Saturday the 20th of June 1733* (London: J. Bretherton, 1733), 3-4.
[6] Defoe apparently stopped counting at 17,000 and this was just in the city of Kent. Defoe, *The Storm*, 70.
[7] Janković, 75.

included occasional mentions of the weather. Even Samuel Pepys's seventeenth-century diary had references to weather and temperature, but these remarks were sporadic. However, by the mid-eighteenth-century, weather became a central concern of daily journals.

For example, private weather diaries kept by Samuel Winter and Nicholas Blundell in the early eighteenth century demonstrate how weather was gradually becoming an object of empirical study; they also illustrate how seasons were particularly instrumental in determining patterns for regular and irregular weather. Winter's diary, for instance, takes note of anomalous weather in terms of seasons. In 1733, he wrote: "This year the months of November and December were so warm that the Birds of the Air thought it Spring and were Singing and building their nests as in April or May."[8] In this entry, Winter observed how the irregular weather was not just a series of warmer days, but rather weather that seemed as though it was a different season. Even other species were confused as birds started behaving as though it was spring. Here, he identifies a pattern in the weather via a seasonal framework and links species behavior to seasons. Similarly, Blundell's observations recorded what was seasonable versus unseasonable, or regular weather versus irregular weather, in the early eighteenth century. In the beginning of the century, he has sporadic observations based on a given day: "It was a wet day" for example.[9] But by 1709, his observations defined weather in terms of what was "seasonable weather" or not. For example, April 1709 features the entry: "The month had indifferent seasonable weather though a very backward spring it having been generally very cold and but a

[8] Typescript of Diary of Samuel Winter 1703-1771, MET/2/1/2/3/13, Box 5, Met Office National Meteorological Library and Archive, Exeter, England.
[9] Typescript of The Great Diurnall of Nicholas Blundell concerning weather the years 1702 to 1728, MET/2/1/2/3/23, Box 103, Met Office National Meteorological Library and Archive, Exeter, England.

little rain."[10] In contrast to this anomalous weather, May 1709 had "very seasonable weather and things as forward as could be expected considering some of the last months past."[11] Similarly, June 1710 had "very seasonable weather" and March 1711 had weather "proper for the season."[12] In Blundell's diary, he frequently aligns monthly weather with what is "seasonable," thus demonstrating the importance of seasonal parameters in determining patterns for weather. In other words, seasons helped eighteenth-century diarists make sense of the constant inconstancy of daily weather.

In this chapter, as in the previous one, I concentrate on the temporality of the everyday and the reading of one's surrounding environment, but I also turn to the complex spatiotemporalities of hurricanes as well as a different kind of season: a season that emerges from a disastrous weather phenomenon like a hurricane. Even though hurricanes are difficult to perceive and describe, the concept of a hurricane season makes the disastrous weather event a regular anomaly. In the twenty-first century, we are witness to hurricanes or typhoons forming often days before they reach land. Modern-day meteorologists use data that is now available from satellites and the wire circuits that were put up along U.S. coastlines to predict a hurricane's landfall. These same wire circuits also assist in creating what we now define as hurricane season—June 1-November 30.[13] Eighteenth-century observers of hurricanes did not have access

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] This date range has increased from the originally proposed dates, June 15-October 31, over the past fifty years. Many scientists are arguing for this seasonal parameter to be lengthened as well because of the occurrences of hurricanes beyond this time frame. See James P. Kossin, "Is the North Atlantic hurricane season getting longer?" *Geophysical Research Letters* 35 (December 9, 2008): L23705, https://doi.org/10.1029/2008GL036012 and Andrea Thompson, "Is Warming Changing Boundaries of Hurricane Season?" *Climate Central* (May 15, 2015), https://www.climatecentral.org/news/warming-climate-boundaries-hurricane-season-18982.

to these twentieth-century technologies or data, but they still had a concept of a hurricane season. As William Beckford wrote in his descriptive account of Jamaica:

> I cannot help relating in this place, the general dread, in the months of August, September, and October, of this expected calamity, when the temper of the air, the appearance of the sky, and the instability of the weather, distract the observer with terror and suspense, and make the imagination look for a deluge in every cloud, and expect a tempest at the daily commencement of every breeze.[14]

Despite "the instability of the weather," islanders felt a heightened sense of fear during a certain frame of time: hurricane season. The time of the year, or rather the time of the season, and its various signatures—"the temper of the air" or "appearance of the sky"—cue islanders' expectations of an imminent disaster. England's 1703 storm was an anomalous and unexpected event, but, in the Caribbean, hurricanes, despite being highly irregular in form, were anticipated.

Although this chapter certainly involves aspects of summer, it moves away from a focus on temperate climates and their four seasons to concentrate on hurricane season—a season that is more conspicuous and certainly more threatening in the torrid climate of the Caribbean. Even Daniel Defoe's character, Robinson Crusoe, recognizes how seasons in the Caribbean might differ from Britain's seasons when he describes the climate of his "Island of Despair" after one full year has passed: "I found now that the seasons of the year might generally be divided, not into summer and winter, as in Europe; but into the rainy seasons, and the dry seasons."[15] In Defoe's story, Crusoe also observes how hurricanes can take a person "quite out of [their]

[14] William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of Jamaica* (London: T. J. Egerton, 1790), 393.
[15] Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: W. Taylor, 1719), 124.

knowledge."[16] Atlantic hurricane seasons are like the four seasons in that they are linked to the earth's movement around a sun—they occur in the heat of the northern hemispheric summer, peak during the autumnal equinox, and die down as the winter solstice approaches. They also develop near the equatorial line. Yet, hurricane season is also organized around the likelihood of an event occurring, indicating how seasons can also be understood as tools for predicting certain phenomena.[17] During hurricane season, disastrous and volatile weather events become seasonable, housed under a spatiotemporal parameter that translates these extraordinary events into terms of regularity.

Over the course of this chapter, I link the Caribbean's well-defined hurricane season and the growing interest in the empirical study of weather in the eighteenth century, and more specifically the classification of seasonable and unseasonable weather, to a georgic poem that dominated much of the eighteenth century, James Thomson's *The Season*s (1726-46), as well as James Grainger's georgic poem, *The Sugar-Cane* (1764). Scholarship on eighteenth-century poetry and the georgic in particular has focused on self-conscious spatial shifts that announce the georgic's medium specificity. In her groundbreaking study on the georgic, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, Kevis Goodman argues that we see how in Thomson's *The Seasons* the "poem's consciousness of itself as a medium is frequently represented by a vertiginous shift in space, whereby near becomes far, or far near."[18] But the complex spatiotemporality of hurricanes

[16] Ibid., 47.
[17] There are seasons defined by turtle eggs hatching, fires, hunting, rain, etc., and in each of these examples a season affords one with an expectation that a phenomenon will occur. Anne-Lise François has recently discussed how seasons can be defined as periods of potentiality. Anne-Lise François, "'Middle Summer's Spring': Seasonable Months, Warming Skies" (paper presented at the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism annual conference, University of Illinois-Chicago, Chicago, IL, August 2019).
[18] Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19.

and their descriptions in georgics like *The Seasons* and Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* has yet to be addressed. How does the georgic mediate an account of a disastrous weather event that is ostensibly indescribable? How might a season, with its identification of regular and irregular patterns of weather, mediate a hurricane that seems indeterminable and is highly variable in both space *and* time? Eighteenth-century poets like Thomson and Grainger offer possible answers to these questions because, like Defoe and many other eighteenth-century writers, they did not stop trying to describe indescribable or seemingly unthinkable weather. They took notice of what was seasonable and what was anomalous, attempting to mediate a natural disaster in the torrid zone.

This chapter analyzes eighteenth-century poetic representations of hurricanes in two georgic poems to show how the georgic and seasons mediate the complex spatiotemporalities of a hurricane as well as the climate of the "torrid zone." Drawing on Goodman's argument that the georgic can be understood as a medium, I argue that the georgic *and* seasons are both mediums for translating the unknown: torrid climates (the West Indies) and disastrous and yet seasonal events (hurricanes). Ultimately, I show how Thomson's georgic is self-aware of the difficulties in trying to capture a disaster and its systemic violence in real time; it is always too late. Whereas "Art is too slow" in Thomson's georgic, Grainger's georgic emphasizes future temporalities and the portentous quality of seasons. Depicting an early form of forecasting, Grainger's poem shows how a knowledge of hurricane season in the Caribbean creates expectation, rendering an anomalous natural disaster as a regular occurrence.

1. Georgic Mediation and the Writing of Natural Disaster

Kevis Goodman has shown how the georgic can be understood as a medium, one that offers "itself to [the eighteenth-century] period as an occasion for negotiating temporal flux,

spatial extension."[19] For Goodman, the georgic is a medium that, as previously cited, "is frequently represented by a vertiginous shift in space, whereby near becomes far, or far near."[20] Here, space and place are key to georgic mediation; the poetic form vacillates and mimics the sensory disturbances Goodman sees as a defining feature of the eighteenth century. Goodman reads the eighteenth-century georgic in particular as a "channe[l] of sensation and perception," one that "turn[s] up" "sensory discomfort" in an often indirect way, or a "by-way."[21] A medium, in Goodman's argument, relies heavily on sensory perception, but also what exceeds it as she connects this "sensory discomfort" to the "noise of history" and to the critiques regarding Raymond Williams's "structures of feeling" as being too vague.[22]

Goodman's study demonstrates how media, or mediums as they were referred to in the eighteenth century, can be found prior to the twentieth century in the georgic. In fact, it contradicts Friedrich Kittler's claim that because "writing was a universal medium" before the 20th-century "there was no concept of medium."[23] John Guillory's more recent etymological history of media reveals that although there is a concept of media in the early modern period, "the substantive noun *medium* was rarely connected with matters of communication before the later nineteenth century."[24] Yet, as Goodman observes, media, or, more importantly for this chapter's argument, mediation "governs relations between quite different domains of reality or terms of thought, levels marked by incommensurability, contradiction, or indirection—in other

[19] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity*, 10.
[20] Ibid., 19.
[21] Ibid., 22, 3, 32.
[22] Ibid., 3, 64, 5-7.
[23] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 5-6.
[24] John Guillory, "Genesis of the Media Concept," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 321.

words, those that cannot be well described by 'communication.'"[25] Mediation is therefore a vital process for negotiating that which "exists beyond sense perception, even beyond complete conceptualization, yet paradoxically seeps into everyday experience."[26] In other words, mediation is a correlative process for abstract concepts that punctuate everyday life; it is a process that mimics the work that seasons do in translating the variability of the everyday, including its weather. If, as Goodman argues, the georgic assists readers in realizing the "ongoing dialectic of distance and proximity," then I build on her argument to suggest that seasons, too, are mediums for negotiating the incommensurable levels of space and time that are associated with natural disasters like hurricanes.[27] Seasons can help readers make sense of a hurricane that is at once too near and far as well as highly variable in time.

Weather is a sign to be read, as Jonathan Culler has argued of meteorology, but seasons are also different from weather in that they can be a medium for interpreting the variable and unpredictable conditions of daily weather.[28] For example, Joseph Addison, an early literary critic of the georgic, found Virgil's *Georgics* particularly delightful because "He [Virgil] gives us the signs in nature, which precede the changes of weather."[29] Virgil's book begins by singing the praises of various gods in the sky as well as the vernal ritual of plowing and preparing fields for planting. It is an explicit rejoicing in the turning of soil, but it is also an implicit celebration of the turning of the earth, i.e. earth's seasons. As John Dryden's translation of the first book

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[25] Kevis Goodman, "Conjectures on Beachy Head: Charlotte Smith's Geological Poetics and the Ground of the Present," *ELH* 81, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 1001n10.
[26] Goodman, "Conjectures," 984.
[27] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity*, 40
[28] "Meteorology attempts to contract a system in order to relate atmospheric conditions to their causes and consequences and thus to read them as signs: signs of weather conditions" (Jonathan Culler *Ferdinand de Saussure* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977], 105).
[29] Joseph Addison, "An Essay on Virgil's *Georgics*," in *Poems on Several Occasions* (Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1751), 156-7.

Virgil's *Georgics* reveals, it is "Ye Deities! Who Fields and Plains protect, / Who rule the Seasons, and the Year direct" who are invoked in the opening lines.[30] Seasons precede the changes of weather and are important signs in nature to be read. Addison also privileges Virgil's periphrastic method over Hesiod's because Virgil's indirect method is more faithful to nature's signs and the ways in which nature is unpredictable. Much like Alexander Pope's argument against Edmund Spenser's use of monthly description in his *Shepheard's Calendar*, Addison also finds fault with Hesiod's method of "describing month after month" because it is "too grave and simple."[31] It is also too predictable: "The reader is carried through a course of weather and may beforehand guess whether he is to meet with snow or rain, clouds or sun-shine in the next description."[32] For Addison, a georgic should not be too predictable and should acknowledge the variability of daily weather; it should also have signs that help mediate irregular phenomena. Put another way, a georgic should have "signs in nature"—seasons—that help one to mediate the daily flux of weather and nature.

As Addison shows, nature's signs or its seasons are an important component of the georgic's ability to mediate the continuous changes of quotidian weather. Seasons are quite literally the subject of Thomson's four-part georgic and, as Geoffrey Hartman wrote, Thomson's poem is particularly remarkable for "the brilliant yet simple idea of changing Virgil's didactic fourfold into a seasonal fourfold."[33] This choice illustrates how "seasons and weather" became the "presiding deities of the natural cycle" in a "cultic celebration of the English countryside."[34]

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[30] Virgil, *The Works of Virgil Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis*, trans. John Dryden (London: Jacob Tonson, 1709), l. 7-8, 49.
[31] Addison, 161.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Geoffrey Hartman, "Romantic Poetry and the Genius Loci," in *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays, 1958-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 319.
[34] Ibid.

Hartman observes how a season, or *saison*, represents the English countryside and its agricultural cycles of sowing and reaping. But Thomson's choice reflects not just a celebration of the English countryside: it also demonstrates the unique ability of seasons to mediate phenomena. Thomson's georgic is rich with a variety of descriptions, digressions, and numerous activities and occurrences. Seasons are essentially what arrange and order all of these phenomena, signaling to readers what might be regular and ordinary, or irregular and extraordinary, even disastrous.

As the Great Storm of 1703 demonstrated, writing about disaster often creates prolific accounts that all seem to fall short of being able describe the event. They never seem able to fully capture it. Similarly, Maurice Blanchot observes how disasters represent "the limit of writing" or that which "de-scribes," but also how an urge to write persists despite the medium's inability to fully apprehend disaster.[35] For Blanchot, writing cannot fully communicate a disaster because a disaster is never finished. As Blanchot explains:

> When the disaster comes upon us, it does not come. The disaster is its imminence, but since the future, as we conceive of it in the order of lived time, belongs to the disaster, the disaster has always already withdrawn or dissuaded it; there is no future for the disaster, just as there is no time or space for its accomplishment.[36]

Disasters exist outside of normal parameters of space and time. They never completely end, spilling over into the future or "lived time" while they simultaneously create a desire for them to end. Writing about disasters gives one the false sense of capture, of their completion, but this feeling does not last. Similarly, hurricanes, as a form of natural disaster, are never complete.

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[35] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 7. For the persistence of writing or desire to write, see esp. 11.
[36] Ibid., 1-2.

They represent a large-scale weather event that is highly variable in both space and time. In other words, they, too, exist in a complex spatiotemporality. In the eighteenth century, many writers attempted to describe and write about hurricanes, but, even as accounts proliferated, the natural disaster still remained in some sense an enigma. Looking for ways to somehow communicate this disaster, Thomson and Grainger turned to the georgic and seasons because of how they could mediate this complicated phenomenon.

Thomson and Grainger saw the value in communicating a large-scale disastrous weather event to their readers. For them, a hurricane was an unknown phenomenon that they had never experienced, but one worth describing because both included the weather event in their poems. In Thomson's poetic case, a disastrous hurricane is disorienting; it seems to occur both everywhere and nowhere, projecting fast and slow temporalities. Similarly, Grainger's georgic depicts a hurricane that comes from all directions. Yet, both poets show how a full translation or communication of this natural disaster is impossible due a hurricane's complex spatiotemporality. As Goodman's argument regarding mediation indicates, the process of mediation does not offer a clear communication; instead it often turns up sensory disturbance and discomfort. Similarly, I argue that although seasons are important tools for mediating hurricanes in Thomson's georgic poem, what they often turn up are instances of temporal discrepancies and large-scale harm. Thomson would continually work on the description of the hurricane, adding several hundred lines to that particular section of *Summer* by the poem's final edition in 1746. Although he could never quite fully capture it, Thomson kept trying to describe the natural disaster, mediating its catastrophic effects by way of the georgic and seasons.

2. Thomson's Georgic *Summer*: "Art is too slow"

Thomson's *The Seasons* draws on a variety of sources that together make up its unique georgic form. Ralph Cohen, in his book *The Unfolding of* The Seasons (1970), observes the poem's diverse sources, writing that "*Georgics*, *Job*, *De Rerum Natura*, and Milton's *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso* and *Paradise Lost*" all influence Thomson's work.[37] Cohen also insists that Thomson's seasonal georgic was "not a either a georgic or a scientific-didactic poem" nor an "epic in any traditional sense."[38] For Cohen, Thomson's poem is a bricolage of sorts, influenced by a variety of genres, even incorporating "the fragmentary features of Augustan satire."[39] Recently an anthology, *The Genres of Thomson's* The Seasons (2018), addresses the multi-genre composition of Thomson's poem as well.[40] Indeed, Thomson's georgic project and sources are as expansive as they are diverse. But Hartman's claim of the "brilliant yet simple idea" to adapt Virgil's *Georgics* into the four seasons themselves also stresses the perhaps too conspicuous and yet overlooked aspect of how central seasons are to Thomson's poetic project. By choosing a seasonal structure for his georgic, Thomson uses the affordances of georgic and seasonal mediums for making sense of the incommensurable spatiotemporal scales of disastrous weather events like hurricanes.

From the poem's beginning, Thomson emphasizes seasons with a direct invocation of spring. Much like Virgil, who references the earth's seasonal revolutions via the turning of the soil, seasons dominate the initial moments of Thomson's poem. From "Come, gentle Spring,

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[37] Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of* The Seasons (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 92.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] See *The Genres of Thomson's* The Seasons, ed. Sandro Jung and Kwinten Van De Walle (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2018).

ethereal mildness, come" to "surly Winter," the poem stresses how nature's signs revolve around seasons.[41] The daily variability of weather might affect one's perception of the time of year, as the poem first describes the year as "trembling" and "unconfirmed," but ultimately "surly Winter" gives way to spring (11, 18, 3). From the small bittern who "knows his time" to the "impatient husbandman" who "perceives / Relenting Nature," various species and their activities are shown to be governed by the cosmic or solar movement of the sky (22, 34-5). Or, as the poem puts it: when Aries "rolls the bounteous sun" into Taurus (26). Positioned on a threshold of seasonal change, the poem demonstrates how diurnal and cosmic time as well as species activity, both great and small, are organized by seasons.

The opening of the Thomson's *Spring* shows how seasons help orient one in a given place and time, but the second book of Thomson's georgic, *Summer*, illustrates how a season is particularly powerful. In Thomson's poem, there is not a hurricane season per se. It instead highlights summer, in particular the sun's intensity and its extreme heat during this season, to describe the foreign climate of the torrid zone. As the poem emphatically claims, summer is the "Parent of Seasons!" (113); it needs no coaxing at the opening of the second book of Thomson's georgic. *Summer* is also the most dominant book of Thomson's georgic in terms of lines, the final 1746 edition has 1805 lines. By comparison, *Spring*, *Autumn*, and *Winter* have 1176, 1373, 1069 lines respectively. Thomson's *Summer* begins with a "refulgent Summer" coming on his own accord with an "ardent look" that makes Spring abruptly leave "his hot dominion" (2, 6-7). It is a season "felt through Nature's depth" (3).

[41] James Thomson, *Spring*, in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3, l. 3. Hereafter abbreviated by season—*Sp* and *Su*—and cited parenthetically by line number. Sambrook's edition follows the 1746 edition of Thomson's much-revised poem.

The arrival of *Summer* emphasizes summer's power; however, it is not just a personified form in Thomson's book, but a medium for describing the torrid zone to readers in Scotland and England. The heat of summer continues, but when the poem reaches the "torrid zone," Thomson can no longer draw from his own experiences to describe the climate (632). As John Barrell observes, when Thomson describes the "torrid zone" in *Summer*, landscapes "cannot be looked at properly, and so cannot be described in the normal way."[42] Thomson's descriptions become more "enthusiastic, excited" and there is an "experience of disorientation in the landscape."[43] Indeed, the descriptions of the torrid zone are one of the more disorienting sections of Thomson's *Summer*, but this confusion is representative of the hurricane's dizzying effects. Right after peaceful descriptions of a nap under a tree in the "sweetness of the shade," Thomson invokes "bold fancy" to "view the wonders of the torrid zone" (631, 632). Thomson's invocation of fancy demonstrates how he participates in armchair travel to an unknown climate, but his descriptions of "double seasons" reveal how vital seasons are to his mediation of this torrid climate (645). Here, "great are the scenes" and "returning suns and double seasons pass" (643, 645). As Thomson explains in a footnote, double seasons in the tropics happen because "the sun, as he pass and repasses in his annual motion, is twice a year perpendicular."[44] The "double seasons" convey the dizzying effect of the "clime unrelenting" (633). The sun "pass[es]" and "repasses," appearing to move more quickly. The appearance of the sun's power and its extreme heat happens more often because the sun's path is different at the equatorial line. In essence, the torrid zone makes the sun's "annual motion," and the earth's tilt and its rotation, more

[42] John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 31.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Thomson, *The Seasons* ed. James Sambrook, 54n645.

noticeable. Via the extreme heat and the movement of the sun, Thomson translates the torrid zone's unfamiliar climate to readers in England and Scotland.

Solar power and heat, two important contributing factors of hurricanes, epitomize this section of the poem and *Summer* in general, but once the poem enters the torrid zone it becomes quite expansive in its spatiotemporal scope. The poem takes readers quite deliriously from one place to the next, from "majestic woods of every vigorous green" to "citron groves" and a "maze" of Indian fig trees to "vast savannas, where the wandering eye, / Unfixed, is in a verdant ocean lost" (649, 663,670, 692-3). The eye and reader never linger in one place, but instead are whipped about from scene to scene, following in many ways the chaotic trajectory of a hurricane. Nearly 150 lines after entering the torrid zone, the rapid scene changes pause to describe a storm in the "blazing height of noon" (784). Emphasizing the peak intensity of the sun and the hottest part of a day, the passage also features multiples temporalities at play in a weather phenomenon.

> How changed the scene! In blazing height of noon,
> The sun, oppressed, is plunged in thickest gloom.
> Still horror reigns, a dreary twilight round,
> Of struggling night and day malignant mixed.
> For to the hot equator crowding fast,
> Where, highly rarefied, the yielding air
> Admits their stream, incessant vapours roll,
> Amazing clouds on clouds continual heaped;
> Or whirled tempestuous by the gusty wind,
> Or silent borne along, heavy and slow,

With the big stores of streaming oceans charged.
Meantime, amid these upper seas, condensed
Around the cold aerial mountain's brow,
And by conflicting winds together dashed,
And Thunder holds his black tremendous throne;
From cloud to cloud the rending Lightnings rage;
Till, in the furious elemental war
Dissolved, the whole precipitated mass
Unbroken floods and solid torrents pours.

(*Su*., 784-802)

Like the poem's rapid travels throughout the torrid zone, this description of the storm illustrates how quickly a weather event emerges in this climate of extreme heat. Yet, the poem also introduces a tension between temporalities when it describes the storm's formation. The storm is described as both "crowding fast" and "heavy and slow." Clouds accumulate, they can be whirled about by winds, but they can also be "silent borne, heavy and slow." This slow temporality is similar to the dead calm before a storm, but it also represents a slow, accumulative process of a more insidious nature.

In trying to represent the natural disaster's spatial vastness and temporal chaos, Thomson articulates something akin to what Rob Nixon defines as slow violence, or a "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space."[45] The storm is immediately noticeable by the sudden change in scene, yet its

[45] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

conspicuous violence is scattered throughout the narrative of the poem. Thomson's "general all-involving storm" ostensibly disappears for roughly a hundred lines and later emerges as a more visible hurricane that can only be seen by a "skilful eye" (972, 989). Before the "circling typhon" appears, however, its violence is more abstract and spread around the world (984). The "solid torrents" from the storm materialize as rivers, like the Nile and Niger, and oceans that allow explorers like Columbus to cross; they are the waters that feed empires (802, 805, 822, 832). In this way, violence is dispersed, appearing in various forms of empire and artifice, or rather various forms of liquid infrastructure. Empire and its violence is the "general all-involving storm" because

> our floods are rills. With unabated force
> In silent dignity they sweep along
> And traverse realms unknown, and blooming wilds,
> And fruitful deserts—worlds of solitude
> Where the sun smiles and seasons teem in vain,
> Unseen and unenjoyed. Forsaking these,
> O'er peopled plains they fair-diffusive flow
> And many a nation feed, and circle safe
> In their soft bosom many a happy isle,
> The seat of blameless Pan, yet undisturbed
> By Christian crimes and Europe's cruel suns.
>
> (*Su*., 845-855)

Prevalent in this passage of *Summer* is a formulation of the "microscopic eye" or "poetic seeing" in Thomson's poem that Goodman has articulated.[46] *Summer*, in particular, emphasizes what escapes perception, or rather a "presentness of ongoing history beyond lived experience, or phenomenological verification."[47] Building on Goodman's close reading, I want to add that what is "silent" and "unseen" is also a form of systemic violence that the hurricane, and its seasonal mediation, makes visible. In the poem, violence is not always instant nor is it immediately perceptible. In fact, this quoted passage is bookended by the slow and fast description of a thunderstorm's formation and a culminating hurricane that whirls "from point to point" (984); it is a digression about empire that occurs in the middle—the eye—of a storm. In this way, violence precipitates; it trickles down into the very rivers of the poem, undetected at first, eventually causing much destruction in the form of a hurricane. A thunderstorm or hurricane might be a singular event, but, as this passage shows, its violence can be delayed and dispersed; it is an unseen process that seasons mediate.

There are very few moments in Thomson's georgic that use the word "season" or "seasons" explicitly, but *Summer* features three: a reference to summer as the "Parent of Seasons," the description of the torrid zone's "double seasons," and a description of "traverse realms unknown" where "seasons teem in vain, / unseen, and unenjoyed" (847, 849-850). Double seasons stress the power and extreme heat of summer and the torrid zone, but the third mention of seasons, which occurs in the midst of the long "all-involving storm" of the hurricane, underscores how seasons are an often unrecognized medium for communicating "realms

[46] See Goodman's discussion of the "poem-as-microscopic-eye" in *Georgic Modernity*, 59. See also Heather Keenleyside's observation of the eye as a detached body part and therefore not only human, but representative of all kinds of beings. Heather Keenleyside, "Personification for the People: On James Thomson's *The Seasons*," *ELH* 76.2 (2009): 455, 469.
[47] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity*, 59, 64.

unknown." By describing seasons as "unseen and unenjoyed," the poem suggests that they have been neglected and even "forsaken." They "teem in vain," highlighting their forgotten existence, but the poem recalls their significance because they mediate the unperceived violence and various temporalities of *Summer*'s long storm. In other words, they are the signs in nature that precede changes in weather as Addison observed; they mediate the variable conditions of the everyday as well as the slow and unseen harmful effects of disaster and empire.

Although the flexibility of Thomson's unique georgic medium allows the poem to move rapidly from scene to scene, the poem does not purport to fully communicate the unknown. Instead, it questions art's, or the georgic's, ability to fully translate the spatiotemporal complexities of a hurricane in terms of time. Slow temporalities are emphasized again when the hurricane surfaces more obviously again at line 980, when and where it also becomes apparent to the reader that the storm has actually been going on the whole time.

> The circling typhon, whirled from point to point,
> Exhausting all the rage of the sky,
> And dire ecnephia reign. Amid the heavens,
> Falsely serene, deep in a cloudy speck
> Compressed, the mighty tempest brooding dwells.
> Of no regard, save to the skillful eye,
> Fiery and foul, the small prognostic hangs
> Aloft, or, on the promontory's brow
> Musters its force. A faint deceitful calm,
> A fluttering gale, the demon sends before
> To tempt the spreading sail. Then down at once

Precipitant descends a mingled mass

Of roaring winds and flame and rushing floods.

In wild amazing fixed the sailor stands.

Art is too slow. By rapid fate oppressed,

His broad-winged vessel drinks the whelming tide,

Hid in the bosom of the black abyss.

(*Su*., 984-1000)

"Art is too slow." This sentence stands apart as it is one of the few pithy moments to exist in Thomson's poem full of long descriptions. On the one hand, the sentence refers to the sailor's skill and inability to outlive the natural disaster. On the other hand, it is a self-referential moment that describes how poetry cannot keep up with the "mingled mass" that revolves from "point to point," unfixed in both time and space. As Jonathan Sachs has recently argued, "the tension between speed and slowness intensified after the late eighteenth-century"; for Sachs, this tension that can be seen in especially in a Romantic "poetics of slowness."[48] In Thomson's poem is an earlier case of a tension between these two temporalities, one that accentuates how disastrous weather events are difficult to describe precisely because they have varying degrees of intensity and speed. It's as though, as Sachs articulates, "knowledge of the event cannot keep pace with the event because the event itself, as registered by the senses, has already happened."[49] Not being able to keep pace with the storm's path is Thomson's predicament, but also the fact that "all-involving storm" has never really concluded; it continues to trickle through various crevices of the world, unseen and unperceived by many until it is too late.

[48] Jonathan Sachs, "Slow Time," *PMLA* 134, no 2 (March 2019): 316, 318.
[49] Ibid., 320

There are a variety of temporalities everywhere in Thomson's long poem, but it is the hurricane that most dramatically accentuates the tension between fast and slow temporalities of disaster. Seasons and the georgic mediate the hurricane, turning up forms of large-scale violence and these temporalities, but they also cannot fully communicate the natural disaster. Despite not being able to keep pace with an event as massive and complex as a hurricane, Thomson kept working on his poem, revising and adding to this *Summer* moment in particular.[50] Thomson added much of the section of the storm in the 1740s, thus extending the storm's temporality in the poem while also making *Summer* the longest book of his georgic. He kept trying to describe the indescribable. Ultimately, it is a long, hot *Summer* and a hurricane that dilate the harmful and dizzying effects of empire; they mediate the incommensurable spatiotemporal forces of violence while also showing how they can never be fully accounted for.

3. Grainger's Georgic Climate Model

James Grainger was another Scottish poet who was known for his experimentation with the georgic form, but, unlike Thomson, Grainger actually lived in the torrid zone and directly experienced its extreme heat and weather. Grainger was born in Dunse, Scotland. He entered the University of Edinburgh at the age of fourteen after he was orphaned. After spending some time in 13th Foot regiment of the British army, Grainger eventually returned to Edinburgh to focus on becoming a physician. In 1754, he moved to London to make a living for himself as a doctor While there, he became involved in an elite literary circle, befriending Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, and William Shenstone, and began to express a desire for literary fame. Soon after

[50] As Goodman has put it, "The study of Thomson's revisions, almost as much as Wordsworth's, is a small industry itself" (*Georgic Modernity*, 167n6).

receiving harsh criticism from Tobias Smollett for his translation of Tibullus's *Elegies* in 1759, Grainger moved to the island of St. Christopher (then St. Kitts). The choice proved favorable as a year later he was "a settled physician" and married.[51]

Grainger's ambitions for literary fame did not leave him across the Atlantic and, in three short years, he wrote a four-part georgic called *The Sugar-Cane*. In 1762, he wrote to his friend Thomas Percy about his poem: "I have completed it, at least for the present, no less than a Georgic, and in four books too."[52] Grainger's poem followed a Georgic tradition in some sense. As Samuel Johnson wrote, Grainger "keeps Virgil in his eye."[53] But Grainger also diverged from the georgic thematically and adapted it to fit his "West Indies" subject. For example, although the first book begins much like Virgil's, with the turning of soil and focus on agriculture, Grainger's subsequent books take on vastly different themes. He covers everything from the cultivation and care of sugarcane crops during dangerous natural disasters, including the destruction of crops due to rats and monkeys, to making rum. His fourth book, perhaps most infamously, is pro-slavery and focuses on the care of slaves.

In his letter to Percy, Grainger included a manuscript of the poem, except for a few parts, writing: "I now send you the whole, only as I have seen no hurricane, and have not yet had time to arrange my remarks on a fire by night in a cane field, those parts in the second book are incomplete."[54] What Grainger's letter to Percy reveals is the emphasis Grainger places on seeing

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[51] James Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane*, *Poetics of Empire: A Study of John Grainger's* The Sugar-Cane, ed. John Gilmore (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 13. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically, but notes by either Gilmore or Grainger are cited in the footnotes by page number.
[52] Ibid., 16.
[53] Samuel Johnson, review of The Sugar-Cane, in *The Critical Review*, 18 (1764), 270-7 quoted in Gilmore, "Introduction," *Poetics of Empire*, 42.
[54] *Poetics of Empire*, 22.

and experiencing a phenomenon before he can write about it. Grainger believes that "sage experience" instructs a reader, and even in the poem's extensive footnotes he is careful to avoid suggesting potentially inaccurate remedies, adding caveats like: "but I cannot say, I have not had any experience of its efficacy" or "It is said to be a diuretic, but this I do not know from experience.[55]

But Grainger also failed to fully experience everything. Although Grainger wrote to Percy that because he had "seen no hurricane," he couldn't complete his poem, he ultimately did complete the poem before he had the opportunity to witness one. [56] According to records, a hurricane passed through the Leeward Islands in 1754 and in 1766, before Grainger had arrived and a few years after the poem was published.[57] Instead of basing his description on experience, Grainger had to resort to a different kind of data—data that drew from the traditional georgic, but also his knowledge of hurricane season that came from living in the Caribbean. As Gilmore notes in his reading of Grainger's hurricane, the description has "a number of verbal and structural echoes of the storm in *Georgics*."[58] In Grainger's poem, however, the storm is not just a regular thunderstorm as it is in Virgil's poem. It occurs during a specific time of year: "Soon as the Virgin's charms ingross the Sun;/ And till his weaker flame the Scorpion feel" (287-288). Unlike Virgil, who explicitly claims that his description of stormy weather is based on personal experience, Grainger's description relies on another source for his description of the storm: hurricane season.

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[55] Ibid., 191, 198.
[56] Ibid., 16.
[57] See Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 198 and Gilmore, *Poetics of Empire*, 255-6.
[58] Gilmore, *Poetics of Empire*, 255.

As Shaun Irlam and Cristobal Silva have shown, a sense of fantasy still pervades and disrupts Grainger's georgic construction of the Caribbean climate in *The Sugar-Cane*, demonstrating that its location in both space and time is tenuous and also hazy. Grainger gave his poem the subtitle "A West-Indies Georgic," a subtitle that both relies on the tradition of British georgics of his time, but also places the poem in a new geographic location and climate. As Silva argues, the qualifier "'West-India' is not a geographic referent so much as it is a space of discontinuities and dislocations." [59] Grainger can't quite ground the poem in the Caribbean and it shows throughout his georgic's "jarring if not disorienting breaks."[60] As Silva explains, Grainger's position, with "one foot firmly in the British tradition and the other on a West Indian plantation," places a lot of "great pressure on the poem [and georgic medium] to mediate between two irreconcilable positions."[61] In this way, the poem reflects a kind of mediation that presides over incommensurable scales of space and time. Similarly, Irlam has argued that by "taking the already fictive English landscape," imagining it "in terms of the pastoral myths of Hesiod and Virgil," and finally "projecting it on the Caribbean plantation" the poem "initiates a second-degree aesthetization of agrarian-capitalist relations."[62] In other words, these imaginary and fantasy landscapes of labor do not mitigate the harsh realities of slave labor on a sugar plantation, but rather show how "the georgic form fails to camouflage and naturalize the darker side of the colonial landscape."[63] Irlam draws attention in particular to the poem's treatment of slavery in the fourth book of Grainger's georgic, showing how the poem's failure to "capture the

[59] Cristobal Silva, "Georgic Fantasies: James Grainger and the Poetry of Colonial Dislocation." *ELH* 83, no. 1 (Spring 2016):154.
[60] Ibid., 129.
[61] Ibid., 128.
[62] Shaun Irlam, "'Wish You Were Here': Exporting England in James Grainger's 'The Sugar-Cane,'" *ELH* 68, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 380.
[63] Ibid., 393.

imagination of literary London" falls upon Grainger's "indifference" toward slavery.[64] Or, as he puts it, "The strains placed on Grainger's georgic model are most conspicuous when it attempts to located the ugly and disagreeable fact of slavery in this mimic English landscape."[65] What these critics observe is that Grainger's georgic relies on imagined communities and landscapes and ends up propagating colonial control and supporting slavery, albeit at times in a disorganized fashion.

As both Grainger's and Thomson's poems show, the georgic does rely on flights of fancy to mediate the unknown. The obvious shortcoming of this mediation, in Irlam's view, is that the "imperial poet," will always be in control of what the poem ultimately conveys.[66] I do not disagree. For the purposes of this chapter's argument on natural disaster, however, I concentrate on the odd moments of spatiotemporal disarray in Grainger's poem that critics like Irlam and Silva have observed, especially since they are similar to the spatiotemporal tensions that exist in Thomson's poem. In Thomson's case, these disorientating spatiotemporalities collide, merging empire and violence in an "all-encompassing storm"; they also illustrate the extent to which the disaster of hurricane escapes full representation. We might read Grainger's poem similarly, as indicative of a disaster that cannot be fully depicted because it has not been experienced, but one that Grainger attempts to ground through an early form of seasonal forecasting. Although much focus has been on book four of Grainger's georgic and his position on slavery, in this section of the chapter I focus on the second book of *The Sugar-Cane*—his book comprised of numerous natural disasters—to show how a prior knowledge of hurricane season in the Caribbean turns a disorienting hurricane into a regular anomaly.

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[64] Ibid., 390.
[65] Ibid., 384.
[66] Ibid., 389.

Grainger was first and foremost a physician. In the preface to his poem, Grainger apologizes for his extensive footnotes on indigenous remedies and diseases, begging "leave to be understood as a physician, and not as a poet."[67] Like a good physician, Grainger collected data for his georgic poem, writing most of georgic "mostly in rides to different parts of the island to visit patients."[68] His diagnostic field work produced numerous footnotes—data that supplemented his verses. There are forty-nine footnotes in the first book, thirty-two in the second and fourth, and twenty-six in the third. Although the appearance of footnotes was not unusual in eighteenth-century poetry and Thomson has them throughout *The Seasons*, Grainger's are quite numerous and extensive. As Britt Rusert argues, they "disrupt" and "threaten to overwhelm the body of the poem."[69] For example, the first note appended to line 22 of Grainger's first book features a history tied to the botanical name of sugar cane's etymology, including many of the places it was cultivated around the world. Grainger even notes sugar's literary history, revealing that "sugar is twice mentioned by Chaucer."[70] The footnote dominates much of the page space of the poem's beginning, but, for Grainger, these footnotes were vital to his georgic.

The extensive footnotes demonstrate how Grainger attempts to ground his poem in data that can be used for diagnosis, i.e. an assessment of present conditions, and for prognosis, i.e. a future scenario. In his footnote on mosquitoes, he records their propensity for "shady, moist, and warm places" and how the result of their bite, "an itching tumour," can be remedied with "warm lime-juice."[71] Footnotes such as this one showcase Grainger's knowledge of plants and illnesses

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[67] Grainger, *Poetics of Empire*, 90.
[68] Grainger, *Poetics of Empire,* 22.
[69] Britt Rusert, "Plantation Ecologies: The Experimental Plantation in and against James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane*," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 349.
[70] Grainger, *Poetics of Empire*, 167.
[71] Grainger, *Poetics of Empire*, 175n334.

indigenous to St. Christopher, knowledge that he felt was important for readers to learn. It helps them diagnose and treat a bite and it also helps them prevent future bites by indicating where mosquitoes like to dwell. As he admits in his preface, his footnotes, or "terms of art" as he calls them, might "look awkward in poetry, yet didactic composition cannot wholly dispense with them."[72] Art is not too slow in this case, but rather these are the terms of art that are necessary for diagnosis and prognosis. A later reader, Dr. William Wright, praised Grainger for the "liberal pains taken [. . .] to enlarge the knowledge of the medicinal virtues of the indigenous plants of the West Indies."[73]

With all of these footnotes, Grainger's poem operates much like a climate model; it uses data, or in Grainger's terms, "precepts" of "experience," in order to describe present conditions and also imagine possible outcomes.[74] Climate models are also used to simulate future climate conditions, or scenarios. They utilize the data of the present conditions of climate for diagnosis as well as prognosis and they put it in multiple forms of temporality, or what is called a time step. Time steps are important because they show how projections can come down to a highly specified minute or hour, or a more general year or decade.[75] They predict using various parameters of temporality. Climate models have an empirical foundation; they begin with observed data. But they are mathematical representations and, in this way, rely on abstract forms of quantitative data; they rely, in some sense, on fantasy, or rather projection. In Grainger's poem, the footnotes act as data that describe the island's present climate. They can seem like

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[72] Ibid., 89.
[73] James Grainger, *Three Tracts on West-Indian Agriculture* (Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1802), vi. To the second edition were appended ''practical notes, and a Linnaean Index, by William Wright, M.D., F.R.S., Physician to His Majesty's Forces.''
[74] Grainger, *Poetics of Empire*, 89.
[75] "Climate Models," Climate.gov, NOAA, https://www.climate.gov/maps-data/primer/climate-models

abstract data that are in direct tension with the poem's verses, but these "terms of art" work together with the body of the poem to diagnose the present conditions of St. Christopher and prognosticate possible scenarios. Quite significantly, Grainger's poem turns to seasonal forecasting as a method for reading the signs that precede a hurricane.

Throughout Grainger's georgic, a muse is continually relied upon to describe scenes and present conditions; this is no different when the poem describes a hurricane about halfway through *Book II*. Yet, what is remarkable is the muse's inability to describe the event:

> Say, can the Muse, the pencil in her hand,
> The all-wasting hurricane observant ride?
> Can she, undazzled, view the lightning's glare,
> That fires the welkin? Can she, unappall'd,
> When all the flood-gates of the sky are ope,
> The shoreless deluge stem? The Muse hath seen
> The pillar'd flame, whose top hat reach'd the stars;
> Seen rocky, molten fragments, flung in air
> From Ætna's vext abyss, seen burning streams
> Pour down its channel'd sides; tremendous scenes!—
> Yet not vext Ætna's pillar'd flames, that strike
> The stars; nor molten mountains hurl'd on high;
> Nor ponderous rapid deluges, that burn
> Its deeply-channel'd sides; cause such dismay,
> Such desolation, Hurricane! As thou;
> When the Almighty gives thy rage to blow

And all the battles of thy winds engage.

(*Book II*, 270-286)

Grainger invokes his muse to describe a hurricane, but almost immediately the description goes to another type of natural disaster: a volcanic eruption. It is a point of comparison that emphasizes the book's theme of natural disasters, but it is also quite jarring. Grainger could be relying on his own firsthand experience here as well as Virgil's descriptions of the volcano. As Gilmore points out, "Grainger may have seen volcanic activity at Etna in the course of a visit to Italy in 1750, but there were no major eruptions between 1669 and 1830, and his description closely resembles that in *Aeneid* II, 571-7."[76] But the poem also uses the description of the volcano as a false point of comparison. After the poem describes "Ætna's vext abyss" and "burning streams," it claims that a hurricane is "Yet not" these things. It is "as thou[gh]" the poem does not know how to describe the event (284). The muse wanders or rambles here, delaying the description of the hurricane.

It would make sense that Grainger's muse would then describe a hurricane in the next stanza, but, significantly, the poem instead describes hurricane season, or the "unsteddy" time of year when islanders and planters alike should take note of their actions.

Soon as the Virgin's charms ingross the Sun;
And till his weaker flame the Scorpion feels;
But, chief, while Libra weighs the unsteddy year:
Planter, with mighty props thy dome support;
Each flaw repair; and well, with massy bars,
Thy doors and window guard; securely lodge

[76] Gilmore, *Poetics of Empire*, 256.

Thy stocks and mill-points.—Then, or calms obtain;
Breathless the royal palm-tree's airiest van;
While o'er the panting isle, the daemon Heat
High hurls his flaming brand; vast, distant waves
The main drives furious in, and heaps the shore
With strange productions.

(*Book II*, 287-297)

The hurricane has yet to be described in the poem. Grainger instead describes the time of year, hurricane season, before the weather's "strange productions." In this way, Grainger describes the signs of nature—a season—that precede the changes in weather. For islanders, a knowledge of hurricane season precipitates action. The movement of the stars and astrological signs indicate the time of the season, or the time when the planter should begin safeguarding his stock. Planters must "securely lodge" their "stock" and guard "thy doors and windows." The poem attends to the hurricane by stressing how present actions must be done in anticipation of a future disaster.

A description of the "coming storm" is further delayed as the poem continues to stress how the hurricane season changes the actions of various species in anticipation of a future event (306). "Transient birds" stop to rest often and "herds, as sapient of the coming storm, / (For beasts partake some portion of the sky)" stand at attention (301, 306-7). A few lines later, the poem attends to predictive "signs of nature" by describing how one can make oneself of "master of the signs."

For see! the mists, that late involv'd the hill,
Disperse; the midday-sun looks red; strange burs*
Surround the stars, which vaster fill the eye.

(*Book II*, 314-16)

> *These are astral halos. Columbus soon made himself master of the signs that precede a hurricane in the West-Indies, by which means he saved his own squadron; while another large fleet, whose commander despised his prognostics, put to sea, and was wrecked. (Grainger's footnote)

A hot midday sun during this time of year portends the coming disaster. In Grainger's footnote, he places emphasis on reading signs in nature and on "prognostics." Grainger's reference to Christopher Columbus and focus on mastery accentuate his white colonial perspective, but this passage also shows how hurricane season regulates disaster. It is used for predicting events and it also alters human, and nonhuman, behaviors. By anticipating imminent disaster, humans and herds alter their behavior.

After these passages of seasonal forecasting, Grainger finally does describe the hurricane. The result is a disorientating description of a weather event that appears to occur both everywhere and nowhere; the hurricane seems to exist outside of space and time as winds from every direction are described. From the North that "hurls the frighted air" to "the West, with sudden burst" and "blast more rapid" to the "the South, sallying from his iron caves, with a mightier force" to finally "the savage East" who has a "wing'd tempests" of a "more relentless rave," the description of the hurricane whirls about (321, 329-30, 343, 354-5). Fortunately, the reader has long been cued for this moment since the descriptions of hurricane season act as signs that precede this disastrous and chaotic weather event.

By including hurricane season as a vital predictor of a hurricane disaster, Grainger incorporates seasonal forecasting as a way of mediating a spatiotemporally complex natural disaster for readers across the Atlantic. In his review of Grainger's poem, Samuel Johnson

thought that the hurricane episode and the cane fire were extraordinary events that would "excite" even "the most languid" of European readers. Johnson writes:

> A new creation is offered, of which an European has scarce any conception: the hurricane, the burning winds, a ripe cane-piece on fire at midnight; an Indian prospect after a finished crop, and nature in all the extremes of tropic exuberance.[77]

Although the review was not fully complimentary, Johnson's praise here focuses on how Grainger's West-Indies georgic can transfer the idea of a phenomenon to readers in England, a phenomenon that they could never experience, or "scarce [have] any conception." Johnson observes how the poetic description of the event is enough to confer its reality, its "exuberance." In other words, Johnson's comments reveal how Grainger's poem could, in some ways, mediate an unthinkable phenomenon, or what occurs "out there," across the Atlantic, to readers in England and Scotland.[78] With the help of seasonal prognostics, the hurricane becomes a "tropic exuberance" to those who had never experienced one.

In some sense, the torrid zone and West Indies will always be some abstract place. As Irlam and Silva show, it becomes especially abstract and fantasized when it is mediated through the perspective of white male poet. Yet, my goal in reading Grainger's borrowed description of a hurricane and his reliance on the prognostic powers of Caribbean hurricane season is to show how natural disasters, especially in our time of climate change, can still be read, interpreted, and mediated despite being difficult to describe. Hurricanes in particular are the result of

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[77] Samuel Johnson, review of *The Sugar-Cane*, in *Critical Review*, XVIII (October 1764): 270-7.
[78] This recalls the earlier quote of Goodman's reading of Thomson's poem "whereby near becomes far, or far near" and Barrell's reading of Thomson's georgic where "out there" also becomes here.

anthropogenic factors since warmer temperatures in the oceans are created by an increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is directly linked to human causes. Similarly, we might read disaster in Thomson's and Grainger's poems as indicative of not just natural forces, but as an event that both involves and affects human behavior. Grainger's turn to Caribbean hurricane season and descriptions of prophylactic action demonstrate how eighteenth-century mediations of natural disasters did not just fall short of describing a hurricane in real time. Instead, Grainger's poem shows how seasonal mediation imparts just enough knowledge of a disaster; it diagnoses and prognosticates in order to change human action in the present.

II. Autumnal Melancholy: The Burden of Care in Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* and *Beachy Head*

The first lines of John Keats's ode, "To Autumn," personify the "season of mists" as one who "conspir[es]" with the "maturing sun."[1] Emphasizing nature's bounty with its trees laden with apples, swelling gourds, and "o'er-brimm'd" bees, the poem depicts the season as one of thanksgiving, a period for idly relishing the year's cornucopian provisions. The middle stanza in particular exemplifies this rather carefree portrayal of the season when it poses a question to a personified Autumn:

> Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
> Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
> Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
> Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind.
>
> (12-15)

Some have read this personified figure as gendered feminine and many have noted the odd temporality of this ode, in particular how the poem blurs diurnal and seasonal time.[2] What I want to point out is that "careless" is an idiosyncratic description of the season, one that differs from the way eighteenth-century poets, particularly women poets such as Charlotte Smith and Ann Yearsley, use care to describe or personify a terrestrial and melancholic weight that cannot be

[1] John Keats, "To Autumn," in *John Keats: The Poems*, Everyman's Library (New York: Knopf, 1993), 233-34, l. 1-3. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically.

[2] See Helen Vendler's discussion of the movements of time and space in the ode, also her identification of the personification as a "female divinity" (*The Odes of Keats* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983], 234, 244-5). For a well-established account of the poem's blurred temporality, see Geoffrey Hartman's essay "Poem and Ideology: A Study of Keats's 'To Autumn.'" Here he observes how the poem "becomes oddly an Ode to Evening" in the final stanza ("Poem and Ideology: A Study of Keats's 'To Autumn,'" *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975], 129).

shed.[3] In Keats's poem, however, the season is without care; the granary floor during a busy harvest time instead represents freedom from the chains of domestic responsibilities and labor.

An autumn without care not only separates the season from the labor involved in reaping that appropriately comes after a period of sowing, or a *saison*, but the depiction also disconnects the season from melancholy. This sorrowful feeling was linked to autumn through Hippocratic humoral theory, but also through the eighteenth-century elegy. The etymology of care reveals the word's more melancholic roots; it comes from the Old High German word *chara,* meaning grief or lament.[4] In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the word care populates elegiac poetry as an expression of sorrow and lament and thus corresponds with its Germanic etymology. In Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), the poem lists a "busy housewife" in the midst of her "evening care" and a "drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn, / Or craz'd with care" among its sad figures in a gloomy landscape where, as the concluding epitaph states, "melancholy mark[s]" the dead "for her own."[5] Care also often coincides with

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[3] For example, Ann Yearsley's "Paroxysm of a Moment" (1796) begins quite sharply with the demand "Fly me care!" and an intense desire to be rid of care's "fetters" that chain the speaker aversely to domestic labor and responsibilities. Examples from Charlotte Smith will be the focus of this chapter. Ann Yearsley, "Paroxysm of a Moment," in *Collected Works of Ann Yearsley*, ed. Kerri Andrews (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 1:217.

[4] Clarifying the meaning of care, the *Oxford English Dictionary* states in parentheses that the word is in no way related to the Latin *cura*. This parenthetical explanation distinguishes the word from its more salubrious false cognate—cure—a word that tends to influence more positive contemporary meanings of care as in healthcare or humanitarian aid groups such as Care International or CARE. "care, n.1," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/27899?result=1&rskey=QHvcsq&.

[5] "Carecrazed," as Samuel Johnson's dictionary defines it, is to be "broken with care or solicitude." In the later, more comprehensive 1785 edition, the following *Richard III* quotation that describes Anne of Cypress, mother of nineteen children, is included: "A care-crazed mother of many children." In contrast, Gray's poem features a man as care-crazed, but Johnson's dictionary quotation from Shakespeare illustrates a literary inclination to align care with maternal figures. Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language : in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers : to which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar* (London: J.

autumn in other elegies and sonnets of the period. For example, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's final lines in "Sonnet to the Autumnal Moon" (1796) describe the lunar figure as one that sails "o'er the sorrow-clouded breast of Care."[6] Here, a personified Care represents a lamentable and earthbound state while the harvest moon rises above that condition, untethered by the burden of grief and mourning. These late eighteenth-century elegies and autumnal poems use care to depict a mournful state that is linked to the season. Autumn is neither careless like in Keats's ode nor a season for optimism and gratitude.

While the autumnal poem often adopts melancholy tones, this chapter focuses on how Charlotte Smith's collection of poetry, *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784-1797), intensifies the connection between autumn and melancholy, specifically by identifying autumn with elegy. In Smith's debut collection of sonnets, the word "care" appears over twenty times and is often modified by negative adjectives—"corrosive," "officious," "hopeless," to name a few—or personified as a vulture that feeds upon the heart.[7] In some cases, care has a sense of material weight that binds the speaker to domestic responsibilities, but in other cases care is used to describe an ecological condition that enlarges the circle of care; care defines what it means to live in the world with numerous attachments and relationships. Smith particularly connects this melancholic lexicon to

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F. and C. Rivington [etc.], 1785), n.p. Thomas Gray, *The Poems of Mr. Gray with Notes by Gilbert Wakefield* (London: G. Kearsley, 1786), 160, 165.

[6] Written in 1788 at the age of sixteen, this sonnet was one of Coleridge's first poems. It wasn't published until 1796. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Vol. 1*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 5.

[7] This chapter analyzes sonnets from multiple editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*. The 1784 edition had only 16 sonnets and the 1797 had eighty-four. Significantly, for the scope of this chapter's argument, the 1786 edition's final sonnet, sonnet XXXVI, ends with the line "Where the pale spectre Care pursues no more" and the 1792 and 1795 editions end with sonnet LIV, a sonnet written during a storm in autumn of 1791 as the title states, "Written September 1791, during a remarkable thunderstorm, in which the moon was perfectly clear, while the tempest gathered in various direction near the earth."

the season by naming specific months in autumn in her titles. For example, sonnet XII, "Written on the sea shore.—October, 1784," sonnet XXXII, "To Melancholy. Written on the banks of the Arun, October 1785," or sonnet XLII, "Composed during a Walk on the Downs in November 1787" are all written in autumn.[8] These seasonal sonnets depict a melancholic condition that lasts beyond autumn since even "revolving seasons" cannot bring "gay change."[9] In this sense, autumn's melancholy persists through the year; it is a pervasive sadness that *Elegiac Sonnets* connects to what it means to be alive on this "tumultuous sphere."[10]

Smith also recognized the enduring nature of her melancholy and its effects on her poetic production. In the preface to the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784), she writes: "some very melancholy moments have been beguiled by expressing in verse the sensation those moments brought."[11] Here, she treats the expression of melancholy as a way of coping with her miserable circumstances, finding solace in writing poetry. Smith's marriage to Benjamin Smith resulted in prison time because of his debts. In order to evade a further prison sentence, her husband moved to France in 1784, where she joined him, in a period that she defines as one of "involuntary exile" in her long poem *The Emigrants*.[12] She later refers to her melancholy again in her preface to the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1793): "I wrote mournfully because I was unhappy—And

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[8] By my count, six sonnets name either autumn or an autumnal month in the title or subtitle. Seven of her other sonnets or poems are also autumnal by either their attention to melancholy, references to autumn in the poem, or their subtitle—like her well-known longer poem, *The Emigrants*, which features a November, 1792 subtitle at the beginning of Book 1 or the poem, "To the geranium which flowered during winter: written in autumn." *Beachy Head*, which is considered to be in some sense a revision or return to the locodescriptive elements in *The Emigrants*, also features similar descriptions of *The Emigrants* November scene.
[9] Charlotte Smith, "Sonnet XLII," *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Stuart Curran (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 41, l. 11.
[10] Smith, "Sonnet XLI, To Tranquility," *Poems*, 40, l. 1.
[11] Smith, *Poems*, 3.
[12] See ll. 155-6: "I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known / involuntary exile" (Smith, *The Emigrants*, *Poems*, 141).

I have unfortunately no reason yet, though nine years have since elapsed, to *change my tone*."[13] Still unhappy due to the burden of her financial troubles, which became even greater in 1787 when she became the sole support for her children after she elected to separate from her husband, Smith marks her mournful mood and poetic expression as unchanged. Indeed, many of Smith's life circumstances were unfortunate and conducive to making her a specialist in long-standing misery and maternal care. She had twelve children, of whom nine survived childhood, and the financial and emotional labor that was involved in taking care of them had a powerful impact on her life. Although the circumstances of Smith's life were difficult by any measure, what interests me in this chapter is her commitment to extending her personal melancholy into an account of life, an account that becomes intricately entangled with seasons, and with autumn in particular.

The previous chapters of this dissertation focused more on the seasonal mediation of the everyday and how seasons aided eighteenth-century readers in scaling down abstract or large-scale concepts and phenomena. In this chapter on autumn, I turn to the ways in which seasons have long been understood to produce a kind of mood. Since Hippocrates, who stressed the connection between the human body and seasons through illness, or "crises" as the word illness is often translated, seasons have been thought of as a communicative device between the human body and the natural world. For Hippocrates, an abnormal season could produce sickness in the body and each season also had its own particular ailments.[14] Autumn in particular was a season that could promote the accumulation of black bile, or a condition of melancholy; it was a season defined by plangent care, not carelessness as in Keats's ode. Similarly, in *Elegiac Sonnets*, a

[13] Original emphasis. Smith, *Poems*, 5.
[14] *Hippocrates*: *Volume 1*, trans. W. H. S Jones, Loeb Classical Library 147 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957), 71.

dejected state persists because the speaker is plagued by care. Care denotes a ceaseless condition and numerous attachments that the speaker cannot cast off.

Smith's sense of the precariousness of her hold on her attachments, her proleptic fear of losing those she most loved, resonates with twentieth and twenty-first century care feminism, which I will use to illuminate her position. In her book *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (2017), Maria Puig de la Bellacasa shows how care becomes entangled with what she defines as three dimensions of "labor/work, affect/affections, and ethics/politics."[15] "To care," Puig de la Bellacasa writes, "can feel good; it can also feel awful. It can do good; it can oppress."[16] With so many calls to care in the present world, care has become an omnipresent condition that is often overwhelming, thus creating ambivalence. Complicating care even more is that fact that "care is not only ontologically but politically ambivalent" and previous feminist approaches to an ethics of care demonstrate that it is not "a notion to embrace innocently."[17] Referring to Carol Gilligan's controversial argument that based the caring ethical subject on mother-child relations, Puig de la Bellacasa recalls how late-twentieth-century feminist theories regarding an ethics of care were criticized for being too essentialist.[18] That is, they were criticized for ostensibly being concerned with only mothers or women caregivers. However, care feminists such as Gilligan and also Nancy Chodorow highlighted mother-child relationships because they had been ignored. For much of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud's development of the Oedipus complex had focused on mother-son relationships, but not

[15] Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
[16] Ibid., 1.
[17] Ibid., 7.
[18] See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,1982)

mother-daughter ones. As Nancy Chodorow writes in preface to the second edition of *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), this mother-daughter emphasis "struck a chord with readers, especially women readers [. . .] who knew that their mothers as well as their fathers were extremely important in who they thought they were."[19] Care feminism demonstrated how attachments of care were foundational to and also inextricable from one's life. This recent history of care feminism in the late twentieth century, the same period during which Smith's work came to receive new attention, offers a lens through which to read care anew in the elegiac poetry of eighteenth-century women writers like Smith.

This chapter reads the burden of care in Smith's sonnets and also the inescapable nature of care in posthumously published poem *Beachy Head* (1807) as representative of attachments that go beyond the gendered domestic labor of a mother; care is the weight of earthly existence, or what it means to live in a world of numerous attachments from which one cannot escape. In the more recent recovery of the importance of Smith along with various women writers of the Romantic era, some have thought that an interest in Smith was fueled largely by an interest in diversifying the canon.[20] And while that certainly the desire to recognize women writers was important, there seems to be two lines of thought that precipitated Smith's rediscovery. First, was the rise of care-focused feminism in last two decades of the twentieth century. Second, was a line of thought, advanced by Stuart Curran and Jerome McGann, that recognized in Smith's poetry generalizing impulses. In what follows, I first analyze Smith's expansion of the circle of care in *Elegiac Sonnets*. Smith's role as a mother, and the financial responsibility that came with it,

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[19] Nancy Chodorow, "Preface to the Second Edition," *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), ix.
[20] In Curran's seminal publication of an anthology of Smith's poems in 1993, he names Smith as "the first poet in England whom in retrospect we would call Romantic" in his introduction, thus revising the canon. See *Poems*, xix.

played a vital role in her writing; however, what emerges in her poetry are representations of care that define it as a condition of what it means to live on this planet. Next, I show how this universal condition of care is further expanded temporally by way of seasons in Smith's sonnets; care is shown to be a persistent melancholic condition that defines adult life. Finally, I connect the representation of this ceaseless melancholic burden of care in *Elegiac Sonnets* to its ultimate representation in Smith's posthumously published poem, *Beachy Head*, and in its hermit figure, Parson Darby, a man who epitomizes the expansive, yet ambivalent nature of care in Smith's poetry.

1. Expanding the Circle of Care

Charlotte Smith was a poet who saw the world, and in particular nature, as interconnected. As William Wordsworth famously wrote, Smith was a poet to "whom English verse is under greater obligation than [is] likely to be acknowledged or remembered."[21] She wrote "with true feeling for rural nature, at a time when nature was not much regarded by English Poets."[22] Smith's turn to rural nature demonstrates that she was not a poet whose "everlasting lamentables" and "hackneyed scraps of dismality" were a "perpetual dun on pity," as Anna Seward characterized her sonnets, or a poet who "herself [. . .] fills the foreground."[23]

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[21] William Wordsworth's note to "Stanzas, Suggested in a Steamboat off St. Bees' Heads, on the Coast of Cumberland," in *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. ed., Ernest de Selincourt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), 724n.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Anna Seward to Theophilus Swift, 9 July 1789, *Letters of Anna Seward: written between the years 1787 and 1807: in six volumes* (Edinburgh, 1811), 2:287. See Kerri Andrews's essay, "'Herself . . . Fills the Foreground': Negotiating Autobiography in the *Elegiac Sonnets* and *The Emigrants*," for a more expansive analysis of Smith's persona in her poetry. This line, "herself [. . .]fills the foreground," is from a review of *The Emigrants* in the *Critical Review,* 9 (1793), 299-300. Andrews's essay is in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 13-27.

Rather, Smith saw life as a series of relations, drawing attention to responsibilities of maternal care in her poetry, but also the ways in which various subjects could be bogged down by their numerous attachments to the world.

Elaborating on what she terms the "mother-sonnets" in Smith's poetry, Jacqueline Labbe calls attention to these attachments, situating them in the love-lorn figure of the mother. In her chapter "*Elegiac Sonnets* I: The Good Mother," Labbe argues that Smith "reifies her position as the grieving mother," but also "writes her mother-sonnets in such a way that the speaker fluctuates in her expressions of devastation between the grief-stricken mother and the lamenting lover."[24] What is key about Labbe's observation is not necessarily that Smith's role as a mother inflects her poetry, but rather that Smith directs attention to the similarity between the burdens of care of a mother and the unrequited love of a lover. Smith draws on her own life's tragedies, but she also appropriates a generic Petrarchan sonnet form to represent this grief. The Petrarchan form generalizes the love between a lover and the beloved. In this way, the themes of Smith's sonnets vacillate between personal cases of maternal care and the more generalized subject of unrequited love. Moreover, the speaker's complaints in Smith's poetry, as Labbe observes, are never fully traceable to a focalized position. Instead, the lyric subjects of Smith's poem "fluctuate," and the burden of care does not fall upon the maternal figure alone.[25]

I connect Smith's movement between the particular case of maternal care and the more generalized case of unrequited love in the sonnet form to the ways in which care-focused feminists began to critique the specific role of a mother caregiver. Seminal books of the late 1970s and early 1980s, like Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976),

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[24] Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry, and the Culture of Gender* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 65.
[25] Ibid.

Nancy J. Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978) and Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), brought care, and specifically the rearing of children, to the forefront of second wave feminism. Centering attention on the role of the mother in the formation of a child's psyche, these works provided a "matricentic" approach to psychoanalytic Freudian theory. This was an attempt to revise phallocentric approaches of psychoanalysis that had dominated a large part of the century. However, criticisms arose over Chodorow's claim, "all children have the basic experience of being raised primarily by women," one that homogenized experience and also created a gendered distribution of care.[26] In Chodorow's article, "Reflections on *The Reproduction of Mothering*—Twenty Years Later," she recognizes these criticisms, writing, "From the perspective of a later generation of postmodernist-poststructuralists feminists, the book is full of currently tabooed universalizing and even essentializing language about 'the girl,' 'the mother-daughter relationship." However, she also summarizes the historical context of the time: "The context of the writing was, of course, a period when many feminists wanted to document the universality of gender and male dominance as an important object of study (and politics)."[27] What is implicit in Chodorow's reflection twenty years later is that people tended to talk about care as being restricted to mothers, when in fact the point of her book was to show how maternal care was actually labor in general.

[26] Although this quote is from Chodorow's later book, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, it is very much the central thread to her earlier book. Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29.
[27] Nancy J. Chodorow, "Reflections on *The Reproduction of Mothering*—Twenty Years Later," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 1, no. 4 (2000): 342. See also her preface to the second edition of *The Reproduction of Mothering* previously cited.

Similarly, Dinnerstein's argument in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* was in fact a critique of what she defined as sexual arrangements that delegated childcare as a "primary female responsibility."[28] Also central to her argument was the fact that care can make us feel estranged from the world. Dinnerstein argues that the gendered discrepancy of responsibility in child care creates a "human malaise" or "species' psychopathology" that in turn produces "our sense of strangeness on earth" and prevents us from "feeling at home here."[29] Matricentric care estranges us as a species. She writes, "central to the structural weakness built into our species' life is an imbalance between the overwhelming sturdiness of the mother-infant pair and the fragility of the father-infant pair."[30] I want to draw attention to Dinnerstein's terminology here, "our species' life," as it predates Dipesh Chakrabarty's formative argument about the Anthropocene and the climate of history in terms of species being. In Chakrabarty's essay, species can be a problematic term, essentializing experience for something that cannot be verified empirically: "we can never experience ourselves as species."[31] Yet, what emerges from Dinnerstein's term "species life" is how care produces and affects a generalized experience; it is possible to feel and experience malaise as a species. In fact, our "species psychopathology" is a feeling of never really being at home or happy here on earth—two defining characteristics of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*.

During this same time period literary scholars like Jerome McGann and Stuart Curran were advancing arguments regarding Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* and how her sonnets expressed a

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[28] Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, (New York: Other Press, 1999), 4.
[29] Ibid. 4, 1.
[30] Ibid. 77.
[31] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009), 220.

more universal condition.[32] In his seminal assessment of Smith's sonnets, McGann writes, "the peculiar force of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* comes from the fact that they are *not* elegies for some particular person or persons. *Lacrymae rerum*, they mediate a general condition."[33] McGann's observation underscores an important aspect of Smith's poetry: a universal condition that affects every living person and thing. In this sense, Smith's life tragedies and role as a mother do not dominate the sonnets; the sonnets instead portray a melancholic condition that affect all who live on this planet. In *Elegiac Sonnets*, it is often the case that it is neither clear who or what is doing the mourning nor who or what has been lost. Although a few sonnets name Anna Augusta as the beloved daughter of Smith being mourned, most fail to articulate what exactly is causing the lyric subject's depression or the sadness of the scene.[34] There is an expansive sense of loss that

[32] By 2004, Theresa M. Kelley also observes how: "the modern critical landscape of Smith studies has moved, in short, rather quickly from the textual recovery of a Romantic woman poet who mourned her marginal, inadequate relation to the male tradition (both poetic and juridical), to the recognition that Smith capably staged a Romantic poetic persona for whom loss and recovery and diffusion are the rhetorical work at hand and the labor of poetic speech" ("Romantic Histories: Charlotte Smith and *Beachy Head*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 59, no. 3 [December 2004]: 285). Kelley's observation draws attention to the shift in modern scholars' attention from the biographical and gendered elements in Smith's poetry to a recognition of a poetic impulse that echoes Theodor Adorno's argument regarding the subjective "I" in lyric poetry. In Adorno's argument, the "I" or poetic identity dialectically emerges from its relation to society. She writes, "No longer hidden below the radar screen of canonical Romantic poets, Smith has emerged as a poet whose appropriations of genre and voice convey in singular fashion the *Romantic impulse* to laminate biography and poetic identity with public as well as personal ends in view" (286, emphasis added). Smith's poetry articulates a more public condition, extending her individualized cares and complaints beyond their domestic interiors.

[33] Original emphasis. Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 157.

[34] Samuel Rowe observes in Smith's sonnets "the object-less elegy." He argues that in Smith's sonnets the lyric subject notably declines to participate in the "lyric function of the elegy." The lyric subject is supposed to "designate a lost object" and "then to propose a means of recuperating that loss, but Smith's lyric subject does neither. Samuel Rowe, "The Negative Turn: Smith's Elegiac Sonnets and the Right not to Communicate," *Romantic Circles* (June 2017), https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/negative/praxis.2017.negative.rowe.html

permeates the collection. Curran identified a revision of genre in Smith's sonnets, one that made this pervasive loss legible to her contemporary readers because of its broad scope. Curran recognized how Smith's sonnets were an "accent" on the Petrarchan sonnet form.[35] For Curran, this slight revision of the form came from an "awareness both of the conventions of the traditional sonnet sequence and of the effect of her reversing its traditional gender roles."[36] Smith's adaptation of Petrarch's theme of unrequited love expands the particular case between a lover and a beloved to instead a kind of grief that could strike "a responsive chord in her readers and her numerous followers."[37] Curran attributes the "revival of the sonnet in British Romanticism" to Smith's more general themes of love and loss.[38] What I am adding to these keen and formative arguments is that Smith anticipates a twentieth-century understanding of care-focused feminism because she was a poet for whom the question of care generalizes itself to such an extent that it ceases to look like solely women's work, but rather like a general condition of species life, or what it is to live in a world full of attachments.

Like care-focused feminism that sought to have maternal care recognized as a universal labor, Smith's sonnets similarly portray care as something that is not solely restricted to maternal figures. For example, in one of the sonnets, Smith uses a scene of looking after children to describe how "Care and Anguish" eventually come to preside over every living person on this world. Sonnet XLI, "To Tranquility" begins with a depiction of the speaker looking upon a sleeping child. Much like S. T. Coleridge will write of his son, Hartley, in "Frost at Midnight"

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[35] Curran, *Poems*, xxv.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., xxvi.
[38] Ibid. See also Stuart Curran, "Charlotte Smith and British Romanticism," *South Central Review* 11, no. 2 (1994): 66-78, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3189989 .

(1798) a few years later, the sleeping babe represents tranquility that is rarely found on earth, but instead of the watchful caretaker feeling "tender gladness" over the prospect of the child's future as in Coleridge's poem, Smith's sonnet focuses on the suffering and misery that will follow the child until his or her deathbed.[39]

> In this tumultuous sphere, for thee unfit,
> How seldom art thou found—Tranquility!
> Unless 'tis when with mild and downcast eye
> By the low cradles thou delight'st to sit
> Of sleeping infants—watching the soft breath,
> And bidding the sweet slumberers easy lie;
> Or sometimes hanging o'er the bed of death,
> Where the poor languid sufferer—hopes to die.
> O beauteous sister of the halcyon peace!
> I sure shall find thee in that heavenly scene
> Where Care and Anguish shall their power resign.
>
> (1-11)[40]

Exemplifying a state of carelessness, sleeping is the only time when one is free of concerns and anxiety, or care.[41] This sonnet links the peaceful slumbers of an infant, somewhat morbidly, to

[39] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems,* ed. William Keach (New York: Penguin, 1997), 231.
[40] Smith, *Poems*, 40. Lines are cited parenthetically.
[41] Sleeping is in fact the only time, other than in childhood, when one is careless in Smith's sonnets. I refer here to three sonnets that feature rural wanderers and shepherds who are described as careless while asleep, Sonnet XXXI "Written in Farm Wood, South Downs, in May 1784", Sonnet XXXVI, and Sonnet LIV "The sleeping woodman. Written in April 1790." Smith, *Poems*, 34, 37, 49. Sonnet LXXIV "The winter night"also begins with a quote from *Macbeth*: "Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care" (Smith, *Poems*, 63, l.1).

"the bed of death," where "a languid sufferer—hopes to die" (7, 8). Bedside scenes of infancy and old age exemplify tranquility or what it means to escape from the power of "Care and anguish" on this "tumultuous sphere" (11, 1). In this sense, the poem depicts the caretaker's care as not just an attachment that a mother has for her child, but rather as the many attachments and burdens that await the infant. While childhood is often seen as the spring of one's life, Smith depicts the period as one that contains the potential baggage of a lifetime of care. The sleeping child will eventually wake up to a world of "Care and Anguish" and will only find peace at the end of their existence. To live one's life is to have care and is thus an ontological condition of being bound to the world.

Indeed, living comes with a sense of being attached to someone or something and the actions of a mother for her child embody that condition, but Smith's sonnets also show how care becomes involved with labor more generally. In sonnet LVII, "To dependence," Smith describes dependence much like Ann Yearsley's poem, "Paroxysm of a Moment" (1796), describes care. Yearsley's poem begins quite sharply with the demand "Fly me care!" and an intense desire to be rid of care's "fetters" that chain the speaker aversely to domestic labor and responsibilities.[42] In Smith's sonnet, "dependence" has "heavy, heavy" "chains" that exemplify the financial and artistic constraints that patronage imposes on an artist (1). These chains also define a condition of life.[43] The sonnet compares the artist's life to a shepherd's:

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[42]Ann Yearsley, "Paroxysm of a Moment," *Collected Works of Ann Yearsley*, ed. Kerri Andrews (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 217.

[43]As Curran writes in a footnote to this sonnet: "Although this sonnet appears to refer to the chronic problem artists face securing patronage without sacrificing freedom, Smith also seems to intrude on her forceful denunciation the particular indignities suffered by a woman." Curran reads the legal suit Smith had over her father-in-law's estate in line 12-13. Curran's observation points to the movement between "particular indignities" and more general cases of obligation in Smith's sonnets (*Poems*, 51n).

More blest is the hind, who from his bed of flock

Starts—when the birds of morn their summons give,

And waken'd by the "lark—'the shepherd's clock,'

Lives but to labour—labouring but to live.

(5-9)

The sonnet's volta lands on a tautological line, "Lives but to labour—labouring but to live," which stresses how maintenance and work are inseparable from life or what it means to live on this planet. Every day the shepherd and the lark awake to their individual cares, but both are linked in that the bird's labor or singing is the shepherd's call to begin his own day of work. Although the relationship between the shepherd and the lark is painted as more idyllic than the sycophantic relationship between an artist and patron, the laborious attachments that define life remain at the heart of the sonnet: its volta.

As a condition of life, care is depicted as that which ceaselessly follows the subjects of Smith's sonnets—even the rural figures like wanderers and shepherds cannot fully escape the burden of care. A wanderer appears in the final sonnet of the 1786 edition, Sonnet XXXVI, which describes a "lone Wanderer" who traverses "paths thro' thorns and roughness" only to have "the sense of sorrow" be lost "awhile" (1, 3, 6).[44] Care ultimately finds him, as well as the speaker, as the poem ends with the couplet: "And point my wishes to that tranquil shore / Where the pale spectre Care pursues no more" (13-14). The speaker cannot escape her cares in "fair poesy" as well, and "life's unhappy day" continues to "grow" "darker" (7, 9). Care itself is attached to each figure, including the lyric subject, and even the wanderers in rural settings cannot rid themselves of its presence.

[44] Smith, *Poems*, 37. Lines cited parenthetically.

In another one of Smith's sonnets, sonnet LXII "Written on passing by moon-light through a village, while the ground was covered with snow," the speaker herself becomes a wanderer.[45] She "wander[s]" away from the "hamlet" and the sleeping "village labourers," but on her excursion she finds no peace or happiness (1, 3). Instead, she finds only a "change of place" and only a different degree of pain (2). The final sestet depicts her winter walk as one that ends in despair:

> O'er the cold waste, amid the freezing night,
> Scarce heeding whither, desolate I stray;
> For me, pale Eye of Evening, thy soft light
> Leads to no happy home; *my* weary way
> Ends but in sad vicissitudes of care:
> I only fly from doubt—to meet despair!
>
> (9-14)

Care remains constant throughout the speaker's meandering and the poem's turns. Despite the speaker's wandering and straying, both within the city and outside of its society, care follows. There is "no happy home" to be found on earth. Care pursues the speaker, as it does the "lone wanderers," and shepherds, because to be careless is an impossible feat for an earthbound adult.

When maternal care does emerge in Smith's sonnets, it often coexists in scenes of loss, thus adding to the elegiac atmosphere of the poems, but also the way in which carelessness comes to represent a lost vernal state of happiness. McGann's attribution of *lacrymae rerum* and Samuel Rowe's observation of the "object-less elegy" in *Elegiac Sonnets* turn our attention to the

[45] Smith, *Poems*, 55. Lines cited parenthetically.

fact that the lost object is often not defined in Smith's sonnets.[46] However, in several of Smith's sonnets featuring caretakers or figures looking after or upon children, part of this confusion over what defines the lost object arises from the fact that children are supposed to represent a sanguine and otherwise vernally happy time, but ultimately do not. In Smith's poetic cases, a child, or scene of children playing, makes the adult speaker unhappy because they see childhood in general as something that has been lost and corrupted. For example, in sonnet XXVII, which was one of twenty poems added to the 1786 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, the speaker describes a scene of children playing and contrasts their happiness with her current state of pain. This scene will reoccur throughout Smith's poetry, particularly in poetry regarding the South Downs or Beachy Head.[47] Quoting a line from James Thomson's *Autumn* from his four-part georgic *The Seasons*, the speaker alludes to autumn as a way of describing her present state of adulthood melancholy (13-14).

> Sighing, I see yon little troop at play,
> By Sorrow yet untouched, unhurt by Care;
> While free and sportive they enjoy to-day,
> "Content and careless of to-morrow's fare!"*
> O happy age! when Hope's unclouded ray
> Lights their green path, and prompts their simple mirth;
> Ere they feel the thorns that lurking lay

[46] Samuel Rowe, "The Negative Turn," n.p.
[47] See for example, Sonnet V, "To the South Downs," that begins with "Ah! Hills belov'd—where once a happy child,[. . .] I wove your blue-bells into garlands wild" (Smith, *Poems*, 15, ll. 1-3). This same scene appears throughout Smith's later poem, *Beachy Head*, albeit fragmented. L. 368 begins, "Ah! hills so early loved!" and ll. 282-285 describe the speaker's carefree happy childhood: "*I* once was happy, when while yet a child, / I learn'd to love these upland solitudes [. . .] To my light spirit, care was yet unknown" (*Poems*, Curran, 232, 228-9).

To wound the wretched pilgrims of the earth;

Making them rue the hour that gave them birth,

And threw them on a world so full of pain.

(1-10)

*Thomson [James Thomson, *The Seasons*, "Autumn," line 191]

Here, carelessness is synonymous with happiness and is also linked to the "green" or vernal "happy age" of childhood. The seasons seem to align with their appropriate affects. However, the poem quickly moves from the vernal state of happiness to a description of what it means to grow older. Although children are blissfully ignorant, they will eventually "rue the hour that gave them birth, / And threw them on a world so full of pain" (9-10). In this sense, having care represents what it is to be a "wretched pilgrim of the earth" (8).

Smith's sonnets portray life as having care, thus demonstrating how attachments and relationships define what it means to live on this planet. Even wanderers and shepherds, persons who seem beyond the reach of care, have attachments which they cannot escape. In this way, Smith expands the circle of care beyond domestic concerns. Care is not just a matter of maternal-child relations, but rather a condition of life and growing older in a "world so full of pain" and "tumultuous sphere." As the quotation from Thomson's "Autumn" in sonnet XXVII conveys, the trope of autumn also factors into Smith's representation of care. Symbolizing middle-aged adulthood as well as melancholy, the trope of autumn occurs throughout Smith's sonnets, thus connecting care to the season. In the next section, I argue that Smith's sonnets not only expand care in terms of species or kind, but they also expand care in terms of seasonal time, or what becomes identifiable as a kind of perennial melancholy. By perennial, I do not mean to suggest that this is kind of mood or feeling that returns only in autumn. Rather, I use perennial in the

sense that the mood is ceaseless or related to its Latin root, *perennis*, meaning "lasting through the year or years."[48]

2. Care and Autumnal Melancholy

In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton designates autumn as a season of sadness, writing: "of the seasons of the year, autumn is the most melancholy."[49] He saw melancholy as "a settled humour, as Aurelianus and others call it, not errant, but fixed."[50] Similarly, for Charlotte Smith, melancholy is not a transient or fleeting feeling. As her prefaces to the various editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* reveal, "melancholy moments" transpired in her life and "unfortunately" she has no reason to change her mood or "*tone*."[51] Melancholy is, at the very least, a "decade mood."[52] To contrast Smith's poetry again with another of Keats's odes, melancholy is not a "fit" as it is in Keats's "Ode on Melancholy;" it will not go away or be forgotten as is the fear in Keats' poem when the speaker pleads: "No, no, go not to Lethe."[53] Instead, melancholy persists in Smith's sonnets, extending the autumnal mood to that which is felt throughout the year and years.

The reader is almost immediately introduced to this melancholic mood in *Elegiac*

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[48] "perennial, adj. and n.," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/140686?redirectedFrom=perennial.
[49] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 172.
[50] Burton, 146.
[51] Original emphasis. Smith, *Poems*, 3, 5.
[52] Smith, Sonnet LXXXVII "Written in October," line 5, 74.
[53] John Keats, "Ode on Melancholy," *John Keats: The Poems*, Everyman's Library (New York: Knopf, 1993), 234-5, ll. 1, 11. See Smith's Sonnet V "To the South Downs," a poem in which the speaker longs for a "Lethean cup" in order "to drink a long oblivion to my care" since, as the final line proclaims, "there's no oblivion—but in death alone!" (Smith, *Poems*, 15, ll.11-12, 14). Whereas Keats's poem worries about melancholy's "beauty that must die," Smith's earlier poem desires for forgetfulness, for a non-melancholic state, but cannot achieve it (l. 21).

Sonnets. In sonnet II, "Written at the close of spring," the very same sonnet in which the word "care" also first appears, the sonnet's temporality is said to be at the close of spring as the title suggests; however, the emphasis of the poem is not vernal vivacity or happiness. Instead the sonnet's focus is on how flowers die and humanity is "so frail."[54]

The garlands fade that Spring so lately wove,
Each simple flower which she had nursed in dew,
Anemonies, that spangled every grove,
The primrose wan, and hare-bell mildly blue.
No more shall violets linger in the dell,
Or purple orchis variegate the plain,
Till Spring again shall call forth every bell,
And dress with humid hands her wreaths again.
Ah! poor Humanity! so frail, so fair,
Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant Passion, and corrosive Care,
Bid all thy fairy colours fade away!
Another May new buds and flowers shall bring;
Ah! why has happiness—no second Spring?

(1-14)

"Tyrant Passion, and Corrosive Care" dominate the scene through the sonnet's volta, or turn to "poor Humanity!" Care causes the vernal "fairy colours [to] fade away" and the poem ends with "Ah! why has happiness—no second spring?" Perennial flowers might return to bloom every

[54] Smith, *Poems*, 13-4, l. 9. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically.

spring, but human happiness does not reappear. Like Anna Letitia Barbauld's warning of no second spring for England in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, this poem portrays a pessimistic future; however, unlike Barbauld's poem that emphasizes an unacknowledged disaster in the present moment, Smith's poem stresses decay, fully acknowledging a sense of deterioration that impacts humanity at large. Instead of a vibrant vernal scene filled with new and burgeoning forms of life, "corrosive Care" eats away at life as one gets older. Spring is no longer a time of rebirth and regeneration; it is a reminder of lost innocence and carefree days.

Smith's sonnets continue to depict care as a condition that follows and overwhelms the adult speaker by explicitly aligning it with autumnal melancholy. In sonnet XLII, "Composed during a Walk on the Downs, Nov. 1787," the beginning lines describe the season as a mournful period of the year:

> The dark and pillowy cloud; the sallow trees,
> Seem o'er the ruins of the year to mourn;
> And cold and hollow, the inconstant breeze
> Sobs thro' the falling leaves and wither'd fern.
> O'er the tall brow of yonder chalky bourn,
> The evening shades their gather'd darkness fling,
> While, by the ling'ring light, I scarce discern
> The shrieking nightjar, sail on heavy wing.
> Ah! yet a little—and propitious Spring,
> Crown'd with fresh flow'rs, shall wake the woodland strain;
> But no gay change revolving seasons bring,
> To call forth Pleasure from the soul of Pain,

Bid syren Hope resume her long lost part,

And chase the vulture Care, that feeds upon the heart.

(1-14)

This elegiac scene is one where trees mourn "o'er the ruins of the year," the "breeze sobs" over the falling leaves and dying plants, and, quite significantly, the "vulture Care, that feeds upon the heart" culminates the poem. In this sonnet, the crisis, or turning point of its volta, demonstrates how care is a burden that even the "revolving seasons" cannot relieve. The beginning of the sestet "Ah! Yet a little—and propitious Spring" refers to a thought of vernal hope and promise, but this proposed solution is quickly doused with the second half of the quatrain "But no gay change revolving seasons bring / To call forth pleasure from the soul of pain!" The poem's revised Petrarchan volta turns not to a solution, as the Petrarchan sonnet is supposed to, but rather to a condition of perpetual suffering that persists despite the earth's tilt and changing seasons. Care forever consumes one, eating away at one's being; it is the melancholic condition of adult life.

As the peculiar volta in sonnet XLII illustrates, the revolutions of seasons on earth cannot create "gay change" because care dominates adult life, thus extending the melancholic condition in time. "Sonnet LXXVIII, Snowdrops," depicts this prolonged melancholy as one that remains fixed throughout the four seasons. In one of the few sonnets to reference Anna, Smith's beloved daughter who died in childbirth in the spring of 1795, the poem's speaker can no longer "escap[e] for a moment all my cares" (6).[55] As the "Heralds of the Sun and Summer gale" begin to "wan," the sonnet depicts the autumnal period as one of perennial sadness (1). The sonnet

[55] Curran attributes the "she" "whose untimed grave" in line 11 to Smith's daughter Anna Augusta (Curran, *Poems*, 67n).

ends with: “Flow my unceasing tears! Their varied round / The Seasons go; while I through all repine: / For fix’d regret, and hopeless grief are mine” (12-14). Although the seasons might change, the speaker cannot run away from her care or sorrow. Her unhappy state is “fix’d.”

Having attachments of care is what remains a fixed component of adult life and the sonnets define this condition as a perennially melancholic mood. In Smith’s Sonnet LXXXVII, “Written in October,” the speaker observes how “the blasts of Autumn” that spread “the faded foliage of another year,” create a “sad and solemn sound” that is “well attuned to my decade mood” (1-3, 5). The fallen leaves might mark the end of a year, but the “decade mood” contradicts this temporality of annual completion; melancholy is a mood that is felt perennially. Even the sonnet LXXXVII’s nod to spring is one of foreclosure: “The airs that breathe of Spring” are forsaken and the final line declares, “For never more to me the Spring of Hope returns!” (6,14) There is no second spring or optimism for seasonal revolutions because they will not bring a change to the speaker’s melancholic mood.

As Timothy Morton has argued of ecological elegies, “something strange happens to elegy’s usual organization of time. Ecological elegy asks us to mourn for something that has not completely passed, that perhaps has not even passed yet.”[56] Like Morton’s definition of ecological elegy, Smith’s elegiac sonnets demonstrate how melancholy exists in a complicated spatiotemporality; it never goes away or completely passes. Indeed, sadness never seems to end despite seasonal changes and revolutions because the attachments of care eat away the adult figures and lyric subjects in the sonnets, corroding their sense of happiness. In contemporary poetry, Margaret Ronda has observed a similar hybridity of elegy and melancholia. Ronda

[56] Timothy Morton, “The Dark Ecology of Elegy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 255.

characterizes Juliana Spahr's "Gentle Now, Don't Add to the Heartache" as an elegy that "points, again and again, to the inadequacy and incompletion of its work of mourning" and a poem that "never defines precisely what its loss consists of."[57] It is difficult to define the object of the Smith's elegy as Rowe has argued. Yet, what is clear in the sonnets is not only the prevalence of a melancholic mood, but also how numerous attachments of care remain fixed throughout one's adult life. In this sense, autumnal melancholy shows how care becomes that which is perennially felt. In what follows, I analyze Smith's *Beachy Head* to connect this perennial and inescapable melancholy to ecological care. In this posthumously published poem by Smith, care emerges as a species activity, defining what it means to live on a planet where one is always in relation to other beings.

3. Ecological Care in *Beachy Head*

Recently, Kevis Goodman and Tobias Menely have called attention to the geological and Holocene poetics of Charlotte Smith's *Beachy Head*.[58] I also read this posthumously published poem of Smith's for its earthly or geological themes, but, unlike Goodman and Menely, I connect these terrestrial themes to the burden and insescapable nature of care. Care, I argue, comes to preside over the many figures of *Beachy Head* as an earthly weight that, despite its gravity, connects them to each other and the world. As *Beachy Head* illustrates, care is an ecological species activity that defines what it is to live with numerous attachments, even if they

[57] Margaret Ronda, "Mourning and Melancholia in the Anthropocene," *Post45* (June 2013), http://post45.research.yale.edu/2013/06/mourning-and-melancholia-in-the-anthropocene. This is similar to Samuel Rowe's identification of an object-less elegy in Smith's sonnets.
[58] See Kevis Goodman's "Conjectures on Beachy Head: Charlotte Smith's Geological Poetics and the Ground of the Present," *ELH* 81, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 983-1006 and Tobias Menely's "Late Holocene Poetics: Genre and Geohistory in Beachy Head," *European Romantic Review*, 28, no. 3: 307-314.

make life melancholic.

Various critics have observed how *Beachy Head* does not focus on any one person or subject, but continuously moves from the particular to the general and back again, traversing multiple scales of space and time. As Theresa M. Kelley argues, *Beachy Head* is rich in its complex ability to traverse both the micro and macro levels of history. [59] Smith herself acknowledged that the poem featured a "variety of subjects," some "local" while others are more general.[60] Indeed, the poem's seven hundred and thirty-one lines do seem to touch upon a bit of everything. From the "rock sublime" to the "sea-snipe's cry" to the fisherman below to the "strange and foreign forms / of sea-shells," the poem's first four hundred lines alone cover quite a range of subjects, moving between lyrical moments of singular reflection and expansive scenes of history and deep time.[61] As Christophe Bode observes, "the subject of 'Beachy Head' is not confined by any limitations of time or space" and "'Beachy Head' does not demarcate the *limitations* of human subjectivity but highlights the fact that human subjectivity can encompass everything."[62] Like Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*, *Beachy Head* does not focus on any particular

[59] Kelley defines these micro and macro levels of history in relation to Siegfried Kracauer's account of historiography's dilemma that faces two competing models: a grand historical and more linear narrative versus eye-witness or local accounts in line with a Marxist model as history from below. See "Romantic Histories: Charlotte Smith and *Beachy Head*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 59, no. 3 (December 2004): 281-314.
[60] Smith describes *Beachy Head* as a "local poem" that "embraces a variety of subjects" (*The Collected Letters*, ed. Judith Phillips Stanton [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003], 705).
[61] Smith, *Beachy Head*, *Poems*, lines 1, 113, 373, 217-247. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically
[62] Original emphasis. See Christophe Bode, "The Subject of *Beachy Head*," in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 63, 67-8. Kelley attributes this ambivalence of the human subject to the elegiac subject, arguing, "elegiac subject of *Beachy Head* is not centrally the woman poet assailed by others, but rather the difficulty of writing history when its records and concerns work at so many discordant levels." Kelley, "Romantic Histories," 289-90.

person per se, but instead demonstrates how care comes to preside over every living species.

In the beginning of *Beachy Head*, a variety of laborers are featured, and the word "care" appears four times in the span of roughly fifty lines. Significantly, a season will frame this section, providing a general parameter for reading the particular and individual cases of work amidst harsh conditions. From "the fishermen, who at set seasons pass" and "hail their comrades" at sea, the poem turns to shepherds "engaged in the contraband trade" as the footnote tells readers (100, 104).[63] This turn at line 168 is to "simple scenes of peace and industry" at the end of autumn. Yet, the weather of the season interrupts the supposed tranquility of these scenes. A heavy "snow-storm of December's night" will stress the perilous reality of a shepherd's "clandestine traffic" (185, 183). "More happy is the hind," ostensibly, but, even he, too, waits for the "green blades" of "Spring's return" to feed his sheep (193, 200). The shepherd's happiness is also tainted by the "wintry tempests" that blow and force him and "his children" to share the same "rugged shed" with his sheep (199, 198). The poem depicts a broad, but desolate landscape of various rural laborers amidst their seasonal cares.

The poem darts from subject to subject and even various species, thus demonstrating how living beings are connected despite their individual cares and concerns. In addition to the rural laborers, the poem also features a variety of birds who have cares of their own. A "poor family" of black coot birds, who "thro the drear hours of Winter," "extirpate with care" what plants they can find to eat are described as well as a "mother" curlew and her "children" who "toil" as well (223, 219, 225, 234, 235). From these birds, the poem jumps to a "sturdy hind" who looks with "envy and contempt" on a passing train car where "secret care / or sick satiety is often hid" (239, 240, 242-3). Although the shepherd thinks that the train would carry him away

[63]Smith, *Beachy Head*, *Poems*, 225n.

from his daily labors, the "secret care" that the train car actually holds is that a "child of luxury" knows no pleasure (245). He, too, is unhappy and "flies from place to place / in chase of pleasure that elude his grasp" (246-7). No person or species can elude or escape the sadness of having care.

The burden of care is so expansive that it even implicates the shepherds who with "watchful care" tend to their sheep as well as the speaker herself; it affects all who live in this world (459). A few lines after the poem features its various cases of care among birds and rural laborers, it describes innocence much like it does in *Elegiac Sonnets*—as a vernal time that is quickly lost amidst "the world's wilderness" (258). Although childhood might be careless and content, this period is as fleeting as the happiness that "misleads the wanderer" because a boy "who knows not death" soon will (255, 257, 262). To be careless is something that cannot be sustained beyond childhood. The speaker writes of her own experience: "To my light spirit, care was yet unknown / And evil unforeseen:—Early it came / And childhood scarcely passed" (285-87). In the speaker's case, care comes too early, ending her happy childhood prematurely.

With all of these unhappy cases of care, Smith's poem demonstrates how care is an ecological species activity; it is a laborious, melancholic condition that involves and connects various species. The "simple scenes of industry" and "care" throughout *Beachy Head* in this section of the poem provide an example of what species activity might look like. From the mother coot bird who "extirpates with care" food for her "poor family" to the "evening curlew" and "mother and children" of birds who "patiently encounter" their "toil," to the "sturdy hind" who "envies" those in a train carriage that passes by him while he's at work, the poem connects all of these instance via care. Care feminism in the past thirty years also seeks to connect care to species activity. For example, Joan C. Tronto's book, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument*

for an Ethic of Care (1993) defines care as a species activity. Tronto writes: "in the most general sense, care is a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web."[64] Tronto argues that care is a species activity; it is ecological because it stresses the connections and attachments that make up our relationship to the world and the various forms of life within it. In recent arguments concerning ecological care, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa notes that "Feminist ethics of care argues that to value care is to recognize the inevitable interdependency essential to the existence of reliant and vulnerable beings. Interdependency is not a contract, nor a moral idea—it is a *condition*. Care is therefore concomitant to the continuation of life for many living beings in more than human entanglements."[65] As this section of *Beachy Head* shows, care is represented as a condition that involves many species in more than human entanglements, however melancholic or unhappy that condition may be.

Beachy Head exhibits a recluse figure who is the figure extraordinaire of this ecological care—a figure who also represents the ambivalent nature of these attachments. In the poem's final move, it turns to a hermit's story about a man who dwelled "just beneath the rock" of Beachy Head. Parson Darby, as the footnote tells readers, lived in a "cavern almost immediately underneath the cliff called Beachy Head" and "who for many years had no other abode than this cave, and subsisted almost entirely on shell-fish. He had often administered assistance to ship-wrecked mariners; but venturing into the sea on this charitable mission during a violent

[64] Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York, Routledge 1993), 103.
[65] Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, 70.

equinoctial storm, he himself perished."[66] Darby's story is melancholic by way of this autumnal storm, but also in the way that Darby can see no "seasonal change."

Just beneath the rock
Where Beachy overpeers the channel wave,
Within a cavern mined by wintry tides
dwelt one, who long disgusted with the world
And all its ways, appear'd to suffer life
Rather than live; the soul-reviving gale,
Fanning the bean-field, or the thymy heath,
Had not for many summers breathed on him;
And nothing mark'd to him the season's change,
Save that more gently rose the placid sea,
And that the birds which winter on the coast
Gave place to other migrants; save that the fog,
Hovering no more above the beetling cliffs
Betray'd not the little careless sheep*
On the brink grazing, while their headlong fall
Near the lone Hermit's flint-surrounded home,
Claim'd unavailing pity; for his heart
Was feelingly alive to all that breath'd;
And outraged as he was, in sanguine youth,
By human crimes, he still acutely felt

[66] Smith, *Poems*, 245n.

For human misery.

(674-691)

*Sometimes in thick weather the sheep feeding on the summit of the cliff, miss their footing, and are killed by the fall.

Darby does not feel the breath of summer, he feels only a long "disgust for the world" and he will die in "violent equinoctial storm" as the footnote to line 675 explains to readers. There is nothing to "mark the season's change" and he no longer represents a man of "sanguine youth." In these ways, Darby lives in a constant state of melancholy. Yet, interestingly, he is a figure who cannot help, but "acutely" feel for "all that breath'd." This feeling extends to the "careless sheep" who, as the note tells us, fall to their death in foggy weather. Significantly, the sheep's carelessness, like little lambs or careless children themselves, leads to a devastating future. The obscuring fog causes their death, but it does not obstruct Darby's concern for these species. He still has "pity" for them, thus demonstrating Darby's sense of a more-than-human attachment to living beings despite being "long disgusted with the world."

Because for as much as Parson Darby's story is tied to the very rocks and geologic place of Beachy Head as way of leaving society behind, it is also quite significantly a story of "feeling alive to all that breath'd," including the sailors who are drowning in an equinoctial storm (688). Although Darby has isolated himself from society and the world, he still saves shipwrecked sailors, applying "his generous cares" to "snatch" some "unhappy man" from the "wild billows."

One dark night

The equinoctial wind blew south by west,

Fierce on the shore;—the bellowing cliffs were shook

Even to their stony base, and fragments fell

Flashing and thundering on the angry flood.

At day-break, anxious for the lonely man,

His cave the mountain shepherds visited,

Tho' sand and banks of weeds had choak'd their way—

He was not in it; but his drowned cor'se

By the waves wafted, near his former home

Receiv'd the rites of burial. Those who read

Chisel'd within the rock, these mournful lines,

Memorials of his sufferings, did not grieve,

That dying in the cause of charity

His spirit, from its earthly bondage freed,

Had to some better region fled for ever.

(717-731)

Ultimately, Darby dies saving the lives of others. Occurring in autumn, as the "equinoctial wind" makes clear, Darby's death during this time marks his freedom from his "earthly bondage," or his numerous attachments to the world that he could not get shed while alive. This final act, to die "in the cause of charity," signifies his ultimate freedom from earthly cares, but it also accentuates his attachment to life. If charity, *caritas*, is defined by a sense of love or fellowship among living beings, then in this closing act, one sees how Darby's "generous cares" and "charity" triumph despite his ambivalence.[67] Darby desires to get away from society and worldly concerns, but he can't help feeling attached to all who breathe. While alive, he can never fully

[67] "charity, n.," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/30731?redirectedFrom=charity.

escape from having "generous cares" or attachments to other living species.

I want to return to Keats's ode that I initially featured as a counter example to Smith's poetic cases of care in the beginning of this chapter to show how a careless autumn could ultimately represent the ambivalence that surrounds care. The first lines of Keats' ode personify the "season of mists" as one who "conspir[es]" with the "maturing sun," rendering autumn as a distillation that hangs in the air. The root of "conspire," *spirare*, meaning breath, further emphasizes this atmospheric state.[68] The poem continues to disperse the season across a complex temporal landscape laden with weighty objects like ripe apples, swelling gourds, and "o'er-brimm'd bees" with "clammy cells" (5, 7, 11). Going from late summer to the third and final stanza's culmination in a fall evening when the music of crickets, "full-grown lambs," and swallows all finish autumn's song as well as the events of a day, the poem obscures the distinction between diurnal and seasonal time (30). In this unique, but blurred temporality, the season of autumn is grounded by these earthly objects of harvest while it also hovers in the air—like the very bees that fly home to well-stocked hives and the swallows that "twitter in the skies" (11, 33). The poem's remarkable attention to a seasonal atmosphere that is as heavy as the trees that bend from the weight of their apples yet also aerially untethered by the "fume of poppies" and "winnowing wind" is complicated even more with a direct transition that occurs with the middle stanza's opening question (17, 15). I quote the stanza again here:

> Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
>
> Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

[68] John Keats, "To Autumn," l. 1-3, in *John Keats: The Poems*, Everyman's Library (New York: Knopf, 1993), 233-34. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically. "conspire, v.," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/39777?redirectedFrom=conspire.

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

(12-15)

Although the third stanza also begins with a question—"Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?"—this stanza pointedly directs its query to "thee," which, as previously discussed, is a personified Autumn who sits "careless" on the granary floor (23). With this reading of the atmospheric, yet gravity-laden opening of Keats's ode one could read Keats's careless Autumn differently: as an ambivalent attachment that still grounds one to the floor, transfixing one to the earth. This careless Autumn would then represent a kind of paradoxical desire—a care to be rid of all cares—and Autumn as the personified form of melancholic ambivalence. In this sense, a careless Autumn would also mimic the equivocal aura that hovers in the opening lines of Keats's ode to the season of mists, thus depicting autumn as a season of care that wavers between being earthbound and hazily untethered. This vacillation mimics Darby's ambivalence regarding society and how his "charitable" and "generous" actions contradict his disgust. He desires to be rid of all attachments, to be untethered and carefree, but an attachment and regard for other beings remains. He still has a love for all who breathe.

Although death represents the ultimate freedom from care in Darby's case, *Beachy Head* shows how care becomes a generalized condition that is thrust upon everyone—even a hermit who seeks to be free from it. This version of care is neither gendered nor does it denote a relationship that only happens between mothers and their children. It is uniquely entangled with a kind of melancholic sadness because it is in fact a terrestrial burden that cannot be lifted once one has left childhood. In other words, Darby's case defines what it means to live in amidst an

earthly equinoctial storm where autumnal melancholy continually looms, but one's life is forever connected to other living beings.

As Smith's poetry shows, to live on this planet is a condition that cannot be detached from the burden and attachments of care, however melancholic that condition may be. Yet, as Smith also shows, it is also important for readers to realize how this universal condition connects all who live on this planet; it is a species activity that also involves more than human entanglements, harnessing both the individual case of sorrow as well as the general. This is the message that Smith concludes her preface to the 1797 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* with:

> It is, indeed, a melancholy truth, that at this time there is so much tragedy in real life, that those who having escaped private calamity, can withdraw their minds a moment from that which is general, very naturally prefer to melancholy books, or tragic representations, those light and gayer amusements, which exhilarate the senses, and throw a transient veil over the extensive and still threatening desolation, that overspreads this country, and in some degree, every quarter of the world.[69]

The "melancholy truth" that Smith refers to here is the burden and inescapable nature of care. Describing a generalized condition that threatens the world-at-large, Smith directs her readers to pay attention to the particular cases of "private calamity," even those that might not seem to affect them. Smith's expansive version of care in her poetry, both in terms of species and time, designates a proto-ecological thinking for even twenty-first century readers. Care might continually be demanded of us and we might want to isolate ourselves from others and our attachments and responsibilities. We might want to "withdraw our minds" and throw a "transient

[69] Smith, *Poems*, 11-2.

veil" over all that affects the world, but Smith reminds us that these melancholic attachments are what connect and unite us. A melancholic burden of care might loom large over life on earth, but it is a weight that demands our attention.

IV. Winter, or Falling in Love with a Cold Climate in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark*

Mary Wollstonecraft's travel book *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark* (1796) was an instant success with readers, becoming even more popular after her early death roughly a year later. In an often-quoted passage from her husband William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of The Rights of Woman* (1798), he praised the book, saying it was admirable in the sense that it created male admirers: "If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book. She speaks of her sorrows, in a way that fills us with melancholy, and dissolves us in tenderness."[1] Godwin of course had fallen in love with the author in real life, losing her only a few months before the publication of *Memoirs* from complications in the birth of their child, Mary Shelley.[2] Although highly subjective, Godwin's praise of Wollstonecraft's travel narrative stresses the melancholy nature of the letters, but many have argued that Godwin's *Memoirs* renders Wollstonecraft's life as a tragic curiosity.[3] Certainly there are melancholic moments throughout Wollstonecraft's *Letters*, but there are also carefree descriptions of summer in the northern countries. For example, Wollstonecraft describes a peaceful evening in Sweden, when and where "worldly cares melt into the airy stuff dreams are made of."[4] This summer evening's mood is not

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[1] William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Richard Holmes (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1987), 249.
[2] Although, as Mary Jacobus writes, Godwin read Wollstonecraft's *Letters* in January 1796, six months before he met her. Mary Jacobus, *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 80n2.
[3] See for instance Mary Jacobus's reading of how Godwin's "response to Wollstonecraft's travel book eroticizes the condition of feminine sorrow." Jacobus, *First Things*, 65.
[4] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, ed. Tone Brekke and Jon Mee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 16. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

melancholic, but happy. *Letters* also features many vibrant descriptions. As one contemporary reviewer wrote in 1796: "[Wollstonecraft's] active mind has, throughout her tour, been awake to every object and occurrence. She has been at no loss to find in every new situation something interesting to describe, or some occasion for just reflection."[5] Wollstonecraft's letters reveal an invigorated mind and carefree mood that is highly attuned to one's environment.

Other readers commented on Wollstonecraft's vivid descriptions of nature and bold scenery. Robert Southey, for example, wrote: "She has made me in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with a northern moonlight."[6] Rather than fall in love with the author herself, Southey instead falls in love with the cold climate of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Interestingly, Southey's praise is not for a picturesque landscape or for nature, two more commonly used terms for the period, but for climate. Southey's impression of Wollstonecraft's *Letters* poses several questions. How does one fall in love with climate in the eighteenth century, especially when climate had long been understood as merely a latitudinal position on the globe? And with regard to melancholy in Wollstonecraft's *Letters*: if ecological existence is always already a melancholic condition that arises from having earthly cares as I argued in the previous chapter, then what are we, as readers, to make of the vibrant and lovable descriptions of climate in Wollstonecraft's *Letters*? Does Wollstonecraft's version of climate offer us a more hopeful account of an ecological existence?

One of the prevailing concerns of this chapter is how Wollstonecraft's *Letters* reveals climate, even harsh climates of "frost and snow," in a more positive light. Indeed, Wollstonecraft's warm and inviting representations of the cold climates of Sweden, Norway, and

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[5] *Analytical Review*, 23 (1796), 229.
[6] Robert Southey, April 28, 1797 to brother Thomas, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1861), 309.

Denmark during summer are not always sorrowful and gloomy, demonstrating how the moods that a climate—and a season—evokes are not as fixed or as melancholic as they initially seem. Contra to Charlotte Smith's enduring melancholy, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* demonstrate how seasons and climates project movement in both time and space. I connect this dynamic version of climate to an important transformation that took place in the eighteenth century regarding climate's supposed impact on human behavior. In the mid-eighteenth century, the French judge and philosopher Baron de Montesquieu produced an early theory of human geography that relied heavily on climate, initiating a more modern conception of the term from Hippocrates's theory. Yet, Montesquieu's theory of climate attracted criticism because it purported that geographic and climatic determinism operated uniformly; he believed that people behaved according to their latitudinal position and there was no room for variation—either in external conditions, like the variations in temperature due to seasons, or internal moods. David Hume attacked Montesquieu's climate-based theory because it was too physical, that is it didn't allow for or consider the moral causes or the effects of society and government on a person's behavior. This mid-century debate shows how this all-too-human version of climate was an unstable concept still developing in the mid-eighteenth century.

Much has been written about the life of Wollstonecraft and the autobiographical nature of her *Letters*, but this chapter focuses on the vibrant cold climates that are depicted in her writing and not the melancholy of the author herself. Wollstonecraft's descriptions of northern Scandinavian countries during the summer of 1795 reveal a climate that is comprised of many different components. Resisting Montesquieu's climatological characterization of people and nations based on temperature and location, Wollstonecraft, constructs a version of climate that involves more than merely temperature or latitudinal positioning—it involves movement, both in

time and distance, mood, and, most importantly, seasons. Traveling to a northern climate in summer, Wollstonecraft followed the naturalist Gilbert White in emphasizing the ways that migration—or the movement of bodies—stresses the numerous connections a person has to the various "objects and occurrences," as well as species, in their environment. Like White's *Natural History of Selborne* (1789), Wollstonecraft's *Letters* incorporates a newly ecological sense of climate, a sense that was evolving during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

1. Climate Theory in the Eighteenth Century

Since the time of Hippocrates, the notion of climate had chiefly involved "airs, waters, and places."[7] Hippocrates's theory of humors also identified climate as a primary factor for disease transmission and his understanding of illness was also largely influenced by seasons; he believed that seasonal patterns for air and moisture had a direct effect on disease and that "knowing the changes in seasons" would allow one to predict certain events regarding a person's health or illness.[8] Although humoral theory was largely debunked by the eighteenth century, the "17th and 18th centuries retained the notion that airs, waters, and places" influenced the human body.[9] Yet, due to Montesquieu's theory of human geography, climate also lost an important contributing factor during the middle part of the eighteenth century: seasons.

Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) argued that climate was a central factor in determining human behaviors. In his theory, climate was an external influence on the body's

[7] See Hippocrates's *Airs, Waters, and Places*, in *Hippocrates: Volume 1*, trans. W. H. S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 147 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1923, 65-138.
[8] Ibid., 73.
[9] Theodore S. Feldman, "Late Enlightenment Meteorology," in *The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Tore Frangsmyr, J. L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 155.

internal mechanisms; however, unlike the individual variations or illnesses that Hippocrates had seen in the changing seasons, Montesquieu's theory assumed constant external conditions based on temperature and place. Montesquieu believed that cold and warm temperatures had a direct impact on the body's fibers, nerves, and blood. According to Montesquieu's theory, "cold air" caused contractions, making men "more vigorous in cold climates."[10] In contrast, warm air relaxed one's fibers and nerves, causing men to be more "timid" because of a "slackening of the heart."[11] Yet, at the same time, external conditions did not change. Warm air in hotter climates would always arouse passions of the heart, or as Montesquieu put it: "in hotter climates, one likes love for itself; it is the sole cause of happiness; it is life."[12] Montesquieu's theory is climate-based, but it relies heavily on a notion of climate as consisting of only temperature and place, or more specifically a location's latitudinal position. In this way he draws from climate's etymological roots of *clima*, or the understanding that climate meant "each of the bands or belts of the earth's surface stretching from west to east and associated with specific parallels of latitude."[13] Yet, what Montesquieu pointedly leaves out of his version of climate is seasons.

By leaving seasons out of his theory, Montesquieu's climate-based theory of human behavior and geography begs many questions. It relies too rigidly on temperature and on place and does not allow for the variation that happens with seasons or within individual bodies. It is also extremely Eurocentric in its biased appreciation for and consideration of French and other European climates. By not considering how a place and a body might change over the course of a

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[10] Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 231.
[11] Ibid., 232.
[12] Ibid., 234.
[13] "climate, n.1," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/34319?rskey=tJLCx0&result=1.

year or by a person's travels, Montesquieu's version of climate becomes much too static and inflexible. For example, if warm temperatures would cause a heart to relax as mentioned above, then how does that slackened heart lead to supposedly angrier and more passionate behavior as he argued of hotter, southern climates? What happens to an Italian's heart during winter? What happens when a German from a colder climate visits a warmer climate of Italy? Montesquieu fails to account for these possible scenarios because his idea of climate is too narrow; he sees climate as solely a construction of static temperature and latitudinal place.

David Hume quickly picked up on Montesquieu's problematic version of climate and offered his version of how human behavior could be characterized on a national level. In Hume's essay "Of National Characters" (1748), he writes of his skepticism concerning climate:

> As to *physical causes*, I am inclined to doubt altogether of their operation in this particular; nor do I think, that men owe any thing of their temper or genius to the air, food, or climate."[14]

Hume's disagreement with Montesquieu is primarily due to the fact that climate is a physical cause and not a moral one. For Hume, human behavior and national character were linked, but he separated physical causes from moral ones, believing the latter to be more influential on a person's behavior. Hume continues his debate a few pages later:

> If the characters of men depended on the air and climate, the degrees of heat and cold should naturally be expected to have mighty influence; since nothing has a

[14] David Hume, "Of National Character," *Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 80-1. Right after this passage is also Hume's racist remark regarding the lower intelligence of "negroes" demonstrating Hume's concession of certain physical causes versus others. Wollstonecraft addresses Hume's racist remark almost explicitly in *Letters*, writing "A people have been characterizes as stupid by nature; what a paradox! because they did not consider that slaves, having no object to stimulate industry, have not their faculties sharpened by the only thing that can exercise them, self-interest" (*Letters*, 33).

> greater effect on all plants and irrational animals. And indeed there is some reason to think that all the nations, which live beyond the polar circles or between the tropics, are inferior to the rest of the species, and are incapable of all the higher attainments of the human mind. The poverty and misery of the northern inhabitants of the globe, and the indolence of the southern, from their few necessities, may, perhaps account for this remarkable difference, without our having recourse to physical causes.[15]

Hume's main issue with Montesquieu's theory comes down to the fact that it relies on physical causes. But, here, he does distinguish northern inhabitants of polar circles or inhabitants near the equatorial line from other locations in the world. This not only demonstrates Hume's own Eurocentric bias, but it also shows how he, too, relies on latitudinal positioning to characterize a group of people. Inhabitants of the polar circles are miserable and poor, but Hume is not able to give a moral reason as to why they are that way. He also does not acknowledge that there might be variation among the people in that area. Both Hume and Montesquieu represent climate as much too restrictive and bound to latitudinal positions of the globe.

Hume's quibble with Montesquieu emphasizes the awkward relationship between a population at large and an individual. That is, Hume does question how Englishmen could be phlegmatic when not all Englishmen look equally phlegmatic. But Hume's criticism of Montesquieu and his attempt to explain the national character of "northern inhabitants of the globe" falters because he does not see climate as anything but external physical factors; he does not see how climate can create variation within the body itself. Whereas Montesquieu at least acknowledged that external temperatures could have an impact on a body's internal fibers, and in

[15] Hume, "Of National Characters," 86.

some sense a body's interiority, Hume does not grant that climate can be internal. For Hume, moral causes of national character were affected by "circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons," but these circumstances were not considered to be climate and did not include a person's temper or mood.[16]

As these two examples of mid-eighteenth-century climate show, an understanding of climate also became a national concern and was very much connected to a political concept of the nation; it was used to define and stress national borders rather than record the variation of life within them. On the one hand, this static notion of a national climate allowed for it to become idealized. For example, versions of Britain's exemplary climate can be seen throughout much of the poetry the eighteenth century. For example, John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757) vindicates "England's moisture" and describes the country as an "asylum of mankind" because of its "thrice happy clime."[17] James Thomson's praises "Happy Britannia!" in *The Seasons* (1726-46), proudly proclaiming: "Rich is thy soil, and merciful thy clime." [18] Climate was the perfect panegyric subject during England's agricultural revolution and it was a fixed ideal that people could uphold in order to feel connected. In this sense, English climate created the sort of imagined community that Benedict Anderson associates with the medium of the daily newspaper.[19] But this version of climate also did not acknowledge the variable factors and influences of everyday circumstances. English climate was still very much tied to the material and local observations readers had in their daily lives—observers who criticized the frequent rain or unseasonable cold or heat.

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[16] Ibid., 78.
[17] John Dyer, *The Fleece* (London: R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall, 1757), Book 4: ll. 511-2.
[18] James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), *Summer*: ll. 1441, 1445.
[19] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

Weather diaries acknowledged these kinds of undesirable and highly variable weather, demonstrating how climate was not always ideal and even temperamental.

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, what I am anachronistically calling climate theory involved temperature and latitudinal place, but it also began to include internal moods and acknowledge other variables. As Vladimir Janković has argued, medicine in the eighteenth century became environmental. That is, it became concerned with the body's exposure to weather, or "agencies *surrounding* the body," and even "atmospheric dangers."[20] In this way, medicine began to be concerned with climates inside and outside the body as well as indoors and outdoors.[21] Certainly temperature was an important factor of climate as well. As the thermometer became a common household item, more weather diaries began to include them. By the eighteenth century, as Jan Golinski writes, "thermometers and barometers came to be more widely used than any other kind of scientific apparatus."[22] But thermometers were also considered as "analogous to the human body in its responses to the qualities of the air [. . .] Caricaturists, such as William Hogarth, showed thermometers and barometers as registers of the emotional climate."[23] Unlike Hume, Hogarth's drawings illustrated how climate was not just an external physical factor, but also something that was internal. The thermometer also revealed other variables. When weather observers began to compare their records, they realized how highly inconsistent temperature readings were.[24] In order to account for the discrepancies, they

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[20] Original emphasis. Vladimir Janković, *Confronting the Climate: British Airs and the Making of Environmental Medicine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11, 9.
[21] Ibid., 8.
[22] Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 111.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Theodore S. Feldman, "Late Enlightenment Meteorology,"148.

realized that they needed to collaborate and formulate more long-term records of the weather; this accumulated data became known as climate.

Gilbert White, resident of a small parish called Selborne is perhaps the most famous example of an English naturalist who gathered long-term weather and climate data in the eighteenth century; he is also considered to be one of the founding figures of modern ecology. Over the course of roughly 40 years, White kept a naturalist journal that recorded temperature and aspects of weather like wind, precipitation, and barometric pressure, but his observations also included elements beyond weather. His journal had columns that tracked "Trees first in leaf/fungi first appeared, "Plants first in flower: mosses, vegetate," "Birds/insects first appear, or disappear" and another column for "Observations with regard to fish, and other animals."[25] In his final observation column, reserved for miscellaneous observations, he kept track of everything from the very mundane and minute—or what he did in his vegetable garden that day, including how many cucumbers he picked—to more grand and cosmological observations like those of the planets and, perhaps most famously, swallow, or *hirundine*, migrations throughout the year. Together, these categories show how attuned White was to mobile and diverse aspects of climate. He was also keen to document everything, no matter how insignificant it might initially seem, because he believed that personal observations from a specific location could denote variation and movement of both human and non-human species.

White's naturalist journal was eventually published in the epistolary form that he defined as "a parochial history," which, according to his advertisement "ought to consist of natural

[25] See image of Gilbert White, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne, in the county of Southampton. To which are added, the naturalist's calendar; observations on various parts of nature; and poems*, British Library (1813), https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/gilbert-whites-naturalist-journal.

productions and occurrences as well as antiquities."[26] White translated the observations from his journal, or his observations of "natural productions and occurrences," into a series of letters to British zoologist, Thomas Pennant, and a member of the Royal Society, Daines Barrington, that he published as *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789). In these letters, White demonstrates how a natural history of a small parish changes the understanding of what had been understood as climate in the eighteenth century to something akin to how we think about ecology today.

Although the term ecology is not coined until the latter half of the nineteenth century, many consider White's work to be ecological.[27] As Rhian Williams argues, White's "'everyday' mode" is ecological in that he "engage[s] his environment, and the species that inhabit it, on its own terms of habit, rhythm and recurrence—the grounds through which losses and gains are most acutely *felt*, in the body."[28] As Williams observes, ecology is not something that only involves external causes or factors, but it is also an embodied experience. Williams reconsiders White's "'parochialism' [. . .] as an ecologically significant mode" in that White's observations of daily "productions and occurrences," his attunement to the temporality of "everydayness" or "quotidian rhythms," can be thought alongside twentieth-century philosopher's Henri Lefevebre's concept of the "everyday."[29] Williams highlights how White's "radical ecological consciousness" is revolutionary in that it echoes more contemporary debates concerning ecological thinking in the twentieth and twenty first century. [30] But White's 1789 publication is

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[26] Gilbert White, *A Natural History of Selborne*, ed. Richard Mabey (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 3.
[27] "ecology, n.," *OED* Online, Oxford University Press (March 2020), https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/59380?redirectedFrom=ecology.
[28] Rhian Williams, "Gilbert White's Eighteenth-Century Nature Journals as 'Everyday' Ecology," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 453.
[29] Ibid., 435.
[30] Ibid., 453.

also radical, I argue, in that it changed theories of climate in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Climate, I have been arguing, was primarily understood in the eighteenth century by its spatial qualities, or rather its latitudinal position, and by temperature; however, White's understanding of a parochial history as a compilation of "natural productions and occurrences" demonstrates his attention to the ways in which climate is connected to place, but also temporality, or rather movement and/or variation in a given place. In addition to Montesquieu and Hume, one could look to Dr. Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary for an understanding of climate in the mid-eighteenth century. Here, Johnson defines climate primarily by its spatial qualities. Climate is a "a space upon the surface of the earth, measured from the equator to the polar circles."[31] Dr. Johnson's second entry includes the more colloquial sense of the word, where climate is defined as "a region, or a tract of land, differing from another by the temperature of the air."[32] This understanding of climate starts to take into account variation, but it largely accepts a notion of climate as based on a stable notion of place. These were the two dominant understandings of climate in the eighteenth-century, but White's *Natural History* changed this static notion of place.

White, who lost his first name and became known as "White of Selborne" because his observations were so clearly tied to his locale, can also be read as an observer who "travels in place." As Tobias Menely argues in his essay, "Traveling in Place: Gilbert White's Cosmopolitan Parochialism," the problem with place, or rather a "pervasive nostalgia for stable,

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[31] "Climate," *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic by Samuel Johnson*, edited by Brandi Besalke, last modified June 14, 2017, https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/.
[32] Ibid.

insular locales," is that it can limit our understanding of the "generative interplay" between local and global relationships.[33] Building on Menely's argument, I suggest that White's cosmopolitanism expands the concept of climate to include how bodies of various species move through time, or, more specifically, how they move and respond to seasons. White's rootedness in Selborne made it possible for him to observes the regular changes over time that seasons represent. Instead of being a concept used to laminate groups of people, or species, by their nation, climate in White's letters is more ecological and seasonal in that it concerns a worldly connective fabric that unites moving bodies. In other words, White is interested in ecological relationships, or the variable, innumerable connections that species can have in *any* given place, not a specific place as defined by a national border. Place or locale is certainly a factor as White begins his letters by describing Selborne's location, including its latitudinal position, but one of his chief concerns was "the tracking of species movement," or more specifically the migration of birds, which he recorded via seasons.[34] In this way, seasons returned to climate theory, helping to render a more dynamic and temporal notion of place and the various life forms within it.

Seasons were White's primary way of demonstrating the movement of species as well as species behavior. A late-eighteenth-century naturalist could not record species activity without the help of seasonal parameters since many used Thomas Pennant's 1767 *Naturalist Journal* as a template. It had columns for noting when flora and fauna first appeared and also disappeared, helping naturalists keep track of various species throughout the year. As Janković writes, seasons were a way of determining patterns and finding regularity in order to "foretell the weather," which became a chief concern of the burgeoning field of meteorology in the mid- to late-

[33] Tobias Menely, "Traveling in Place: Gilbert White's Cosmopolitan Parochialism," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 61.
[34] Williams, "Gilbert White's Eighteenth-Century Nature Journals," 443.

eighteenth century.[35] During this period, "a meteorology of seasons emerged as the epistemically and socially accepted form of meteorological knowledge."[36] Seasons became an important tool for early meteorologists and naturalists alike, helping them find patterns in their observations of the climate around them. One such example, is White's use of seasons in his account of bird migration. In White's first letter to Daines Barrington, the correspondent for the second half of the *Natural History*, White includes lists of birds and "the order in which they appear."[37] The lists are distinguished by season: "Summer Birds of Passage" and "Winter Birds of Passage."[38] White divides and categorizes birds by polar seasons, linking species behavior to the way birds moved throughout the year.

Theories of bird migration in the eighteenth century were highly unstable and a hot topic of debate. Many naturalists were not willing to accept that birds would leave England in winter. White had his own doubts, as he wrote to Thomas Pennant in 1768: "I acquiesce entirely in your opinion—that, though most of the swallow kind may migrate, yet that some do stay behind and hide with us during the winter."[39] White was unwilling to acquiesce *entirely* to the idea at first, but a few years later in a letter to Daines Barrington on Feb. 12, 1772 he was advocating for migration more fully:

> You are, I know, no great friend to migration; and the well-attested accounts from various parts of the kingdom seem to justify you in your suspicions, that at least many of the swallow kind do not leave us in the winter, but lay themselves up like

[35] Vladimir Janković, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 131.
[36] Ibid.
[37] White, *Natural History*, 109.
[38] Ibid., 109, 11.
[39] Ibid., 38-39.

> insects and bats in a torpid state, and slumber away the more uncomfortable months till the return of the sun and fine weather awakens them.
>
> But then we must not, I think, deny migration in general; because migration certainly does subsist in some places, as my brother in Andalusia has fully informed me. Of the motions of these birds he has ocular demonstration, for many weeks together, both spring and fall; during which periods myriads of the swallow kind traverse the straits from north to south, and from south to north, according to the season. And these vast migrations consist not only of hirundines but of bee-birds, hoopoes, *Oro pendolos*, or golden thrushes, etc., etc., and also of many of our soft-billed summer birds of passage; and moreover of birds which never leave us, such as all the various sorts of hawks and kites.[40]

White's gradual acceptance of migration was pivotal because it meant that he was willing to accept that Britain's climate might not be so ideal year round and that British climate, especially its variable seasons and harsh winters, would create the need for a species to travel southward and even abroad to survive.[41] For White, natural history was a method for faithfully recording

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[40] Ibid., 131.

[41] Anne K. Mellor's essay, "The Baffling Swallow: Gilbert White, Charlotte Smith, and the Limits of Natural History," argues that White was eager to prove that hirundines did not migrate, because "the swallow represented all that was best in English country life. Further, the swallow was the essence of an idealized English national identity: domestic, devoted to family values, hard-working, loyal to the community, a powerful protector against foreign invasions, and aesthetically pleasing" (304, 305). In Mellor's argument, natural history is tied to a nationalistic agenda. Although White's later journals might reveal some lingering doubt regarding swallow migration abroad during winter, White's *Natural History of Selborne*, I argue, provides evidence that White less committed to "an idealized English national identity" and does not promote a nationalistic version of national history. For example, as White writes in a letter to Barrington on September 28, 1774, "But in nothing are swifts more singular than in their early retreat. They retire, as to the main body of them, by the tenth of August, and sometimes a few days sooner:

the behaviors and movement of various species, and should not be manipulated to fit a nationalistic agenda. As White puts it in an earlier letter to Pennant in 1769, he appreciates the "candour and openness of natural history," which allows him to confess that his theory of ousel migration came from analogy, not from firsthand observation:

> It gives me satisfaction to find that my account of the ousel migration pleases you. You put a very shrewd question when you ask me how I know that their autumnal migration is southward? Was not candour and openness the very life of natural history, I should pass over this query just as the sly commentator does over a crabbed passage in a classic; but common ingenuousness obliges me to confess, not without some degree of shame, that I only reasoned in that case from analogy. For as all other autumnal birds migrate from the northward to us, to partake of our milder winters, and return to the northward again when the rigorous cold abates, so I concluded that the ring-ousels did the same [. . .].[42]

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and every straggler invariably withdraws by the twentieth, while their congeners, all of them, stay till the beginning of October; many of them all through that month, and some occasionally to the beginning of November. This early retreat is mysterious and wonderful, since that time is often the sweetest season in the year. But, what is more extraordinary, they begin to retire still earlier in the most southerly parts of Andalusia, where they can be no ways influenced by any defect of heat; or, as one might suppose, defect of food. Are they regulated in their motions with us by a failure of food, or by a propensity to moulting, or by a disposition to rest after so rapid a life, or by what? This is one of those incidents in natural history that not only baffles our searches, but almost eludes our guesses!" (170-1) As this passage shows, natural history is not something to be manipulated by naturalists, but rather something that responds to the singular activities of other species, one that should be attempted to be faithfully recorded. In this chapter, I read *Natural History*, and natural history for that matter, as more cosmopolitan and ecological like Tobias Menely and Rhian Williams do. See Anne K. Mellor, "The Baffling Swallow: Gilbert White, Charlotte Smith, and the Limits of Natural History," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 31, no. 4 (December 2009): 299-309.

[42] White, *Natural History,* 68.

White admits, rather sheepishly, his mistake in assuming a theory about species behavior that is not based on empirical evidence. But he does admit it, thus demonstrating his genuine desire for natural history to accurately portray the patterns of species behavior. Similarly, for White, acknowledging migration, and his vacillation on the issue, was not a matter of national pride or manipulation, but exemplary of his desire to be truthful.[43] He wanted to be sure that he was correctly accounting for the various ways species lived and responded to climate, a climate that included differences in temperature and harsh winters. The latter demonstrates how White uses seasons as a way of tracking patterns in the movement of birds. There are "autumnal birds" that "partake of our milder winters" and swallows who are seen by his brother in Andalusia in spring and fall. Species move "according to the season," thus demonstrating how vital seasons were to tracking migration and the concept of climate.

Seasons not only changed the way climate could be understood in terms of weather and migration patterns, but, as White's *Natural History* shows, they also became an important tool for describing variable species behavior within a designated area. In the letter that follows White's categorization of summer and winter birds of passage, he uses seasons to record "singing birds" and organizes them by birds that continue in full song after midsummer, birds that are "usually silent at or before Midsummer," and "birds that sing for a very short time, and very early in spring."[44] White is pleased to find that his "little *methodus* of [singing] birds" had been well received by Barrington, writing "if there was any merit in the sketch, it must be owing to its punctuality."[45] White explains just how achieves this punctuality: "For many months I

[43] See also White's letter to Barrington on January 15, 1770, where he describes his records of birdsong as accurate as they can be, writing "I am as sure of the certainty of my facts as a man can be of any transaction whatsoever" (White, *Natural* History, 117).
[44] Ibid., 113, 116.
[45] Ibid., 117.

carried a list in my pocket of the birds that were to be remarked, and, as I rode or walked about my business, I noted each day the continuance or omission of each bird's song."[46] Although White's business was confined to his small parish, he records the timeliness of birdsong on his daily excursions throughout the year, noting how a bird like a Woodlark might continue "to sing through all the summer and autumn."[47] For White, species activity punctuates his daily life and this punctuation appears more clearly when it is housed under a seasonal parameter.

Seasons help White record species behavior and although an "assemblage of curious and amusing birds" might have generalized kinds of behavior, he is careful to note variation and singularities within these assemblages. Species behavior is not uniform like in Montesquieu's climate theory. Some birds might be "shy" and some birds that sing while they fly tend to do so in "soft sunny weather."[48] There are "many singularities attending those amusing birds the swifts" and there are also instances of some birds who might be outliers or stragglers.[49] White writes to Pennant of these unique occasions: "Some country people in the winter time have every now and then told me that they have seen two or three white larks on our downs; but on considering the matter, I begin to suspect that these are some stragglers of the birds we are talking of, which sometimes perhaps may rove so far to the southward."[50] Seasons, and in particularly, anomalous weather, also affect migration patterns and behavior. Exceptionally cold winters and springs, like that of 1739-40 as White notes, affected species activity: "I well

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 113.
[48] Ibid. 116, 110.
[49] Ibid., 207.
[50] Ibid., 71.

remember that after the very severe spring in the year 1739-40, summer birds of passage were very scarce."[51]

Lastly, White's *Natural History* showcases winter in a new light. It is the season that determines whether or not a specific species will stay or migrate abroad, but it is also the season that denotes community in a given environment, or the various ecological connections different species can share with one another in a given space. As White writes to Barrington on August 15, 1775: "There is a wonderful spirit of sociality in the brute creation, independent of sexual attachment: the congregating of gregarious birds in the winter is a remarkable instance."[52] Despite the harsh and "rigorous winters" of late, White finds pleasure in the way that birds come together.[53] When White attempts to formulate a theory of love and attachment, it is ecological in that recognizes the similarities different species might have with one another—or what connects them, not what separates them.

> When I ride about in the winter, and see such prodigious flocks of various kinds of birds, I cannot help admiring at these congregations, and wishing that it was in my power to account for those appearances almost peculiar to the season. The two great motives which regulate the proceedings of the brute creation are love and hunger; the former incites animals to perpetuate their kind; the latter induces them to preserve individuals: whether either of these should seem to be the ruling passion in the matter of congregating is to be considered.[54]

[51] Ibid., 123.
[52] Ibid., 177.
[53] Ibid., 263.
[54] Ibid., 137.

Winter is a season of community, not cold distance. It is only after realizing how "peculiar" the behavior is "to the season" that White begins to ponder what intraspecies desire and love might mean. Seasons provide the parameters for determining anomalous or remarkable behavior. "The helplessness of their [the birds'] state in such rigorous seasons" is similar to how "men crowd together, when under great calamities, though they know not why."[55] "Perhaps," White postulates, "approximation may dispel some degree of cold, and a crowd may make each individual appear safer from the ravages of birds of prey and other dangers."[56] White's observations do not demarcate or stress species lines; he uses human behavior as a possible explanation for the way birds exhibit community, demonstrating how an ecological climate recognizes not just intraspecies attachment, but interspecies ones as well.

Readers of these letters during the last decade of the eighteenth century would come to understand climate as more ecological in that it incorporated seasons and variation when describing species behaviors and movement. They would also see how cold weather could, despite its frigid temperatures, create "remarkable instance[s]" of community.[57] White's *Natural History* does not represent a static nationalistic climate or one that dictates uniformity with national borders. Instead, he acknowledges fluctuating seasons and how species move among them. In other words, climate is the fabric in which various species live and move in community; it neither designates nor stresses national boundaries and it does not impose fixed behaviors. In the years following White's *Natural History* the French Revolution would have a profound impact on British nationalism, but Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* draws from White's ecological sense of climate in that it also

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 177.

represents climate as a composite of dynamic variables. Wollstonecraft's *Letters* also emphasizes the relationship an observer has to the various objects in their forever changing spatiotemporal environments in order to show how one's surroundings can also produce a certain kind of mood.

2. Traveling Abroad: Wollstonecraft's *Letters* and the Spatiotemporal Expansion of Climate

Travellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country, had better stay at home.
—Mary Wollstonecraft [58]

In the wake of White's newly ecological sense of climate, Wollstonecraft writes a travel narrative that is also in the epistolary form. After her suicide attempt in spring of 1795, Wollstonecraft set out for Sweden, Norway, and Denmark with her infant daughter, Fanny Imlay. Fanny's father, Gilbert Imlay, had arranged the trip in the hopes that Wollstonecraft could recover a ship and some cargo that had been stolen from him. With only her daughter and her nursemaid, Marguerite, Wollstonecraft's journey to a foreign country during the time of the French Revolution, and also on the heels of the Russo/Swedish War of 1788-1798, was an unprecedented trip and quite dangerous. Wollstonecraft sent letters to Imlay, but the published versions were quite different. In this way, Wollstonecraft's publication of *Letters* is similar to White's, or at least most certainly the first nine letters of *A Natural History,* as the letters are altered for publication.[59] Wollstonecraft's letters are also influenced by a writer and work that

[58] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 33.
[59] The first letters of *Natural History* have no addressee and were written with the purpose of providing an introduction to White's publication. The rest of the letters have addressees, Pennant and Barrington respectively, but they are also not the original ones postmarked to either of these people.

Wollstonecraft had expressed love for herself: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*.[60]

Wollstonecraft's *Letters* is also similar to White's *Natural History of Selborne* in that it does two things: it expands a concept of climate by emphasizing variation and temporal movement, not national borders; and it relies heavily on seasonal parameters. Yet, whereas White's *Natural History* uses seasons to track and indicate species movement, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* uses seasons to show how climate connects a traveling observer to the various objects and species in her environment by effecting a mood that is decidedly not melancholic or phlegmatic, but actually quite vibrant. In what follows I first analyze Wollstonecraft's diverse and expansive sense of climate and then, in the third section of this chapter, address her portrayal of a wintry climate as vivid and full of life.

From the very first letter, *Letters* begins to describe climate as a composite of one's surroundings and experiences across time and distances. The opening letter describes Wollstonecraft's arduous journey to Sweden by sea. The only women on board, Wollstonecraft, Marguerite, and Fanny arrive after "eleven days of weariness on board a vessel not intended for the accommodation of passengers."[61] Wollstonecraft is exhausted and also not at her intended destination, Gothenburg. Winds had taken the ship beyond Gothenburg, but Wollstonecraft manages to convince the captain to let her take a small boat ashore. Upon arriving she finds refuge with a lieutenant and his family, who provide her with food and place to stay and she begins to assess her new surroundings, her senses now "so awake."[62] "Nothing, in fact, can equal the beauty of the northern summer's evening and night" she writes, in awe of "what [. . .]

[60] Jacobus, *First Things*, 64.
[61] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 5.
[62] Ibid., 11.

this active principle which keeps me still awake" could be. [63] Everything appears "at home," but the writer marvels about how "alone" she feels and yet is still connected to other life.[64] Wollstonecraft's autobiographical information would designate this melancholic loneliness as the result of her attachment to Gilbert Imlay, but the letter doesn't name him explicitly. Instead it describes a newfound state in a foreign country as that which makes her "feel more alive than usual," one that is "mingled with reflections respecting the state of society I had been contemplating that evening."[65] Previous melancholic feelings, or feeling "as a particle broken off from the grand mass of mankind," have given way to a powerful yet "involuntary sympathetic emotion" that makes one feel "a part of a mighty whole." This is not a melancholic moment, but a moment in which an "active principle" and "imperious sympathies" have awakened Wollstonecraft—a moment that has been activated by Sweden's "northern summer" beauty.[66] In this sense, from the very first letter, Wollstonecraft's travel book demonstrates how one's surroundings can make one feel connected to other life forms in a particular season, thus demonstrating how climate could be ecological and produce changes in one's mood.

As a woman traveling alone with a young child in a new place, Wollstonecraft is a traveling body herself, migrating to foreign lands like one of White's swallows. One would expect Wollstonecraft to be unsettled in these circumstances; however, instead the letters demonstrate how Wollstonecraft's observations are very grounded, keenly perceptive of all that one's surroundings—climate—offers to the mind and imagination. In one well-known passage, Wollstonecraft records a moment at twilight:

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 11-12.
[66] Ibid., 12, 11.

> The cow's bell has ceased to tinkle the herd to rest; they have all paced across the heath. Is not this the witching time of night? The waters murmur, and fall with more than mortal music, and spirits of peace walk abroad to calm the agitated breast. Eternity is in these moments. Worldly cares melt into the airy stuff that dreams are made of, and reveries, mild and enchanting as the first hopes of love or the recollection of lost enjoyment, carry the hapless wight into futurity, who in bustling life has vainly strove to throw off the grief which lies heavy at the heart. Good night! A crescent hangs out in the vault before, which woos me to stray abroad. It is not a silvery reflection of the sun, but glows with all its golden splendour. Who fears the fallen dew? It only makes the mown grass smell more fragrant. Adieu![67]

Although Wollstonecraft's reflections might "stray abroad" here, it's a moment in which she is keenly aware of everything around her. From the silence of cow bells, to the sounds of nearby water, to the fragrance of cut grass as well as the dew on that grass, the moment records various phenomena as intricately connected to one another. As Enit Karafali Steiner writes, "There is a constant pull in *A Short Residence* toward all—animate or inanimate—that the earth discloses to the senses."[68] Wollstonecraft's surroundings invigorate her thoughts and imagination, extending her through space and time while simultaneously keeping her grounded in the reality of the moment.

The animated aspects of the climate continue to be described, highlighting variation as well as movement across vast distances of time. Wollstonecraft pronounces Sweden as "the

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[67] Ibid., 16.
[68] Enit Karafili Steiner, "Mood, Provisionality, Planetarity in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*" *Criticism* 61, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 38.

country in the world most proper to form the botanist and natural history: every object seemed to remind me of the creation of things, of the first efforts of sportive nature."[69] Here, evolutionary time is hinted at, or at the very least observations of awe-inspiring variation that Wollstonecraft connects to the origins of life. Wollstonecraft finds kinship in other naturalists or natural historians, like the Swedish-born Carl Linnaeus, who are recording the natural world. The letter continues to contemplate a distant time by thinking about the origins of human life specifically:

> So far from thinking that the primitive inhabitants of the world lived in a southern climate where Paradise spontaneously arose, I am led to infer, from various circumstances, that the first dwelling of man happened to be a spot like this which led him to adore a sun so seldom seen; for this worship, which probably preceded that of demons or demigods, certainly never began in a southern climate, where the continual presence of the sun prevented its being considered as a good; or rather the want of it never being felt, this glorious luminary would carelessly have diffused its blessings without being hailed as a benefactor. Man must therefore have been placed in the north, to tempt him to run after the sun, in order that the different parts of the earth might be peopled.[70]

The letter reinvigorates the "gloomy" northern climate that was just described, one where "the sun appeared afraid to shine" and that "winter seemed to be contending with nature, faintly struggling to change the season," by offering a rather polemical origin story of where human life began.[71] Polemical not only because it is a proto-evolutionary idea in the late-eighteenth century, but also because this letter vindicates the northern region by designating it as the birthplace of

[69] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 27.
[70] Ibid., 29-30.
[71] Ibid., 28, 29.

human civilization. Unlike Montesquieu's and Hume's portrayals of the polar regions of the globe as miserable and poverty stricken, the cold climate is a catalyst for human progress. The sun might shine less in these parts of the globe, but that is also what makes the sunlight more memorable and significant. Life is not stagnant here and Wollstonecraft accentuates the movement and migration of the human species. Regardless of the theory's accuracy, the speculation into the distant past demonstrates how Wollstonecraft views the northern climate as imbued with life and temporality; it is not a static latitudinal positional.

The letters continue to expand what climate entails by presenting a temporally dynamic notion of place that accentuates connection, even across considerable distances of time. In Letter XI, Wollstonecraft mentions having to leave Portoer by boat and describes how the sights of the coast arouse her imagination, allowing her to speculate on a future time.

> The view of this wild coast, as we sailed along it, afforded me a continual subject for meditation. I anticipated the future improvement of the world, and observed how much man has still to do to obtain of the earth all it could yield. I even carried my speculations so far as to advance a million or two of years to the moment when the earth would perhaps be so perfectly cultivated, and so completely peopled, as to render it necessary to inhabit every spot—yes, these bleak shores. Imagination went still farther, and pictured the state of man when the earth could no longer support him. Whither was he to flee from universal famine? Do not smile; I really became distressed for these fellow creatures yet unborn. The images fastened on me, and the world appeared a vast prison. I was soon to be in a smaller one—for no other name can I give to Rusoer. It would be

> difficult to form an idea of the place, if you have never seen one of these rocky coasts.[72]

In this description, the cornucopia theory that dominated much of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as Fredrik Albritton Jonsson has argued, is challenged as Wollstonecraft imagines a future time when there is famine and the earth's resources are depleted.[73] There is a nod to improvement and progress, but then the speculation turns to humanity's decline from overpopulation. Prior to Thomas Malthus's publication 1798 publication of *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Wollstonecraft imagines a distant future to such an extent that the "bleak" rocky coasts are inhabited by "unborn" people for whom she feels pity. The scene makes her feel connected to people in a vastly different time and place. This imagined future scenario shares strong similarities with Mary Shelley's apocalyptic *The Last Man* (1826) that would be published almost thirty years later. It also shows how a place emits a concept of climate that includes people, even rocks, allowing one to think about various kinds of time from the distant past to the distant future. As Scott J. Juengal argues, this scene is representative of how "the Western understanding of historical time underwent a vertiginous change between 1750 and the early decades of the nineteenth century" due to "new models of temporalization" or theories of geological or deep time.[74] Wollstonecraft's speculation also demonstrates how the tumultuous decade of the French Revolution produced serious concerns over the fragility of human life or the fate of the species. As Juengal writes, "Haunted by what was to have been the future, Wollstonecraft struggles to reconcile the time of revolutionary politics with what we might call

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[72] Ibid., 68.
[73] Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, "The Origins of Cornucopianism: A Preliminary Genealogy," *Critical Historical Studies* 1. 1 (2014): 151-68.
[74] Scott J. Juengal, "Mary Wollstonecraft's Perpetual Disaster," *Romantic Circles*, *https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/disaster/HTML/praxis.2012.juengel.*html.

'species time,' resulting in forms of untimeliness that figure as disaster without end." Wollstonecraft not only perceives "species time" here, but something akin to species being, or what Dipesh Chakrabarty characterizes as a "universal that arises from our shared sense of catastrophe."[75] By imagining the demise of the human species, this scene depicts how one's surroundings, or "an idea of place" is intricately bound up with unseen and unknowable connections. These connections are not based on fixed national borders, but are instead representative of how a dynamic spatiotemporal climate connects species across vast distances of time.

As Wollstonecraft writes in the advertisement to *Letters*, sketching national characters based on climate was not a primary goal for her travel book: "My plan was simply to endeavor to give a just view of the present state of the countries I have passed through." In other words, she was not interested in promoting Montesquieu's static version of climate. At one point, *Letters* even reminds readers of this fact: "Do not forget that, in my general observations, I do not pretend to sketch a national character, but merely to note the present state of morals and manners, as I trace the progress of the world's improvement."[76] The repetition of "present state" in both the advertisement and later letter is significant. It not only characterizes the present tense and temporality most often associated with the epistolary form, but it also demonstrates how aware Wollstonecraft is to the variable factors of the present. As the letters show, Wollstonecraft's descriptions of climate are not bound to a certain place or time, but attuned to how places change over time.

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[75] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 222.
[76] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 108.

Although there are generalized observations of Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians throughout Wollstonecraft's letters, she does not want to sketch a national character because she sees climate as highly variable. Upon arriving in Norway, the writer again emphasizes the problem with trying to define a "national character:"

> Behold us now in Norway; and I could not avoid feeling surprise at observing the difference in the manners of the inhabitants of the two sides of the river, for everything shows that the Norwegians are more industrious and more opulent. The Swedes (for neighbours are seldom the best friends) accuse the Norwegians of knavery, and they retaliate by bringing a charge of hypocrisy against the Swedes. Local circumstances probably render both unjust, speaking from their feelings rather than reason; and is this astonishing when we consider that most writers of travels have done the same, whose works have served as materials for the compilers of universal histories? All are eager to give a national character, which is rarely just, because they do not discriminate the natural from the acquired difference. The natural, I believe, on due consideration, will be found to consist merely in the degree of vivacity, or thoughtfulness, pleasures or pain, inspired by the climate, whilst the varieties which the forms of government, including religion, produce are much more numerous and unstable.[77]

Wollstonecraft begins by heralding the reader through present tense, stressing that what she sees is merely the "present state" of things. For Wollstonecraft, the problem with creating a national character is that the act universalizes history and people in a single stroke. "Local circumstances" can reveal unjust opinions because they might rely on capricious feelings, but these also reveal

[77] Ibid., 32-33.

the variability inherent in climate. At first, the letter seems to define climate as purely natural. However, upon "due consideration," the passage shows how climate has the potential to "inspire" so much more if "degrees of vivacity" are taken into account and "acquired difference." In other words, what is in the air is actually the numerous factors that affect the flux of life. In this way, the passage emphasizes how one's surroundings *and* time exhibit variation. As Karafili Steiner has argued, this passage is one of Wollstonecraft's more "cosmopolitan-minded moments."[78] Climate should be comprised of global and "local circumstances," but it should also be what animates and inspires people, connecting people across vast distances of time and space. As Wollstonecraft writes a few moments later, "Travellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country, had better stay at home."[79] Although White did stay at home, the two are alike in that they both saw the value in documenting movement and observing changes over time. With an emphasis on variation, or "numerous and unstable" factors, the passage demonstrates how climate has the potential to be something that doesn't divide groups of people or nations, but is instead the connective tissue for diverse and migrant communities.

3. Winter: No Longer the Season of Discontent

Wollstonecraft's *Letters* illustrates how the climate is alive with ecological connections and spatiotemporally expansive; it also shows how the northern regions of the world are not

[78] Steiner further shows how Wollstonecraft differs from Hume regarding racism. Even though "Wollstonecraft relies on David Hume's bipartite structure of the moral and physical factors shaping national character," her views on slavery "differ starkly from Hume" (Enit Karafili Steiner, "Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Love of Mankind' and Cosmopolitan Suffering in *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*," *Studies in Romanticism* 58 [Spring 2019]: 7,8).
[79] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 32.

frozen tracts of land devoid of life, but are instead quite vibrant. This version of climate is similar to White's in that it stresses ecological inter- and intraspecies connections that are not nationalistic, but more cosmopolitan. Wollstonecraft's *Letters* are also similar to White's in that it is heavily influenced by seasons.

The four seasons are unique in that they represent one annual trip around the sun, a person's lifetime, and also futurity that is based on perennial cyclicality. In other words, multiple temporalities can emerge from seasonal tropes. Seasons also illustrate how a place can change over time as well as how one's experience of that place can be altered by seasonal parameters. Much like the speculations regarding the distant past or future that occur throughout Wollstonecraft's *Letters*, seasons can signify the various ways in which spots of time are felt, much as they do in Romantic poems. Take for example the beginning lines of William Wordsworth's poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798): "Five years have past; five summers, with the length /Of five long winters!"[80] In Wordsworth's loco-descriptive poem, time is connected to place through memory, but the place also evokes different experiences of the present due to seasonal temporalities. In these opening lines, years are qualified by seasons to denote variable experiences of time passing because years cannot fully relate all of the change that has happened within them as Alexander Pope observed. Winters also bring with them their own perceived rate of time, ostensibly slower. Wordsworth uses seasons to describe a location, but seasons also stand in for considerable periods of one's life. The poet's place or "here, under this dark sycamore" is described according to "this season" of summer (10, 12). Yet, summer's green copse fondly reminds Wordsworth of course of his earlier years. In this

[80] William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," *Selected Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 61, ll. 1-2. Lines are hereafter cited parenthetically.

case, seasons describe the present as well as one's past, or how "time is past" (85). Wordsworth's poem shows how seasons represent the varying degrees with which time passes, or how time is felt to pass, as well as how one's surroundings are heavily mediated seasons.[81]

Similarly, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* demonstrates how seasons are not just a way of marking the time of the year, but rather a parameter for showing readers the varying degrees in which climate can be felt. Wollstonecraft visits the northern countries during the summer and often refers to the beauty of the season as well as its brevity. Once she is in Norway, she reflects on her newfound ability to manage her time: "Amongst the Norwegians I had the arrangement of my own time, and I determined to regulate it in such a manner that I might enjoy as much of their sweet summer as I possibly could; short, it is true, but 'passing sweet.'"[82] Referring to the "passing sweet" of solitude in William Cowper's "The Retirement," the letter reflects on how summer feels more poignant because it feels brief.[83] The letter continues to describe the climate with respect to seasons:

> I never endured a winter in this rude clime, consequently it was not the contrast, but the real beauty of the season which made the present summer appear to me the finest I had ever seen. Sheltered from the north and eastern winds, nothing can exceed the salubrity, the soft freshness of the western gales. In the evening they

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[81] Another example of the way Romantic poems represent how weather or climate can invoke a certain kind of mood be found in Earl Wasserman's reading of John Keats's "pleasure thermometer" in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Wasserman demonstrates how happiness in Keats's ode lies in "that which beckons us until we are free of the spatial, that extension which is the opposite of essence" (23). Keats's representation of a pleasurable and even empathetic register denotes "the act of freeing the self of its identity and its existence in time and space" (24). Here, climate isn't spatial, but rather that which effects a variable, even ethereal existence (Earl Wasserman, *The Finer Tone: Keats' Major Poems* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953]).
[82] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 38.
[83] *Letters*, 176n38.

> also die away; the aspen leaves tremble into stillness, and reposing nature seems to be warmed by the moon, which here assumes a genial aspect. And if a light shower has chanced to fall with the sun, the juniper, the underwood of the forest, exhales a wild perfume, mixed with a thousand nameless sweets that, soothing the heart, leave images in the memory which the imagination will ever hold dear.[84]

Significantly, the letter's reference to seasons in these first few lines demonstrates how important seasons are to one's understanding of climate. "The present summer" needs no harsh winter or contrast for the writer to feel its beauty. The passage again goes on to show just how multifarious climate is. The climate or "real beauty" of the summer involves not just temperature or weather, but also the moon, various kinds of airs, and even smells. From the "light shower" that creates the "wild perfume" of juniper to winds that shake the aspens, the climate is shown to be comprised of many components. These various elements surround the writer "with a thousand nameless sweets," signifying how just how many things make up the northern climate that she has grown to love.

Yet time passes throughout the letters, and summer's beauty is not a thing that will last forever. From referencing the way the Swedes "lay up a store of dried fish and salted meat for the winter" to the how "the severity of the long Swedish winter" creates "too much time [. . .] to guard against its inclemency," the northern summer is often described with reference to the coming winter.[85] In Norway, upon seeing an avenue of "aged pines stretched along majestically" to which "time had given a greyish cast to their ever-green foliage," the letter remarks on how the "fresh odour" "reanimate[s]" one.[86] From the vibrant description of the present, the letter

[84] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 39.
[85] Ibid., 15, 22.
[86] Ibid., 57.

quickly turns to thoughts of winter, speculating on what these trees must look like during that time: "In the winter, these august pines, towering above the snow, must relieve the eye beyond measure and give life to the white waste."[87] Winter is never far from Wollstonecraft's thoughts and the season of winter appears to be always impinging on the present.

Much like in Sweden, Letter XIII declares again that "the sweetest summer in the world is the northern one," but this assessment is soon followed with a description of winter: "The balance of happiness with respect to climate may be more equal than I at first imagined; for the inhabitants describe with warmth the pleasures of a winter at the thoughts of which I shudder."[88] Not only does Wollstonecraft describe again how climate affects one viscerally and emotionally, but she also again turns to thoughts of winter; the future season impedes on the enjoyment of the present summer. And finally, when in Denmark, Wollstonecraft reflects on how "the climate appears to be very disagreeable" to the Danes, adding "I do not hear the inhabitants of this place talk with delight of the winter, which is the constant theme of the Norwegians; on the contrary, they seem to dread its comfortless inclemency."[89] Summer may be beautiful, but the current season also brings with a knowledge of its passing and the revolutions of seasonal change. As Percy Shelley writes of seasonal change and time in his poem "Ode to the West Wind" nearly twenty years later: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"[90] Even though each season is distinctly defined, the cyclical movement of seasons prompts thoughts of the future.

As these numerous examples of seasonal reflections show, although Wollstonecraft visits the northern countries during summer, the letters often gravitate toward thoughts of winter. For

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 77.
[89] Ibid., 114-5.
[90] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind," in *The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Micahel O'Neill (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 414, l. 70.

all of the author's stress and desire to describe the present state of things, a future season certainly preoccupies the mood of the letters. Wollstonecraft's "sustained inquiry into amatory melancholia" and her bouts of depression might partially explain the gravitation toward winter.[91] After all, winter is the season in which everything dies, the season ripe for thinking about one's death and eschatological themes. But Wollstonecraft's bouts of depression don't explain the animate and vibrant cold climate depicted throughout *Letters*. Nor does her autobiographical melancholy explain why the letters would be drawn to thoughts of winter since autumn is the season of melancholy and winter of phlegmatic calm. Perhaps Wollstonecraft's winter themes offer a way to read the cold climate in *Letters* as a sense of calmness that might come after a season of earthly melancholy. Put slightly differently, perhaps Wollstonecraft's winter represents what it means to finally come to terms with an ecological existence that is always already melancholic.

Certainly, *Letters* has plenty of melancholic moments, but the book also contains reflections of death as part of a cycle or a revolution. In this way, death becomes part of seasonal cyclicality. Winter ends the calendar year and begins the next one, stressing the end of one cycle as well as the beginning of another. Winter's way of impinging on the present throughout Wollstonecraft's *Letters* demonstrates how death is never quite far from the animating properties of summer; seasons continue to turn, indicating movement, not stasis. In one of the more famous passages on death in *Letters*, Wollstonecraft writes about the practice of mummifying the remains of the deceased. Upon viewing the "human petrifactions," the writer has a bodily reaction of "disgust and horror," writing "Pugh! My stomach turns."[92] Believing it to be a

[91] Jacobus, *First Things*, 65.
[92] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 48.

"treason against humanity," the writer reveals the reasoning for her disgust: "The grandeur of the active principle is never more strongly felt than at such a sight; for nothing is so ugly as the human form when deprived of life, and thus dried to stone, merely to preserve the most disgusting image of death."[93] As others have mentioned, the visceral response is akin to what Julia Kristeva describes as abjection, or a subject's horror at being confronted with the Other.[94] This is certainly one way of reading the writer's narration of an inner monologue: "Life, what are thou? Where goes this breath? This *I*, so much alive? In what element will it mix, giving or receiving fresh energy? What will break the enchantment of animation?"[95] The internal thoughts convey the subject's concern of what will happen to "this *I*" when faced with death, but the questions also reflect on why mummification looks so horrid: because it "break[s]" or ends a cycle of movement and animation. If the human bodies had been allowed to return to "dust," then cycles of life could have continued. The decomposed body would turn into another "element" with "fresh energy," thus allowing a version of an active principle to continue. The problem or disgust that the writer has in this scene is not with death, but rather with the fact that mummification stops a cycle of renewed life.

Seasons epitomize the life cycle and another letter implicitly emphasizes temporal movement and seasonal revolutions when Wollstonecraft ponders nature's "grandeur" and the movement of life.[96] Upon viewing a scene of "pine and fir woods, left entirely to Nature," the writer reflects on "aged pines":

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Jacobus, *First Things*, 70.
[95] Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 48.
[96] Ibid., 88.

> The grey cobweb-like appearance of the aged pines is a much finer image of decay; the fibres whitening as they lose their moisture, imprisoned life seems to be stealing away. I cannot tell why, but death, under every form, appears to me like something getting free to expand in I know not what element—nay, I feel that this conscious being must be as unfettered, have the wings of thought, before it can be happy.[97]

Life is "imprisoned" because it has been stagnant in a sense, but death represents the movement of life into some other form or element. Old age, or the winter of the life cycle, does not represent an ultimate end, but is a transformation into another element or form. Much like seasonal cycles which represent the continuous movement of life and elemental changes, decay is not a loss of life, but a reminder of its future renewal.

These thoughts of "imprisoned life" are also similar to how earthly existence is a weight that binds one to life, including other species. Similar to Charlotte Smith's numerous references to care throughout *Elegiac Sonnets*, Wollstonecraft writes about care a few paragraphs later. Upon viewing a waterfall, the rush of water is simultaneously produced in the mind of the writer via her thoughts:

> My thoughts darted from earth to heaven, and I asked myself why I was chained to life and its misery. Still the tumultuous emotions this sublime object excited were pleasurable; and, viewing it, my soul rose with renewed dignity above its cares. Grasping at immortality—it seemed as impossible to stop the current of my

[97] Ibid., 88-9.

> thoughts, as of the always varying, still the same, torrent before me; I stretched out my hand to eternity, bounding over the dark speck of life to come.[98]

Life represents being in chains, or having care, but the waterfall represents something that allows the writer to rise above life's "cares." Although these passages don't mention seasons explicitly, they implicitly focus on perennial cycles of life and death. Like the waterfall that seems to ceaselessly flow, seasonal cycles continue to turn and death in winter will lead to a renewal of life in spring. At the end of this passage, thoughts of immortality take over, or rather the "speck of life" that exists on the horizon of winter. Mapped onto seasonal tropes, this scene designates winter's revolution into spring, or death into life, and the constant movement of seasons.

These moments of death in *Letters* are not necessarily melancholic, but rather they are representative of a calm, even phlegmatic, moment of clarity, a coming to terms with earthly existence. To rise above one's care is not to discard one's attachment to life and its various forms, but to see the ways in which life continues. Seasonal cycles make winter a hopeful trope in Wollstonecraft's *Letters*; it is not the season for discontent and apathy, but a way in which climate, even colder climate and seasons, can be perceived as full of life.

The cold climate of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark is wonderfully dynamic and diverse in Wollstonecraft's *Letters*. It is a cold climate to fall in love with, one that consists of a vast array of smells, species, and seasonal revolutions. From Wollstonecraft's vast and dynamic spatiotemporal depictions of life, migration, and death, an ecological sense of climate emerges. The cyclical movement of seasons enhances this version of climate. Winter is not without its themes of death in *Letters*, but Wollstonecraft's winter is not an end, but rather something getting free, another cycle or revolution around the sun, life carrying on. In this way, winter is

[98] Ibid., 89.

hopeful, showing us how vital seasons are to our understanding of everything under the sun, or rather everything that climate entails.

Coda: Unseasonable Seasons

This dissertation has focused on how seasons gave eighteenth-century readers access to various aspects of climate and in particular how an abstract and highly variable concept like climate can be felt and experienced. But one thing it does not consider is what would happen if we were to lose these valuable parameters for reading climate. What would happen if seasons as we know them cease to exist or become "ungenial" or "unseasonable"? Seasons have seemingly always been occurring due to the earth's tilt. Northrop Frye's theory of genre uses seasons precisely because they are as longstanding as myths, affecting everything under sun. But perhaps seasons are not as permanent as we thought. In addition to the disappearance of intermediate seasons like spring and autumn, hurricane seasons are becoming longer and more powerful, wet seasons rainier, and dry seasons more flammable. There is much evidence to suggest that the seasons are changing under our current climate conditions.

A 2017 piece in *The New York Times* entitled "The Seasons Aren't What They Used to Be" offers one example. In this opinion piece, professor of biology, David George Haskell, writes of his observations of seasonal change within in his own lifetime: "Spring has been particularly hasty and irregular this year, but this is no anomaly. In the latter half of the 20th century, the spring emergence of leaves, frogs, birds and flowers advanced in the Northern Hemisphere by 2.8 days per decade. I'm nearly 50, so springtime has moved, on average, a full two weeks since I was born."[1]Although an early spring might have "felt good," it also "felt dreadful," because this is not the world of seasons that our bodies are used to. As Haskell writes:

[1] David George Haskell, "The Seasons Aren't What They Used to Be," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/opinion/sunday/the-seasons-arent-what-they-used-to-be.html

"What we experienced as spring, a predictable appearance of buds and birds, is passing away. Our children will live in uncharted, unnamed seasons." Seasons themselves are becoming unseasonable.

Seasons were also thought to be changing in the Romantic period. At the start of the nineteenth century, John Williams also noticed how British seasons were "ungenial." In his *The Climate Of Great Britain: Or Remarks On The Change It Has Undergone, Particularly Within The Last Fifty Years* (1806), he urges readers to consider the changes in climate that the country had undergone in the past fifty years. Williams notes in particular "the increasing humidity and consequent cloudiness and coldness of our Springs and Summers" and "ungenial weather."[2] Williams, too, saw how changes in seasons equaled changes in climate.

Romantic writers like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley were both profoundly affected by the ungenial season of 1816, or the infamous "Year Without a Summer" when the average global temperature dropped around 1°C and widespread famine occurred across Europe. During that year Mary Shelley began her first novel *Frankenstein* (1818), which features climactic and also climatic scenes in the cold mountainous climate of the Alps as well the Arctic. Like her mother's representations of a lovable cold climate, Shelley, too, turns to cold climates as well as seasons; however, for Shelley, these cold climates help narrate the story of a man whose scientific ambitions go too far. Victor Frankenstein's project is linked cyclically to seasons: he is more productive and labors intensively during fall and winter, but he also ignores the beauty that spring and summer bring. He forgets to appreciate the natural world and its

[2] John Williams, *The Climate of Great Britain; Or, Remarks on the Changes it has Undergone, Particularly Within the Last Fifty Years* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1806), 3. For Williams, the solution for undoing these harmful effects was in essence an early form of geoengineering; he proposed to ionize or electrify the air.

seasons. In Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), unseasonable seasons define a world in chaos. The character Asia recounts the dismal time of humanity after its fall, when "ghastly death unseen before" affected all and "unseasonable seasons drove / With alternating shafts of frost and fire, / Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves."[3] Unseasonable seasons represent the state of the world as out of sync with natural cycles that protect life. The world is disordered and inhospitable. Similarly, Mary Shelley's later novel, *The Last Man* (1826), features seasons most prominently as harbingers of the downfall of mankind.

In *The Last Man*, seasons regulate the transmission of the plague. In the heat of the summer, the plague spreads, while winter is the season of hope, the season in which the main character, Lionel Verney, and his family and close friends have a reprieve from the spread of disease. Reading seasons is pivotal to one's survival in Shelley's novel. Lionel Verney narrates this important fact:

> Winter was hailed, a general and never-failing physician. The embrowning woods, and swollen rivers, the evening mists, and morning frosts, were welcomed with gratitude. The effects of purifying cold were immediately felt; and the lists of mortality abroad were curtailed each week. Many of our visitors left us: those whose homes were far in the south, fled delightedly from our northern winter, and sought their native land, secure of plenty even after their fearful visitation. We breathed again. What the coming summer would bring, we knew not; but the

[3] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama* (London: C. and J. Ollier Vere Street Bond Street, 1820), 2.4, ll. 454-57.

present months were our own, and our hopes of a cessation of pestilence were high.[4]

Verney and his family "breath[e] again" in winter and read the devastating effects of plague in the "lists of mortality abroad." It is a narrative that uncannily reflects the present moment's COVID-19 crisis of 2020—a virus that could also be tied to seasonal ebbs and flows. Shelley's novel draws attention to the catastrophic and large-scale effects of ungenial seasons on humankind, urging us to see how important recognizing climate change is to our survival.

If "seasons are no longer what they used to be," "ungenial," or "unseasonable," then the pivotal role that they play in revealing climate change in a new light might be lost. In our contemporary world, we are facing "sea-ice-free Arctic summers" and extreme temperatures of polar vortexes during our winters. The recently published special report by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018 reveals that the average global temperature has increased by 1°C and is on track to exceed the 1.5°C limit set by the 2015 Paris Agreement.[5] Significantly, the report states that "multiple forms of knowledge, including scientific evidence, narrative scenarios and prospective pathways, inform the understanding of 1.5°C."[6] Reading seasons has become more vital and timely than ever before, prompting us to return to literature, or "narrative scenarios" of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth-century to find possible pathways of interpreting climate change.

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[4] Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Hugh J. Luke, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 172.
[5] M.R Allen, et al. "Framing and Context," *Global Warming of 1.5°C, An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Oct. 2018), https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-1/
[6] Ibid.

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