

COTURRI SORENSON, GIANINA MARIE, Ph.D. *An Old Acquaintance: Personifying Trees to Overcome the Nature/Culture Binary*. (2020)  
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My project examines the environmental relationships that Romantic-era historical novels model for readers. Scholars argue that Romantic-era writers established modern environmentalism, but most examine the era's poetry or essays, neglecting early nineteenth-century fiction, especially genre fiction. I fill this scholarly gap by illuminating how two British and two American novelists' personified trees and "treeified" people blur the line between human and nonhuman, thus questioning the Enlightenment emphasis on the nature-culture binary. All four authors offer similar models: when some characters interact with trees, they link human and nonhuman, gaining moral and physical power from overcoming the nature-culture binary; when those with political, social, or economic power interact with trees, they emphasize humans' alienation, and cause environmental, social, and political violence; and when oppressed people interact with trees, they show why certain ancient ways of merging nature and culture no longer function, and demonstrate why certain cultures become "extinct."

Beginning with Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, I show how the author displays a proto-ecological argument that connects good governance with forests and corrupt governance with dead trees, providing a political argument for government remaining physically connected to the natural world. Exploring Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, I demonstrate that the author's personification and treeification display that trees enable readers to recognize the Puritanical divide between nature and culture, a divide

enabling white settlers to justify horrific violence against Native Americans and the natural world. James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*, I contend, uses personification and treeification to support the author's argument that only people invested in conservation should lead the United States and its continued settlement of so-called wilderness. Finally, I analyze Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, showing that the author sees both poetry and science as powerful ways to connect to trees, when characters have a sufficiently stable economic situation. These analyses demonstrate that historical fiction has great power to influence how readers understand and interact with trees and the natural world more broadly. Ultimately, I demonstrate that personification's anthropocentrism can help raise environmental awareness and clarify why transatlantic ecocritical examinations of genre fiction helps scholars better understand environmentalism's roots.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE: PERSONIFYING  
TREES TO OVERCOME THE  
NATURE/CULTURE  
BINARY

by

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## APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### PREPARING THE GROUND AND PLANTING THE SEEDS

I have no answer to the question of why we equate trees with humans.—Joan Maloof, *Teaching the Trees*

Most projects arise fluidly, if imperceptibly, from research, making a single genesis point impossible to locate. Indeed, often when one origin point is established, it suddenly becomes clear that the project's actual roots go even further back. Thus it is with this project. I like to say that I owe this project to Joan Maloof's *Teaching the Trees*, a lifechanging book if there ever was one. In retrospect, *Teaching the Trees* merely crystalized a project that had been brewing since I took my first environmental literature class at Santa Rosa Junior College in 2010. My professor underscored a sentence in *Walden* that would continue to resonate even as I transferred to a new university, then moved across the country for graduate school. He highlighted portion of "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors," drawing the class's attention to Henry David Thoreau's comment that "no weather interfered fatally with my walks, or rather my going abroad, for I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow-birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines" (257). Thoreau's words—and my professor's admission that they were among his favorite—struck a chord with me, enabling me to realize that all my favorite places were alongside trees and that whenever I found myself somewhere new, I first picked a

favorite tree to help ground myself and feel at home. I would not do anything with Thoreau's words for nearly a decade, though every time I reread *Walden*, I would pause over those words and reminisce. Maloof's book, which does not even cite Thoreau's tree acquaintances, helped me realize why Thoreau's words meant so much to me: I also see trees as friends and companions and that is rather odd.

However, my impulse to see trees as humanlike is not uncommon, historically. Personifying trees is nothing new. While Maloof acknowledges that she does not know "why we equate trees with humans" (125), other scholars offer a range of answers that feel incomplete. Gabriel Popkin, in an article about a town's response to "their" tree's death, writes that "To mourn a tree as if it were human is understandable, even natural. There are ways, after all, that trees really are like us." How are trees "really like us"? Popkin cites the fact trees and humans have similar bodies and that we both communicate with our neighbors and families. However, the parallels he identifies still do not answer the underlying question. Why are trees, of all living organisms, the ones that are most closely associated with humans? And, perhaps most importantly, what do humans gain from personifying trees? My project extends these questions to literature and attempts to illuminate how and why Romantic-era novelists personify trees.

I study four Romantic-era historical novels, examining instances of personification and "treeification," or moments when humans are given tree-like characteristics, and uncovering how these books show that anglophone culture's insistence on the nature/culture binary causes racial and gendered violence in addition to widespread environmental violence. My project examines two British historical fiction

novels, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and two American historical fiction novels, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, emphasizing transatlantic ties and environmentalism's evolution. Ultimately, I show that when early-1800s historical fiction authors personify trees or treeify humans, they display the advantages of reuniting nature and culture and that the environmental depictions contained within these novels continue to influence twenty-first-century culture. Furthermore, my project shows that Romantic-era fiction offers a much stronger environmentalism than scholars have hitherto admitted and opens up new areas to ecocritical analysis; rather than focusing on twentieth-century fiction or mid-1800s nonfiction, I show that ecocritics have much to learn from earlier literature and that genre fiction offers complicated environmental commentaries that have been widely ignored or explicitly dismissed. My future projects will examine other genres, particularly science fiction, as I strive to understand how "genre fiction" both captures and challenges a given era's approach to the natural world, but I begin with historical fiction because it is a genre invested in defining the characteristics that belong, or ought to belong, to a particular nation or culture.

My project arises from the fact that I live in a culture that divides nature and culture. Scholars, particularly rhetoricians, have long worked to understand the western divide between nature and culture. Nathaniel A. Rivers's essay "Deep Ambivalence and Wild Objects" offers a helpful introduction to what he calls "the ontological fissuring of the human from the nonhuman" (422). He highlights the recent turn towards object-oriented ontology, an attempt to seek the "reality of objects without reifying or reducing

them” (424). Rivers’ point is that many environmentalists place a boundary between themselves and the natural world and consider objects in the natural environment “wild,” and therefore more important than humans, or so “minute” as to become unimportant, and therefore less important than humans; in either case, he shows that implementing such boundaries separates humans and nonhumans. However, when people begin to see how the boundaries between objects are artificial, and when they stop trying to create a hierarchy, the world becomes unimaginably more complex. The historical fiction authors from the Romantic era that I discuss offer one way that people can overcome the boundary between human and nonhuman: personification and “treeification.” When people begin to see how trees are like people and how people are like trees, they find it harder and harder to separate the two and to locate the boundary between the two.

Scholars are rightfully deeply suspicious of the anthropocentrism that personification and treeification displays. Typically, anthropocentric writers, thinkers, or characters do not consider how their actions impact that natural world. Michael Ziser offers an illuminating personal example in the introduction his book *Environmental Practice and Early American Literature*. He writes of his relief when he was told to identify and avoid “pathetic fallacy,” “which to [his] young ears meant the sentimental ascription of meaning and agency to the myriad objects of the world” (1). He then describes his ruthless hunt for “every [example of the] unscientific assignment of human characteristics to the nonhuman world,” thus “exposing the soft ideological underbelly of whatever poetic claim was being made on the page” (1). His approach took no prisoners; even Thoreau was subject to his critical eye. But as he evolved as a scholar he began to

approach personification with more nuance, acknowledging that even when taken to absurd lengths, personification blurs the “seemingly crucial distinctions between the world as it is and the world as we perceive it to be” (1-2). In other words, personification’s anthropocentric underpinnings have a purpose and, deployed carefully, can challenge readers to reconsider how they relate to the natural world. Personification can be a way for writers to help readers see the natural world as having value, rather than existing only so humans can plunder it.

While various writers have identified and conjectured about those who personify trees, most of what has been written about trees examines them as scientific object or cultural bellwether. Eric Rutkow offers a substantial exploration of America’s historic relationship with trees in *American Canopy*, helping readers better understand how the nation has a unique relationship with its most prevalent natural resource. However, for all that he cites trees as a blind spot for historians, who are just as “guilty of taking trees for granted” as other citizens, Rutkow himself seems to have an equally large blind spot. When he lists those most responsible for helping save trees, he only lists white men: George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, John Chapman, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, J. Sterling Morton, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt (8). *American Canopy* offers a fairly comprehensive guide to American forestry practice, but neglects the role women, people of color, and American Indians played, favoring instead the stereotypical white, male narrative, and ignores the contributions of artists and novelists, preferring to cite nonfiction if literature is cited at all. I argue that novelists like Austen and Cooper link gender and economics, showcasing how environmental thought remains dependent

on economic position, while writers like Scott and Sedgwick link nationalism and trees, revealing how environmental violence recoils on colonizers.

Of course, the symbolic link between trees and nation is not entirely new. Thomas Hallock explores the idea at length, especially as it pertains to American nationalism, in his book *From the Fallen Forest*, as does Karen L. Kilcup in *Fallen Forests*. However, both take an avowedly rhetorical approach and highlight nonfiction alongside fiction; my project does not have space to include their rhetorical approach and I privilege fiction alone. Thus, I suggest that literary trees offer a strong and understudied environmentalism and show how authors deploy anthropocentrism to persuade readers to understand the natural world differently.

My project seeks to tie environmental justice and personification, illuminating the interdependence of the natural world and culture. Fred Hageneder writes in his book on yew trees that

a tree is not a separate being. It interacts and socializes with other trees and plants—ecology speaks of ‘plant communities’—and not only interacts *with* its environment, but also *is a part* of this ‘environment.’ Our thinking is influenced by a strong European tradition of dividing objects of our interest into ever-smaller units. A more balanced view of nature recognizes the entire ecosphere of planet Earth as one organism, with large ecotopes...as its ‘organs’, and the animals and plants therein as cells of those organs. (59)

His critique addresses criticisms levied by scholars like Elaine Freedgood, who asks scholars to “[take] things literally...it is not the history that the novel narrates, but the history that the novel secretes: the history it hides and emits, the one it conceals and produces as it calls to mind the locations of deforestation and slavery for which [trees

are] a metaphor, a metonym, and a literal representation” (36). Few scholars tie the cultural history of a tree to its literary representations; an act of personification can thus contain historical, environmental, and political arguments, intertwining nature and culture and confronting readers with the fact that their relationship to the natural world has inescapable political and social repercussions. Freedgood’s insistence on “taking things literally” pairs well with ecocriticism, a critical lens that highlights the environmental details other scholars take for granted.

Since its inception, ecocriticism as a discipline has sought to examine how the written word illuminates the relationship between human and nonhuman. Cheryll Glotfelty offers a list of the questions that propel ecocritics and that undergird my own work. She asks, among other questions, “What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this novel?”, “How do our metaphors...influence the way we treat [the environment]?”, “Do men write about nature differently than women do?”, and “In what ways has literacy itself affected humankind’s relationship to the natural world?” (xix). She further highlights that at its core, ecocriticism argues that “human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (xix). Like most ecocritics, I explore how the natural world is depicted, what happens outside, and how various characters relate to the world that surrounds them. While Glotfelty’s list is in some ways a relic, dating from ecocriticism’s early days, her description of the critical lens’s primary points of interest remains relevant. Furthermore, collections like *The Ecocriticism Reader* privilege nonfiction and twentieth-century novels, creating a canon that highlights predominately white male writers and excludes most other perspectives. I

argue that because fiction writers must make decisions about which environmental markers to include or ignore, all fictional texts have an environmental stance, whether they adhere to their era's general attitude towards the natural world or attempt to combat convention. Therefore, all fiction, regardless of its literary status, deserves sustained ecocritical attention.

Indeed, despite the value I find in the scholars who precede me, I show that there are immense gaps in ecocriticism. Few ecocritics have attempted to connect English and American texts; many instead focus on one small subcategory, studying English Romantic poetry, nineteenth-century American nonfiction, or modern American nature essays. I show that scholars need to more closely examine the environmental ties between England and America. We read these two nations in relative isolation and make few connections. My project begins building a bridge between these two literatures so we can better understand how nineteenth-century writers and thinkers positioned the environment, how that influence continues today, and what we need to shift so we can think differently. Furthermore, my project expands the genres available to ecocritical scholars by showing historical fiction's unique relationship to environmental history. Furthermore, I examine larger trends across anglophone literature, rather than focusing on one geographic area, to help expand intersectionality within ecocriticism. Finally, my project also seeks to open the environmental literature canon, demonstrating why studying texts that are seemingly uninterested in the natural world can be rewarding and instructive. My project tries to show that almost any text, from any location, contains



some sort of argument about the natural world—whether that argument helps protect the environment or not.

Because historical fiction authors explore the past, drawing on recognizable places, people, and events to tell original stories, their texts offer a unique opportunity for scholars to study how people understand and relate to the natural world. Historical fiction authors tend to fabricate their historical settings, drawing from what happened but extrapolating from what went unrecorded, and critique current cultural or political movements by projecting the present onto the past. Emily Miller Budick argues that historical fiction emphatically rejects “mimetic modes of representation,” even as it insists on “specified settings in place and time,” presenting “a world that, however defamiliarized, is still intensely recognizable” (ix). By defamiliarizing recognizable times and spaces, historical fiction authors, like satirists, make their commentaries palatable; readers do not need to feel directly implicated but can instead learn from what they read and consider how to improve their cultural or political situation. Thus, historical fiction paired with personification creates a situation favorable to environmental arguments. The distant chorological setting makes it easier for readers to accept criticisms of a culture’s stance towards the environment and the defamiliarized setting allows writers to create situations that require readers to reconsider the natural world.

I have therefore organized my project according to setting, which clearly showcases how a more thoroughly defamiliarized setting offers different environmental opportunities than a more recognizable one. I begin with *Ivanhoe*, set in twelfth-century England immediately after the Norman invasion. “National Trees: Sir Walter Scott’s

Anti-Imperial Forests” shows how the author links governance and trees, offering a model for uniting nature and culture and thus empowering the nation. Scott collapses the distance between nature and culture, revealing how an environmentally aware culture produces stronger rulers and citizens. He explicitly marks his novel as historical fiction, repeatedly drawing attention to his scholarship and to the era’s history, thus highlighting the era’s turbulent governance and the Norman nobles’ political machinations. Scott uses personification and treeification to showcase that uniting Norman and Saxon cultures forms a stronger, more sustainable future, while also showing that Norman culture privileges a divide between nature and culture, which results in incredible corruption and violence, and Saxon culture is too rooted in the past to function.

Scott offers a quick summary of the era’s politics, highlighting the time period’s extremely bad leadership. He writes that

The condition of the English nation was at this time sufficiently miserable. King Richard was absent a prisoner, and in the power of the perfidious and cruel Duke of Austria. Even the very place of his captivity was uncertain, and his fate but very imperfectly known to the generality of his subjects, who were, in the meantime, a prey to every species of subaltern oppression. (86)

The era’s uncertain political situation, and Prince John’s resulting tyranny, seemingly mirrors early nineteenth-century England’s political situation. In the wake of Princess Charlotte’s death, there were no clear heirs to the English throne, though when Scott started writing *Ivanhoe* in 1819, a royal baby had been born, though she was mere months old. The future was far from secure, and *Ivanhoe* reflects the uncertainty that many must have felt as the royal family scrambled to produce a new (and legitimate)

generation. Just as Scott's contemporary culture scrambled to find a "true" ruler, *Ivanhoe* details a country scrambling to understand who should really rule.

After *Ivanhoe*, I turn to *Hope Leslie*, set during the mid-seventeenth century in Puritan New England. "The Trees Are Us and We Are the Trees: Violence and the Environment in *Hope Leslie*" examines how Sedgwick maps the nature/culture opposition onto the relations between English Puritans and Pequots. She highlights the Pequot method of merging culture with nature, even as she shows that the Puritans cause widespread violence through their insistence on the nature/culture divide. However, the stance she supports is one that unites nature and white culture, showcasing that native people should not be forced to assimilate even as she shows that white culture needs to learn from Native American culture.

Sedgwick offers what at first blush resembles a generic historical novel. She includes the elements readers expect, particularly a preface that highlights the story's relationship to history, clear references to the story's historical setting, and a strong authorial voice that emphasizes the chronological divide between readers and setting. Her preface begins with the statement that her book is not "in an degree an historical narrative" but that "real characters and real events are...alluded to" because this was found "very convenient in the execution of the author's design, which was to illustrate not the history, but the character of the times" (5). Sedgwick thus establishes her novel's historical setting even as she dismisses the need to be historically accurate. Indeed, she employs frequent anachronistic references, a fact that Jeffrey Insko dissects in his essay "Anachronistic Imaginings: *Hope Leslie*'s Challenge to Historicism." Much like Austen

manufactures a complicated historical setting for *Mansfield Park*, Sedgwick offers a book that mingles time periods to better enable readers to understand her critiques and (hopefully) improve their approach to nationalism and culture. *Hope Leslie* therefore includes elements of the other three novels I consider: Sedgwick mimics the strong historicism of *Ivanhoe* and *The Pioneers* while still echoing Austen's vagueness so as to allow readers to better apply her argument to their own lives. And while scholars typically compare *Hope Leslie* and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, juxtaposing Cooper's earlier book *The Pioneers* and *Hope Leslie* helps throw each novel's environmental argument into sharper relief.

While Sedgwick emphasizes American Indian characters, allowing readers to read an environmental argument that contrasts white possession with American Indian spirituality, the next book I consider, *The Pioneers*, set during the late 1700s in the wake of the American Revolution, situates Native Americans in the background, using them as decorative backdrop or emotional shortcut. My third chapter, "Sustaining a New Country: James Fenimore Cooper's Nationalistic Trees," illuminates how Cooper suggests readers overcome the nature/culture opposition. Some characters integrate nature and culture, creating a sustainable approach to settling the frontier. Others are propelled only by greed and separate nature and culture in order to turn a greater profit. While Cooper admits that the Native American emphasis on inextricably mingling nature and culture offers a strong alternative, he ultimately concludes that most indigenous people, or those aligned with them, privilege the natural world, thwarting the necessary civilizing process and unintentionally causing widespread violence.

I begin the chapter with the Whiskey Rebellion and its subsequent unrest because it highlights the early nineteenth-century's political tumult. As Scott tried to navigate and understand a country with a chaotic (and potentially failing) monarchy, Sedgwick tried to garner support for Native Americans, and Cooper tried to understand his new nation. The ties that bind America and England go deeper than political unrest; Anglophone novels all belonged to same literary market, one England dominated. Scholars like Joseph Rezek explore how the "London-centered marketplace for books" shaped Scott and Cooper and how they substituted "for contentious political and national differences an unadulterated literary sphere defined by cross-cultural communion" (893). Rezek further uncovers how "the pressures of the London book trade transformed [Cooper]'s marriage plot and its archetypal American hero into devices for Anglo-American camaraderie" (893). Rezek argues that Cooper includes personal experience in his footnotes, a historical fiction hallmark, to appeal "to the evidence of personal experience, connect the author more intimately to the world of *The Pioneers*, and shore up his authority to represent that world to foreign readers" (900). As Kate Mitchell and Nicola Parsons write, "Historical fiction has always been judged primarily according to its accuracy" (2), and many nineteenth-century historical fiction authors signposted "fact and fiction in their books through the use of footnotes and other paratextual devices" (Stevens 21). Throughout the text, Cooper cites his own experience, the experience of his forebears, and established fact to support his sustainability argument, a combination common to the genre (Mitchell and Parsons 13). Cooper's footnotes typically draw explicit attention to trees and deforestation's

devastation, thus acknowledging that settlers have destroyed the frontier's resources and showing that their greed's ramifications are already visible.

While Scott tries to understand imperialism and English identity, Cooper seeks to define who an American is and what makes them American. Both display Benedict Anderson's sense that "nationality...as well as nationalism, are *cultural* artefacts of a particular kind" (4, emphasis added). Cooper and Scott use historical fiction to bring what Anderson calls a "fixity to language" that builds "that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (44); Cooper actively uses the historical novels "of Sir Walter Scott as his formal model" (Wallace viii), highlighting the importance of transatlantic analyses of Romantic-era historical fiction. *The Pioneers* is not just Cooper setting down a region's history; we can also read it as his attempt to begin forging an American identity that draws from, but does not depend on, English culture. Roderick Nash suggests that Cooper's characters "became the mouthpiece for the standard Romantic conventions regarding the sublimity and holiness of wild nature" (76), furthering the connections between the American author and his transatlantic colleagues. Cooper and Scott's novels are perhaps the most famous historical fiction texts I study, offering a sense of how "canonical" historical fiction reveals Romantic-era environmental thought.

My final chapter discusses Austen's *Mansfield Park*, a text that is set in the quite recent past. "Poetic Trees, Trees as Poetry: Jane Austen's Push to Reunite Nature and Culture" examines how those who use poetry and science to understand trees can avoid the worst aspects of English upper-class culture, whereas those who consider trees

lifeless objects that can be used to gain social or economic power typically fall prey to various temptations that ruin themselves, their companions, and the environment.

Between these two extremes are those whose ability to unite nature and culture varies depending on social and economic context, illustrating the complex relationship between wealth and environmentalism.

While *Mansfield Park* is not widely considered a historical text, Austen draws attention to history by beginning with a reference to time and then tracing the familial choices that led, seemingly inevitably, to the main plot. Beginning “[a]bout thirty years ago,” Austen highlights how the various marriages of three sisters doomed or saved each of them: one sister, impressively elevated by her marriage to a baronet, lives a life of boring luxury; another, having settled for a fairly middling clergyman, lives a comfortable if spartan life; and the third, having married “to disoblige her family,” suffers under the burden of too many children, too little money, and no support from her estranged relatives (35). Numerous scholars have attempted to work out exactly when Austen’s book is set, given this seemingly straightforward opening, a debate that Ellen Moody captures in detail on her academic webpage. Moody reveals that the novel’s opening could refer to 1779 (or possibly 1781), with the bulk of the book occurring in 1807, but also cites scholarly work that indicates the novel’s main action could be set in 1796, suggesting that the opening refers to the 1760s. Austen carefully begins her book with a setting that seems precise and approachable, but uses the vagueness of historical fiction to make her argument more palatable. Furthermore, she traces maternal history, a move that, as Spongberg notes, was one of the few ways eighteenth- and nineteenth-

century women could engage with history. Spongberg writes that “women interested in the past found in family history a viable means of exploring their heritage. Such histories often recovered the lives of women otherwise lost to history” (53). Spongberg concludes that “by domesticating history,” women writers like Austen articulate “a sense that women and men experience the past in very different ways” (66), which Austen highlights so her readers can consider how the past reverberates during the present. Austen foregrounds history, particularly slavery’s history, creating a world that realistically parallels her own and uses that distance to comment on contemporary practices.

My project’s title is taken from Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* despite the fact the literature I study appeared nearly a generation before his foundational text. Indeed, I purposefully avoid Thoreau’s text because I want the novels to stand on their own and to thereby establish *Walden*’s lineage. However, Thoreau’s words remain formative, just as *Walden* remains the foundational ecocritical text. Whether we examine Early American literature or cutting-edge science fiction, trees remain acquaintances and personified characters close the gap between nature and culture. My project enriches nineteenth-century American and British literary scholarship, opening new avenues to explore. In addition to helping expand transatlantic ecocriticism and showing how genre fiction can help expand the ecocritical canon, I showcase nineteenth-century environmentalism and suggest positive ways to deploy anthropocentrism. My project shows how nineteenth-century writers and thinkers positioned the environment, how that influence continues today, and how fiction authors strive to influence their readers. My approach helps form a



foundation for modern tree personification (and human treeification), helping scholars understand an anglophone cultural touchstone and showing how contemporary environmental artists relay on Romantic-era environmental precedents. However, this project is only a start, one that gives me a foundation for a much larger comparison between historical fiction, science fiction, and other genre fictions and how each personifies trees in response to the west's nature/culture binary.

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## CHAPTER II

### NATIONAL TREES: SIR WALTER SCOTT'S ANTI-IMPERIAL FORESTS

...Yet O forbear  
Nor deem him hard of heart, for, awful, struck  
By heaven's severest visitation, sad,  
Like a scathed oak amidst the forest trees  
Lonely he stands; leaves bud, and shoot, and fall,  
He holds no sympathy with living nature,  
Or time's incessant change...  
—Anna Barbauld, “On the Death of the Princess Charlotte”

#### *Introduction*

When Princess Charlotte August of Wales died in 1817, the outpouring of grief was truly astonishing. Unlike her father (heir to the throne) and uncles, the young woman had earned (and maintained) popular support; she was England's darling and she represented a bright future for a people that had been mired in various wars and ruled by an unstable monarchy for a generation. Furthermore, she was the only legitimate royal heir, so her death in childbirth was not just tragic: her death also signaled political instability. Unsurprisingly people immediately started pointing fingers, seeking to blame someone for the princess's death.<sup>1</sup> Her father, the prince regent George IV, was a popular target because his abusive and manipulative treatment during Charlotte's lifetime suggested he was a thoughtless, uncaring father; in her 2010 biography, Gillian Gill remarks that “Charlotte was a princess that no fairy godmother came to save” (17), suggesting that the princess's trauma continues to generate enormous sympathy.<sup>2</sup> Popular

depictions of the prince varied widely, but Anna Lætitia Barbauld's poem "On the Death of the Princess Charlotte" encapsulates the sense that he is an unsatisfactory father and ruler.<sup>3</sup> When she calls him a "scathed oak amidst the forest trees" (26), she marks him as a broken and scarred symbol of English political power, a sentiment most British citizens shared. Barbauld's association between a dead tree and a lackluster ruler echoes throughout early nineteenth-century literature, and nowhere is that reverberation stronger than Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

I begin with the princess because her life's political ramifications profoundly impact *Ivanhoe* and the trees that populate his novel. Furthermore, her death, and the cultural outpouring that it inspired, heavily inform the novel's political valences. For instance, her death forces us to reconsider the novel's prologue. Scott dates the Dedicatory Epistle "Nov. 17, 1817" (23)—a mere eleven days after Princess Charlotte's death and two days before her funeral.<sup>4</sup> Scott draws his readers' attention directly to the political and cultural strife her death caused, priming readers to consider how unstable leadership influences a country and its well-being. Scott is not just crafting a historical foundation for England's culture; he is striving to comment on and shape England's future.

As other English citizens and artists weathered the first decades of the 1800s, with its violent and unsettled politics as well as its turn towards industrialism, the natural world, particularly the few remaining forested areas, offered a tantalizing respite. When Scott started *Ivanhoe* in June 1819, writing in the wake of Princess Charlotte's death and the very recent birth of Princess Victoria (Duncan xxvii), he repeatedly drew on the

ancient association between English rule and the oak tree. Scott personifies trees and treeifies specific people to complicate the Enlightenment's nature/culture binary advocated and asks readers to question this opposition in an effort to examine their relationship their culture and natural surroundings. I begin by studying how Scott integrates nature and culture, focusing on the characters that blur the binary as well as explicating the government that the author advocates. Characters like King Richard, Locksley, and Wilfred of Ivanhoe all utilize the best parts of Saxon and Norman culture, displaying English culture's start and, implicitly, the future for which it should strive. I then turn to the Norman characters who divide nature and culture, to violent and oppressive ends. My second section illuminates the connection Scott develops between environmental alienation and violence. Finally, I turn to the Saxon characters who represent ancient England; they have a way of life for which Scott displays sympathy but ultimately shows is fading away. Scott's proto-ecological argument suggests that good governance not only protect forests and remain connected to England's environmental and historical roots but maintain physical contact with the natural world. Ultimately, I show that *Ivanhoe* is an under-appreciated Romantic-era environmental text that asks readers to reconsider their relationship to their nation, their community, and their environment. Scott's engagement with politics, colonization, and nationalism are not isolated; he showcases many of the same nationalistic issues that early American writers discuss as they attempt to establish American culture.

Scott scholars typically focus on the novel's technical achievements rather than Scott's environmentalism. Scholars like Christopher R. Vanden Bossche illuminate how

the novel uses language to explore how contemporary culture can achieve stability (46-47), while scholars like Joseph E. Duncan study how the novel deploys genre (293-294). Others like Kenneth M. Sroka study how Scott upends generic expectations (645), but some, like Marinella Salari, examine how Scott establishes a “parallel between the mediaeval situation and the contemporary relations between Scotland and England” (150). Many scholars, like John Morillo, Wade Newhouse, and Joan Garden Cooper, argue that Scott refused to engage with his era’s politics. While these scholars create a solid foundation for understanding Scott’s novel, very few of them acknowledge the environment or study how the author depicts the environment.

However, my examination relies on two scholars who have studied how Scott uses binaries and the natural world in *Ivanhoe*. Christopher R. Vanden Bossche, in his essay discussing how the novel seeks to establish a stable political and economic situation, highlights the tension Scott creates between “an economy grounded in the proprietor’s land” and “an economy dependent upon the circulation of capital” (53), a contrast that implies that Saxon and Norman cultures are diametrically opposed, with the latter relying on abstract or arbitrary cultural practices and capital that are coded as exotic while the former reveres concrete and traditional practices that are coded as domestic and “natural” (51, 52). Vanden Bossche helps establish the tremendous divide between Scott’s Saxon and Norman characters, but Susan Oliver and her extensive work on Scott’s relationship to the natural world enables me to approach *Ivanhoe*’s natural spaces more carefully. Oliver’s essay “Trees, Rivers, and Stories: Walter Scott Writing the Land” explains how Scott’s “storytelling drew public attention to real ecological



problems, and how the agency of his writing mediates relationships between memory, mythmaking and the biosphere” (297), though she further acknowledges that he fetishizes the “land for national interests” (298). Interestingly, while Oliver does an exceptional job of identifying how Scott displays his environmental engagement throughout his work, she does not specifically address *Ivanhoe*, paving the way for my project and my exploration of how Scott depicts the nature/culture binary.

#### *A New Future for England: Integrating Nature and Culture*

In *Ivanhoe*, Scott depicts the nature/culture relationship in three ways. He displays how to overcome the binary in a way that enables people to see trees as fellow living beings, a stance that enables characters to gain political power. He further shows what happens when people adhere too thoroughly to the nature/culture binary, as well as displaying the fading power of those who have an “old-fashioned” or outdated relationship to the natural world. I first examine characters and scenes that demonstrate how people overcome the nature/culture binary, showing that Scott rewards those highlight how culture springs from nature with loyalty and power. While the narrator uses history to help readers understand how to relate nature and culture, the characters Wilfred, Locksley, and King Richard model uniting political culture and nature, creating a stronger system of governance that could help England escape a chaotic and lawless time.

Throughout English history, oak trees have often been used to mark appropriate royalty or strong leadership. Jerome de Groot reminds us that when Charles Stuart lost

the Battle of Worcester in 1651, he fled for his life, at one point hiding in an oak tree, a historical moment that created an indelible image of a man integrating nature and culture for his own safety and power. Indeed, the combination of “emblematic English tree with the disinherited prince...became a key moment in the recollection of the Civil Wars” (4).<sup>5</sup> De Groot writes that “rather than a symbol of defeat, the Royal Oak became one of defiance, of loyalty to the kingdom and of the stoicism of its subjects” (4); likewise, to modern readers, the deposed king’s experience could easily become a symbol of a country able to integrate nature and culture. The association between oaks and English royal leadership has not faded, to the point that the “Royal Oak” is considered the “third most popular pub name in England” (de Groot 5). Importantly, Scott would tell the story of Charles Stuart in his 1823 novel *Woodstock*, furthering the connection between his sense of royal leadership and trees. Throughout the nineteenth century, the story of the king in an oak “becomes increasingly romanticized, confused, conjectured about and added to,” until the tree “became a central part of a particular memorial culture” (de Groot 5). Now the event and the tree are deeply ingrained in English culture, having evolved into “a historiographic debate, heritage, a site of tourism and memory, something to be owned, a place to drink, something to spend” (5). De Groot’s analysis of the relationship between English history and popular culture helps contextualize why Scott emphasizes oak trees and why the tree functions so well as a symbol of those able to reconnect nature and culture.

Scott highlights how oaks reflect human qualities, blurring the typically stark line between culture and nature. He begins the novel with an instance of personification that

not only collapses time but also upends the traditional division between nature and culture. The narrator describes the scene, describing how the “Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march of the Roman soldiery, flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious green sward” (Scott 27-28). Scott emphasizes the way trees exist outside human time but are inseparable from human culture. The trees are just as much a part of history as the Roman invasion was. Furthermore, the narrator’s observation helps show how people and environments suffer alike under occupations, whether that occupation is Roman or Norman.

Additionally, the narrator mingles art and nature, highlighting the interdependence of the two. Scott describes a scene filled “with beeches, hollies, and copsewood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking sun; in others they receded from each other, forming those long sweeping vistas, in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of silvan solitude” (Scott 28). Scott filters the scene through an artistic lens, much as we see *Mansfield Park*’s Fanny Price filtering the natural environment through poetry. Both Scott and Austen emphasize that nature and culture are interdependent and therefore inseparable. However, Scott adds a layer of hierarchy. The oak trees are mildly superior to the other trees—the oaks are older, wiser, and seemingly more human than the beeches and hollies. Scott’s early emphasis on the oak tree’s superiority helps readers understand why good leaders, like King Richard and Locksley, are associated with oaks while those who are not destined to lead, like Cedric’s

thrall Gurth, are associated with “lesser” trees. Overall, the scene mingles nature and culture, helping establish a set of natural symbols for a cultural system dependent on economic status.

Scott emphasizes that forests and human culture are inseparable. He carefully places the story’s setting geographically, writing that “In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster” (25). Again, the author emphasizes environmental history; by the 1800s, England’s forests were destroyed, and no old-growth forest remained. Scott reminds readers of what used to exist, highlighting the immense changes that the British Isles have undergone since the Norman invasion. Further, Scott pairs history and nature, helping readers understand how their culture and their heritage owe much to nature and trees specifically.

Scott also highlights how the novel’s historical setting reverberates when he connects the twelfth-century setting with early-nineteenth-century life, thereby helping readers consider how to merge nature and culture. The narrator notes that “the remains of this extensive wood are still to be seen at the noble seats of Wentworth, of Warncliffe Park, and around Rotherham” (25). Indeed, Paul Readman’s description of the New Forest, an area established by William the Conqueror when he led the Norman invasion, epitomizes how Scott’s readers saw their forests. He writes that “the New Forest was a place of sylvan beauty, primaeval wilderness, personal freedom and pleasure, a landscape freighted by associations with the past” (155). Scott utilizes the sense that English

readers have strong associations with forests, and his references to the reader's present try to help readers consider the environmental legacy they have inherited and begin reconsidering how they interact with the natural world. In all, Scott considers trees living history; the forests do not just remind readers of what has happened since the twelfth century but are an actual part of that history. The trees are therefore a living part of culture, a physical reminder that there is no division between nature and culture.

Of all the Saxons, Wilfred of Ivanhoe is the one who gains clear power from his ability to intermingle nature and culture. Perhaps most powerfully, he can safely navigate the forests, as Wilfred demonstrates when he leads two Normans, Prior Aymer and the templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, to his father's house. As the templar and Wilfred start arguing about the latter's duty in the holy land, the prior interrupts, expressing astonishment "that their guide, after such long absence, should be so perfectly acquainted with the passes of the forest" (45). Wilfred's ability to mingle Saxon tradition with Norman military might enables him to do what neither people can do alone. Saxons cannot overpower the Normans because they will not abandon their culture's outdated aspects; the Normans cannot properly control the Saxons because they do not understand and respect the natural environment. Wilfred can traverse the two cultures, mixing the best parts of each. Later, Wilfred promises Isaac, who he is attempting to save from the templar, that "I will guide you by the secret paths of the forest, known as well to me as to any forester that ranges it, and I will not leave you till you are under safe conduct of some chief or baron going to the tournament, whose good-will you have probably the means of securing'" (77-78). Wilfred protects those who need protecting with his ability

to navigate the cultural line between Saxons and Normans. His ability and willingness to do so is a little suspect. Wilfred, “to whom every path and outlet in the wood appeared to be familiar, led the way through the most devious paths, and more than once excited anew the suspicion of the Israelite, that he intended to betray him into some ambuscade of his enemies” (81). While Scott repeatedly emphasizes Isaac’s suspiciousness, the fact is that Wilfred represents the best of England. He manages to utilize both Norman and Saxon cultural elements and through it all, he does not lose his relationship with the natural world.

Scott personifies the setting to demonstrate that the artificial divide between nature and culture has consequences, but he also “treeifies” characters to show how people can link nature and culture. The character who manages to mingle nature and culture most successfully is Locksley, who is introduced as “a stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln green,” with an intimidating wooden bow and a “countenance, which his constant exposure to weather had rendered brown as a hazel nut” (91). Scholars have widely discussed Scott’s inclusion of Locksley, with Simon J. White examining how Locksley and his outlaws mirror “the dispossessed cottagers and smallholders of Scott’s own time,” particularly those “involved in the Pentridge Rising of June 1817,” and show that “the proper administration of ‘civil’ affairs” arises from “the labouring poor” rather than “the monarchy or aristocracy” (210). William E. Simeone argues that Scott combines several historical and literary figures to invent his own Robin Hood, “an invention made to be congenial to the sensibilities of his readers” and who fills the role of a deliverer: “an ancestral hero of superhuman power used to deliver the English people

from the misrule of evil men” (230). While understanding the character’s historical and political foundations helps explain why Scott included him, few scholars connect the character to his surroundings—despite the fact Scott situates the man as ruling from the forests and gaining political power from the trees. Introducing the character by treeifying him helps readers associate him with the forests and helps differentiate him from others, especially the Normans. Locksley is as natural as the trees he lives among, just as the Normans are as unnatural as their fortresses and religious trappings.

Locksley frequently blurs the line between culture and nature, resulting in passages that situate trees as active agents. The outlaw is curious to see ““how Staffordshire and Leicestershire can draw their bows—the forests of Needwood and Charnwood must rear good archers”” (119). Locksley sees no difference between humans and trees; towns and forests alike have birthed impressive archers, in his view, creating a group who are more impressive than any Norman. Indeed, a threat of violence underscores his words. The forests have raised a group of people who can and will defend England from the Normans; the hint of violence behind his words challenges the Normans and their alienation from the natural world.

Locksley’s entire band of outlaws represent what is possible when a group reunites nature and culture. When Locksley agrees to protect a group of Saxons, he guides them through the woods easily and “at a great pace” (211) to “a small opening in the forest, in the centre of which grew an oak-tree of enormous magnitude, throwing its twisted branches in every direction. Beneath this tree four or five yeomen lay stretched on the ground, while another, as sentinel, walked to and fro in the moonlight shade”

(213). Locksley is comfortable in the woods, seeing no threats in the wild space, just like Wilfred. Indeed, the forests are a haven, protected from Normans and, by extension, Norman culture. He is not forced to divide himself from nature, as the Normans would want. Instead, he can create a culture that integrates itself with the natural world, providing a space for his followers that is safe and protected by an oak tree.

Most importantly, Locksley's willingness to connect nature and culture renders him an equitable leader. As the battle against the local Norman nobles ends, Locksley tells his followers, "Let each bring his spoil to our chosen place of rendezvous at the Trysting-tree in the Harthill-walk; for there at break of day will we make just partition among our own bands, together with our worthy allies in this great deed of vengeance" (342). He directs his people to a specific tree and connects that tree with his ability to guide his followers towards an equitable division of spoils. A tree thus becomes a seat of government, a metonym as powerful as "the White House" is to modern readers. As Locksley sits on his throne of "turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak," with "his silvan followers...gathered around him" and the English king on his right and the Saxon leader on his left (343-4), he splits part of the spoils between Cedric (344) and Richard, disguised as the Black Knight (349), with the rest divided proportionally:

A tenth part of the whole was set apart for the church, and for pious uses; a portion was next allotted to a sort of public treasury; a part was assigned to the widows and children of those who had fallen, or to be expended in masses for the souls of such as had left no surviving family. The rest was divided among the outlaws, according to their rank and merit; and the judgment of the Chief, on all such doubtful questions as occurred, was delivered with great shrewdness, and received absolute submission. (351)



Locksley literally sits on an oaken throne; he literally rules as king, whilst the real king stands next to him. He unites nature and culture, locating his leadership outside, beneath a tree. The tree is not just a metonym; it is also the throne itself. While it would be easy to read Locksley as a proto-socialist leader who establishes a utopia that escapes capitalism's woes, in reality he upholds a tiered economic system that rewards "merit." Furthermore, he is in charge. There are no group decisions here; instead, Locksley rules over all people and the entire forest, a benevolent tyrant.

Unsurprisingly, given his experience as king of a people who almost gleefully divide nature and culture, Richard is impressed by the equity he sees amongst the outlaws. Locksley tells Richard that "'Good fruit...will sometimes grow on a sorry tree'" (369), furthering the sense that his rebel enclave owes its existence to people who unite nature and culture. He and his men are the forest's product; without the sheltering oak at the center of his "kingdom" and without the protective barrier of trees between him and the Normans, Locksley would not have any power. By successfully tying his political and economic culture to a tree, he has gained power and proven to King Richard that the Norman "sorry tree" has, inadvertently, fostered a new generation of leaders who do not divide themselves from the natural world. Locksley's ease in the forest influences King Richard, who eventually learns the power of combining nature and culture. In the end, he is called the foresters' "natural guardian," implying that he has special control over them (459). He has learned from Locksley's example and can now exit the forest to create a better government, one that similarly mingles nature and culture.<sup>6</sup>

Before he becomes a “natural guardian,” though, Richard is shown to have a surprising connection to his surroundings, which Scott uses to imply that the king is more like Locksley than his brother Prince John. When Richard flees his brother, “he was...reduced to the usual expedient of knights-errant, who, on such occasions, turned their horses to graze, and laid themselves down to meditate on their lady-mistress, with an oak-tree for a canopy” (178-179). Despite being raised in a society that emphasized the divide between nature and culture, the narrator implies that Richard knows better. He understands that his own Norman culture is rooted in the natural world and that it would not be difficult to reunite his culture with the natural world. His time in the forest, accompanied by Friar Tuck and Locksley, helps him see how his culture connects to the natural world and how he can build a better England.

Scott ties King Richard’s most physically powerful moment to trees, furthering the sense that the king can connect to the natural world while his Norman enemies cannot overcome their separation from nature. Richard’s climatic fight is witnessed from afar; Scott treats readers to a second-hand account, narrated by Rebecca. She describes the fight to Wilfred, remarking that Richard ““fights as if there were twenty men’s strength in his single arm—His sword is broken—he snatches an axe from a yeoman—he presses Front-de-Bœuf with blow on blow—The giant stoops and totters like an oak under the steel of the woodman—he falls—he falls!”” (313). Scott’s treeification is peculiar; he technically compares a Norman to a tree while he connects Richard to a person who cuts down trees. At a surface level, comparing Richard to a woodman would seem to undo the careful characterization that precedes the scene. However, calling Richard a woodman

links him back to Locksley's foresters and the king's position as a "natural guardian." Richard is the forest's protector; he oversees the forest's maintenance, which involves planting *and* harvesting. Front-de-Bœuf thus becomes a tree that needs to be felled to protect others. Richard can foster a society that unites nature and culture by cutting down those like Front-de-Bœuf who stand in his way. When Rebecca observes that the attackers seem to be drawing back, Wilfred responds that "'O no! I will put my faith in the good knight whose axe hath rent hear-of-oak and bars of iron'" (314-315). Wilfred underscores Richard's position as the nation's forester, a man who unites nature and human culture. Just seeing the king's ability to connect nature and culture seems to revive Wilfred, who lies at death's door. Richard is the proper king, the one who can lead England forward and out of a Norman-caused dark age and into the light of modernity, and Wilfred refuses to miss such a spectacle.

*The Colonial Divide: Norman Support of the Nature/Culture Binary*

Scott sharply contrasts his Norman and Saxon characters. The Normans are corrupt, power-hungry, and careless. The Saxons are angry, rebellious, and brave. The differences between the two people become particularly clear when characters interact with trees. While Saxon characters frequently connect with trees, seeing them as part of their community and using them to build credibility for their rebellious enclave, Normans disregard trees or consider them unimportant. The book's Norman characters devalue the forests, preferring their built environments and their material goods. By displaying the consequences of dividing nature and culture, Scott helps his readers better understand

their own relationship to the natural world and argues for an England that remembers the close connections between nature and culture.

When the narrator describes scenes with Normans, he lingers over materials and objects, an emphasis that serves to reinforce the nation's colonial history. Elaine Freedgood offers a model for examining wooden objects and, while she is primarily interested in Victorian novels, her premise helps illuminate *Ivanhoe*. She writes that "the idea of empty space invites the exercise of habitation as a demonstration of power...the disposition of things in space is also a way of externalizing an internal arrangement of objects and of enacting, however unconsciously, a strict control over them" (33) and that "the social relations of production that inhere in commodities were still all *too* present," a fact that people in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries consciously choose to acknowledge or ignore (35, emphasis in original). Scott frequently chooses to acknowledge colonialism, building a body of literature that responds directly to his era's dependence on slavery and imperialism. Caroline McCracken-Flesher contrasts physical colonization and cultural colonization, showing that Scott, trapped between profiting economically from his union with England and suffering culturally, "poured considerable effort into narrating a separate Scottish subjectivity and inserting that subjectivity within the English economic narrative" (298). Saree Makdisi asks several questions about how Scott influenced depictions of the Scottish Highlands: "[H]ow is space, as a fluid and simultaneously material and political process, produced or re-produced during the process of colonial conquest?" How can "the virtual reinvention of the colonized territory as a space...be put to use in various ways?" "[W]hat happens to a people, a history, a

culture, that falls victim to a colonial project whose objective is not only to exploit its victims, but to dispossess them and claim all of their land in order to re-encode it, re-name it, to literally re-write it and re-invent it?" (155-156). While Scott strives to build a history for English culture, he does not neglect the colonial elements of that history. Without invasions and wars that last centuries, England would be vastly different. Scott draws attention to the nation's violent history to help his readers consider how colonialism influences their own lives and enables them to consider how their relationship to the environment fosters colonial projects.

Contemporary reviews were explicitly aware of *Ivanhoe*'s colonial atmosphere. *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* notes that Cedric is a particularly well-crafted character, distinguishable by his "generous devotion to the cause of England, and boldly-avowed abhorrence of the spoilers of his country;" the review goes on to underscore the "savage brutality and unrelenting ferocity" of the "Norman antagonists" (97-98). The review sympathizes with the oppressed, highlighting the morality and nobility of the colonized against the colonizers' uncivilized comportment. In contrast, the *London Magazine*'s review casts Scott as the colonizer:

...it is in the very nature of genius to incur risks: it thinks nothing done, while aught remains to do; and, if Alexander could not rest short of India, the author of Waverley may be excused (particularly since the Act of Union) for his endeavor to extend his empire beyond the Scottish border. He may also plead, if he pleases, that he finds the throne of the English Novelist unoccupied. If any Southern should object to him as an intruder, he might very fairly reply in the words of his own Cœur de Lion—"I will not dispute my title with thee, noble Thane; but I will bid thee look around thee, and see where thou wilt find another to be put into the scale against it." (79)

Clearly the colonial atmosphere that Scott invokes struck a nerve with his English readers. English discomfort with Scott and his portrayal of colonization suggests that his various comments on colonization, whether that is the Norman conquest of England, the English conquest of Scotland, the French conquest of Europe, or even the English colonization projects abroad, were clear and pointed.

Scott uses trees and wooden products to emphasize the colonial atmosphere, showing how Normans have forced their nature/culture opposition onto the colonized Saxons. Trees precariously surround Norman fortresses, making it seem that the forest itself is laying siege to the invaders. Scott writes that “the turrets of Front-de-Bœuf’s castle raise their grey and moss-grown battlements, glimmering in the morning sun above the wood by which they were surrounded” (224). Just as Normans rule over Saxon people, Norman objects rule over Saxon land. However, like all colonizers, the Normans are beset on all sides. The natural world hems them in, surrounding their fortresses and isolating them from their fellows. The forests also house bands of rebels who pose a threat to the Norman government.

Saxons rely on the forests, a bong that Normans seek to break through poorly enforced laws. When the author describes Cedric’s stronghold, he writes, “A double stockade, or palisade, composed of pointed beams, which the adjacent forest supplied, defended the outer and inner bank of the trench” (46). Cedric’s fortress relies on the forest, using the surroundings trees as a level of defense; his residence blurs the boundary between culture and nature just by existing and being surrounded by forest and is therefore a rebuttal to Norman nature/culture division. Human and forest work together,

creating a small, precarious oasis surrounded by Norman violence and alienation. Even as the built environment helps readers understand the colonial shadow that hangs over the text, Scott ensures that the natural world threatens Norman-controlled objects.

Scott repeatedly emphasizes that, while Saxons traditionally live alongside nature, creating a culture that integrates nature, Normans are utterly divided from the natural world. When Cedric and his people are taken to Front-de-Bœuf's castle, Scott writes that "upon entering that Gothic apartment, hung with many spoils won by his [Front-de-Bœuf's] own valour and that of his father, he found a flagon of wine on the massive oaken table, and the two Saxon captives under the guard of four of his dependants" (284). While Front-de-Bœuf does not explicitly consider oak products one of his spoils, Scott uses syntax to carefully link the oaken table to the Norman's other colonized objects. The many dependent clauses help create a scene that is chaotic while still being controlled by Front-de-Bœuf. As a result, Front-de-Bœuf lords over Saxon and forest alike, though Scott shows that Norman imperialism does not only exist within built environments and that, because Normans consider trees as an object, their violence extends far into the forests.

Normans have established laws and practices that situate Saxons as objects much like the forests, in the hopes that they can divide Saxons from nature. When Wamba warns Gurth that "'One word to Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, or Philip de Malvoisin, that thou hast spoken treason against the Norman,—and thou art but a castaway swineherd,—thou wouldst waver on one of these trees as a terror to all evil speakers against dignities'" (33), he draws attention to the way Normans use the Saxon nature/culture integration

against the occupied people. Wamba reminds Gurth that Norman nobles frequently use the natural world against the Saxons, using fear to sever the bond between human and nature. However, the Norman emphasis on violence and death also displays their own prevalent attitude towards the forest. The treed areas are meant for punishment or the freedom to be violent; they do not see the woods as Locksley and Richard do, and their alienation means that they cannot establish a sustainable level of control.

Norman occupation, and their heavy emphasis on dividing nature and culture, fosters violence. Scott writes that Prince John fosters a community of people who “placed their hopes of harvest in civil commotion” and that “to these causes of public distress and apprehension, must be added, the multitude of outlaws, who, driven to despair by the oppression of the feudal nobility, and the severe exercise of the forest laws, banded together in large gangs, and, keeping possession of the forests and the wastes, set at defiance the justice and magistracy of the country” (87). As the Normans attempt to establish their corrupt culture in England, those of Saxon descent find themselves turning back to the forest as they try to escape the violence and exploitation. The Normans still try to control the wooded areas, continuing to attempt to break the nature-culture connection that grants Saxons power, but the only way they can is to try to pass restrictive laws and to make the forests places of violence. Their alienation from the natural world, the logical result of a culture that divides itself from nature, means that they see the forests as dangerous, but their approach to governing the forests only ensures that, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, the natural world becomes violent.



The tournament Prince John plans in his attempt to distract his subjects highlights the vastly different ways Normans and Saxons approach the nature/culture relationship. The narrator describes the scene as “singularly romantic. On the verge of a wood, which approached to within a mile of the town of Ashby, was an extensive meadow, of the finest and most beautiful green turf, surrounded on one side by the forest, and fringed on the other by straggling oak-trees, some of which had grown to an immense size” (88). Much like Front-de-Bœuf’s castle, with its besieging trees, the tournament is located near trees but is not connected to them. While the setting adheres to picturesque standards, it is still separate from the surrounding forests, situated in an area entirely under Norman control. The tournament and the forests belong to different spheres, and the Normans make sure the two do not interact. The setting thus becomes a tribute to Norman alienation and physical control.

On the other hand, the Saxon subjects offer a contrasting approach. Scott blends spectators and trees, as “many hundreds had perched themselves on the branches of the trees which surrounded the meadow; and even the steeple of a country church, at some distance, was crowded with spectators” (89). The spectators are not nobility; they have no power under the current political system and, as such, they are reduced to watching the tournament from afar. Their position within the forest, though, highlights their ability to integrate nature and culture. For the Saxon observers, the tournament is not separate from the woods, just as they are not separate from the trees. All cultural artifacts like tournaments rely on the natural world, just as Saxons rely on the forests for sustenance.

The Normans are repeatedly associated with dead trees, mimicking the way they divide nature and culture. Wilfred emphasizes the divide, pointing to a “‘large decayed oak, [which] marks the boundaries over which Front-de-Bœuf claims authority’” (82). The dead tree implies both the divide between Front-de-Bœuf and the natural world and the destructive environmental policies associated with those who separate nature and culture. Front-de-Bœuf’s authority has enabled him to wreak havoc, causing damage to the environment and to humans. The dead tree helps readers visualize the consequences of the nature/culture binary—and the resulting disregard for the natural environment—while also enabling them to think through their own situations and how they treat trees. The dead tree becomes a powerful image, representing Norman violence even when it is associated with Saxon characters.

Wilfred similarly associates himself with dead trees, helping display the extent to which Norman control has uprooted him from his family and Saxon roots. When he appears at the tournament in disguise, “the device on his shield was a young oak-tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado*, signifying Disinherited” (106). Wilfred was disinherited for his desire to marry Rowena, a match his father Cedric did not approve of because Rowena descends from the original Saxon kings, and for his support for King Richard. Wilfred’s ability to navigate Saxon and Norman life places him at odds with his father, who opposes assimilation in any form. As a result, Wilfred is separated from his homeland, though not by choice. The Norman conquest has far-reaching consequences, the direst of which is how Saxons are uprooted and divided from their families and culture. Scott situates Wilfred as England’s future, much like he

positions Richard, who can combine the best parts of Norman and Saxon cultures; both men forge a new identity as Englishmen who do not divide nature and humans.

Normans repeatedly cite the close connection between Saxons and their natural surroundings, inadvertently showing the power people can gain when they integrate themselves with nature. De Bracy considers Locksley's band a collection of "'stingless drones...a band of lazy knaves, who take to the wood, and destroy the venison rather than labour for their maintenance'" (262), though Front-de-Bœuf immediately rebuts his assertion. Still, de Bracy's language situates Saxons firmly within nature. Not only does he compare the foresters to bees, a creature classically associated with civilization and utopia, but he paradoxically considers breaking laws a form of laziness. Repeatedly, Normans accidentally situate Saxons back within the natural world, highlighting that Locksley and others are more civilized and more powerful than the occupying force. Similarly, the Templar asks his fellow Normans, "'See ye how dexterously [Locksley's band] avail themselves of every cover which a tree or bush affords, and shun exposing themselves to the shot of our crossbows?'" (292). Robert Pogue Harrison writes that "[forests] have typically been considered places of lawlessness, they have also provided havens for those who took up the cause of justice and fought the law's corruption" (x), and Scott illustrates the power of those who consider the forest their haven. Locksley's archers are powerful *because* they can connect to the forest, using the trees for cover as they defend their forested home. They build a culture that incorporates nature, in direct defiance of Norman tradition, and their success during the battle demonstrates their resulting strength.

Normans recognize Saxon strength, and the potential violence that could result, and try to undermine it by mocking how the occupied people mingle nature and culture. Front-de-Bœuf recalls the history between religious persecution and trees when he asks the Saxons, ““Was it not he of St Ives whom they [forest-dwelling outlaws] tied to an oak-tree, and compelled to sing a mass while they were rifling his mails and his wallets?”” (283). However, before the Saxons can answer him, Front-de-Bœuf remembers ““that jest was played by Gualtier of Middleton, one of our own companions-at-arms”” (283). Even Front-de-Bœuf must acknowledge that much of the violence that occurs in wooded areas comes as a result of Norman interference. Trees for Front-de-Bœuf and his fellow Normans are sites of violence, which only serves to reinforce the divide between nature and culture. Saxons have been reduced to committing acts of violence within the confines of the forest and the Normans live in fear of Saxon violence; even as they try to redirect it or mock it, they are forced to admit that their control is tenuous at best.

#### *Treeified Alternatives: Others Integrating Nature and Culture*

Scott “treeifies” humans to close the distance between humans and the natural world. By tracing the connections between humans and trees, he reminds people that trees and humans belong to the same community and that people who divide nature and culture cause violence and environmental damage. He treeifies specific characters to mark their closer relationship the natural world and showcase the power of united nature and culture. Even as he argues that all humans need to remember their roots in the natural

world, he realizes that some people are “naturally” closer than others. However, he additionally shows that treeified people cannot necessarily survive and that their power is fading.

Scholars like Oliver have identified Scott’s deep interest in forests and in the relationship between locals and the forest. In the introduction to her essay outlining the relationship between Scott and arboriculture, she demonstrates the author’s commitment to not just the environmental benefits of trees but also their symbolism:

Scott was anxious that cultivation of the native Scots Pine would decline because the imported tree offered a quicker financial return, and that increased planting in marginal and wild areas might result in the indigenous tree becoming a threatened species. He was also concerned that the appearance of Scotland might change in ways that would efface the synchronicity between Scottish culture, the nation’s landscape and its history. (“Planting” 586)

Oliver identifies how Scott connected trees to nation and argues that Scott used trees to define national identity because trees helped people (re)connect to their natural environment.

Indeed, the connection between trees and nation is so strong that Scott’s arguments sometimes resemble anti-immigrant, xenophobic rants. Scott writes in *Ivanhoe*’s “Dedicatory Epistle” that “the painter must introduce no ornament inconsistent with the climate or country of his landscape; he must not plant cypress trees upon Inch-Merrin, or Scottish firs among the ruins of Persepolis; and the author lies under a corresponding constraint” (20). Even in the novel’s preface, Scott is concerned with environmental accuracy, suggesting that foreign culture cannot be integrated with local

nature. Seemingly, Scott's primary goal is to build an argument about who should rule England and how that culture should be structured. By tying nationalism and national culture to trees, Scott asks readers to look to the past to structure a better society now. *Ivanhoe* contains the same argument, with Saxons represented a fading civilization that should be honored even as Cedric and his people find they no longer have a place in England.

The Saxon leaders explicitly tie themselves to trees, which serves to highlight their precarious, and indeed fading, cultural position even as the comparisons underscore their ability to mingle nature and culture. Cedric, in a moment of fear and desperation, tells Athelstane, "Let the old tree wither...so the stately hope of the forest be preserved" (271). Cedric is the old tree; Athelstane, descendent of kings, is the forest's hope. Both Saxons become members of the forest, indistinguishable from the other trees. Cedric's ability, and indeed willingness, to become a tree demonstrates that he is nothing like the Normans, but in linking himself to a dying tree, he also acknowledges that his time is over. Cedric's comparison echoes one he offered early in the text. He quietly laments his son's apparent fecklessness, exclaiming, "Ah, Wilfred, Wilfred! couldst thou have ruled thine unreasonable passion, thy father had not been left in his age like the solitary oak, that throws out its shattered and unprotected branches against the full sweep of the tempest!" (52). While Wilfred compares himself to an uprooted tree, largely because his father banishes him, Cedric associates himself with a lone tree trying to weather the Norman "tempest" alone. The Norman conquest has ensured that Cedric and Saxons like him are doomed. They do not represent England's future, not like King Richard or

Wilfred. Furthering the sense of fading glory, Sedgwick repeats the image of a dying tree in *Hope Leslie*, repeatedly connected Pequot leader Mononotto to dead or dying trees. The Saxons and the Pequots are equivalent: native peoples displaced by a colonizing force.

When Cedric and his party travel through the forest, Scott repeatedly emphasizes their ease, contrasting their comfort in the forest with Normans, who feel uncomfortable in the forests primarily because they see it as enormously foreign and separate from themselves. Part of the reason why Cedric and his people are comfortable in the woods is because those who control the forests are also Saxon. Scott writes that “The travellers had now reached the verge of the wooded country, and were about to plunge into its recesses, held dangerous at that time from the number of outlaws whom oppression and poverty had driven to despair, and who occupied the forests in such large bands as could easily bid defiance to the feeble police of the period” (205). The Normans have ensured that the forests are dangerous places, full of those who break laws and rob people. However, the narrator further points out that “in travelling thus late through the forest, Cedric and Athelstane relied on their descent and character, as well as their courage. The outlaws, whom the severity of the forest laws had reduced to this roving and desperate mode of life, were chiefly peasants and yeomen of Saxon descent, and were generally supposed to respect the persons and property of their countrymen” (205). Scott distinguishes between Saxons and those who inhabit the forest, enabling readers to sort through who represents the future and who is fading away. The foresters, like those under Locksley’s control, represent a viable path forward. Cedric and his companions are too old-fashioned to

succeed in the modern world. Their method of integrating nature and culture is admirable and worth learning from, but their complete unwillingness to assimilate and adapt means they represent England's past. Indeed, the fact that the Saxons are not safe in the forest, and are attacked by disguised Normans, suggests that they do not actually provide a viable model for readers.

Instead, Scott uses his Saxon characters and their warlike nature to help readers understand where English culture's roots. During the fight, Cedric launches "his remaining javelin, which...nailed [a Norman] man against an oak-tree that happened to be close behind him" (208). While oak trees are typically associated with just leadership, like Locksley's governance of his foresters, Cedric's violence, coupled with Norman deception and violence, renders this oak tree confusing. On the one hand, Scott connects the nameless Norman, pinned against an oak tree, to the martyrs and persecuted religious figures that people like Front-de-Bœuf mock, situating the dead Norman as an emblem of his culture, killed by a person who refuses to accept a new perspective. On the other hand, Cedric's violence also vividly highlights the way Norman violence recoils. The Norman surprise attack succeeds (Cedric, Athelstane, Rowena, and their Saxon entourage are captured), but the cost is high, and their violence begets further violence (the foresters attack Front-de-Bœuf's castle precisely because the Normans are holding the Saxons captive). The oak tree simultaneously indicates that the Saxon violence is just and that the Norman is a sacrifice. The violence Cedric embodies, despite his ability to connect culture and nature, means he does not represent England's future. Furthermore, while



Cedric clearly integrates nature and culture, he still lives apart from the former in a built fortress.

However, Scott situates Friar Tuck much like King Richard. Both men exist alongside nature, living and thriving in nature. When Friar Tuck's hermitage is first introduced, Scott describes how "Ivy mantled its sides in some places, and in others oaks and holly bushes, whose roots found nourishment in the cliffs of the crag, waved over the precipices below, like the plumage of the warrior over his steel helmet, giving grace to that whose chief expression was terror" (180). Friar Tuck's hut is almost idyllic. Nestled among trees and vines, it shelters and defends him. Personified as thoroughly as any tree in the book, Tuck's living place unites nature and culture, creating a favorable place for King Richard to begin learning how to properly govern.

When Friar Tuck and King Richard meet, Scott makes it clear that while King Richard is the future of England, Tuck represents a very honorable past. As the two settle down to eat, Tuck "fixed his torch in a twisted branch of iron which served for a candlestick; and, placing the oaken trivet before the embers of the fire, which he refreshed with some dry wood, he placed a stool upon one side of the table, and beckoned to the knight to do the same upon the other" (183). Tuck's wooden objects do not have the same colonial shadows as Norman items. Instead, his material goods appear to be an extension of the natural world, increasing the man's (natural) hospitality and helping make the disguised king comfortable. Manmade products like iron are treeified; wooden objects support the meal and ensure the king is comfortable. In Tuck's home, there is

almost no separation between nature and culture; he lives so closely with nature that it is surprising he is not treeified.

Scott emphasizes the Saxon ability to overcome the nature/culture binary by seeing trees as humanlike but also shows that their culture is fading under the Norman onslaught. Near the beginning Gurth the swineherd and Wilfred's most loyal companion tells Wamba, Cedric's jester, that "the oaks, too, notwithstanding the calm weather, sob and creak with their great boughs as if announcing a tempest" (Scott 33). Gurth personifies the trees negatively; rather than seeing them as an extension of Saxon power, he casts them as harbingers of Norman violence. Still, he sees trees as fellows, beings that can respond to the violence and unease of Norman occupation as clearly as he and his fellows.

Gurth's is repeatedly indirectly threatened by the Norman alienation from the natural world. Indeed, Scott encapsulates the tenuous situation for most English citizens by drawing attention to Gurth's precariousness:

There were as yet no tidings of Gurth and his charge, which should have long since have been driven home from the forest; and such was the insecurity of the period, as to render it probable that the delay might be explained by some depredation of the outlaws, with whom the adjacent forest abounded, or by the violence of some neighbouring baron, whose consciousness of strength made him equally negligent of the laws of property. The matter was of consequence, for great part of the domestic wealth of the Saxon proprietors consisted in numerous herds of swine, especially in forest land, where those animals easily found their food. (50)

The Saxons are directly dependent on the natural world for survival, as are all humans. However, they have maintained a clearer sense of their dependence than the Normans.

While Normans import foods and tax their subjects so they can afford more luxuries, Saxons struggle to survive. The forests are particularly important, providing food, fuel, and, of course, shelter. Violently separating Saxons from their forests thus becomes an obvious way to destroy them. Indeed, Gurth has already had violent encounters with Norman neighbors. Wamba reminds Cedric that ““Sir Philip de Malvoisin’s keeper of the chase...caught Fangs strolling in the forest, and said he chased the deer contrary to his master’s right, as warden of the walk’” (58). “Malvoisin” roughly translates to “bad neighbor,” unsuitably underscoring the fraught relationship between Normans and Saxons. The Saxons have been reduced to scrounging and any time they interact with Norman-controlled land, they are subject to incredible, if not senseless, violence. Indeed, Norman violence has created an untenable situation, one where Saxon and Norman alike cannot survive.

Scott suggests that Norman culture and their violent conquest cannot take root in England without generating further bloodshed. Cedric responds to Norman violence by yelling, ““The foul fiend take Malvoisin...and his keeper both! I will teach them that the wood was disforested in terms of the great Forest Charter’” (58). At the novel’s start, the narrator locates historical elements in the forests; the trees are a living history, not just the past’s symbolic representation. Cedric offers a similar perspective, but his violence, his willingness to kill anyone who threatens his forest, differentiates him and explains why he is not England’s appropriate future. Too hot-headed, he does not have the same bent towards justice as King Richard or Wilfred.

While Gurth and Cedric represent the fading Saxon relationship to the natural world, Wamba offers another possibility. Wamba repeats Gurth's act of personification, telling King Richard (disguised as the Black Knight), "'Nay, for me I say nothing...for green trees have ears as well as stone walls'" (445). Again, personification emphasizes the deep discomfort Saxons experience under Norman rule, though this time trees are collaborators rather than mere omens. The trees are like spies, collecting whispers of Saxon discontent and repeating it to the Norman invaders. Wamba is one of the few Saxons who is deeply uncomfortable outside; he is a character who lives his life indoors and who has little connection to his surroundings. However, Wamba occasionally manages to integrate nature and culture more thoroughly than other Saxons, though rarely positively.

Wamba uses poetry to relate politics and the natural world, displaying a canny understanding of Saxon and Norman cultures. Wamba recites a proverb (of his own devising) that conveys the division between Norman culture and nature even as it reestablishes how Saxons integrate nature and culture:

Norman saw on English oak,  
On English neck a Norman yoke;  
Norman spoon in English dish,  
And England ruled as Normans wish;  
Blithe world in England never will be more,  
Till England's rid of all the four. (286)

Wamba's proverb clearly captures the situation: Normans threaten every aspect of English life. They rule over the forests, the labor, the food, and the government; they try

to impose their culture and stamp out Saxon ways of life. The nation cannot thrive until it is free of its colonizers, and Wamba highlights that if the Normans continue ruling, the environmental and humanitarian devastation will be catastrophic. The book's proto-English characters need to develop their own way of life and free themselves from the Norman incursion, particularly their stance that nature and culture must be separated.

While Scott's Saxon characters typically integrate nature and culture, the author also shows his Jewish characters merging nature and culture. When Isaac negotiates for his daughter's safe return, he tells the Prior of Aymer that "'were each leaf on that tree a zecchin, and each zecchin mine own, all that mass of wealth I would give to know whether thou [his daughter, Rebecca] art alive, and escaped the hands of the Nazarene!'" (362). Scholars like Rachel Schulkins examine how Scott ties Jewishness and nationalism specifically, but no one has yet studied how his Jewish characters relate to the natural world. Indeed, Rebecca's healing abilities are deeply tied to her knowledge of herbs, suggesting that she and her father both deserve further ecocritical attention. Still, Isaac's analogy manages to overcome the nature/culture divide in a way that Normans do not typically manage; he connects human cultural artifacts like money to the natural world, reasserting the relationship between humans and nonhumans.

Scott does not appear particularly interested in Isaac's relationship to nature, especially since upon Isaac's introduction, oak wood contains his influence, effectively creating an alternative nature/culture split. Wilfred tells Gurth that "'It is as well as it is...the company, even of a Jew, can hardly spread contamination through an oaken partition'" (75). Wilfred's comment is blatantly anti-Semitic, but it is difficult to say

whether he is preforming anti-Semitism for Gurth or genuinely believes that Jewish people have a contaminating miasma. Regardless, his comment suggests that nature can somehow contain and perhaps neutralize Jewish people. Whether or not Isaac sees himself as part of the natural world, Wilfred sees him as part of a new binary, a Jewish/Gentile opposition that transcends the nature/culture binary. Perhaps nature is the neutral ground between Jews and Gentiles or perhaps nature is a prison wall, containing Jewishness and “protecting” Gentiles—either way, oak wood protects Wilfred.

### *Conclusion*

When Princess Charlotte died, the entire nation mourned. The *Times* reprinted various articles on her death printed in rural newspapers. One such reprinting records a theater owner’s announcement:

With heartfelt regret I appear before you to announce a melancholy event, in which the dearest interests of the whole nation are involved:...the Princess Charlotte of Wales is no more—“Death lies upon her like an untimely frost upon the fairest flower of the field!” and to add to this more dreadful calamity, the event that we all looked forward to with so much cheering hope, has been the cause of her untimely fate; and both the mother and the offspring “press one silent bed.” (2)

The theater-owner goes on to close the theater, sending everyone home. The deep, lasting impact felt by Charlotte’s death profoundly changed the nation. The English royal family’s last hope was gone, and the future was more uncertain than it had been in years. It did not help that the second defeat of Napoleon had happened only two and a half years before, meaning that many in England still lived in mortal terror of French invasion. It

would not be till Princess Victoria's birth a year and a half after Charlotte's death that the nation would begin to hope for a stable and fruitful future. The newspapers were understated though excited when they announced the princess's birth. *The Morning Chronicle* "announced the...most cheering event" and quoted the official communication from the royal family, who "are happy in being able to state, that her Royal Highness was safely delivered yesterday morning, at Kensington Palace, of a Princess, at a quarter past four o'clock" (4). The Victorian era is one marked by stable royal leadership—the sort of leadership Scott envisioned in *Ivanhoe*.

In his novel, Scott attempts to help readers question the nature/culture binary that anglophones take for granted. Throughout his life, Scott associated trees with the nation and national community because the natural world informs cultural symbols. When people think like Normans, considering the natural world a place to be conquered and exploited, their governments tend to be repressive. Rebellions brew in wild spaces, areas where citizens feel insulated from the government and where they can start building a new world. Scott shows that human culture is indebted to trees; they preside over government, witness history, and serve as companions. Without them, the nation has no real power and, more importantly, no future. Scott's investment in trees and his sense that trees are an integral part of nationalism echo throughout the century's literature, on both sides of the Atlantic. Seemingly aware of his long reach, he wrote in his dedicatory epistle that "It was not above sixty or seventy years...since the whole north of Scotland was under a state of government nearly as simple and as patriarchal as those of our good allies the Mohawks and Iroquois" (14). He links his characters and his existence as a

Scotsman to indigenous Americans, inflecting his environmental argument with a transatlantic valence that few scholars have examined. James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Pioneers*, a novel that likewise connects the nation to its forests and argues that trees can help people overcome the nature/culture binary better than any other artifact, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* both show how historical fiction work to establish an American identity, one that is separate from England and that abandons its shortcomings. Both authors blur the nature/culture binary, echoing Scott's keen awareness that any nation estranged from the natural world has, at best, a precarious future and often commits terrible acts of violence as its alienated citizens lash out in fear.

#### *Notes*

1. I am indebted to James Chambers's popular biography *Charlotte and Leopold*, which offers a good introductory examination of the princess's life, death, and lasting influence.
2. Interestingly, many biographies of Queen Victoria begin not with the queen's birth but with her cousin's life and death, highlighting the very real truth that without Charlotte's death, Victoria likely would not have been born and, even if she had been born, certainly would not have had the influence she had.
3. Scott likely had a much more sympathetic attitude towards the future king. He dined with the Prince Regent, who was an immense fan of the Waverley novels, and in 1820, the Prince Regent awarded Scott his baronetcy as a reward for "finding" the Crown Jewels. Whether Scott truly supported the Prince Regent or was simply a canny political positioner is beyond my project's scope.



4. Curiously, *A Hebrew Anthology*, which collects poems about the Old Testament from English literature, places Scott's "Rebecca's Hymn" next to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's translation of "A Hebrew Dirge" (renamed "Israel's Lament"), a poem that was "chaunted on the day of the Funeral of her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte" (636-637). While modern readers would not consider Scott's portrayal of Jewish people in *Ivanhoe* particularly sympathetic, nineteenth-century readers saw his depiction of Rebecca as surprisingly kind, and scholars are intrigued by her positioning as a possible romantic partner for Wilfred. The connection between Princess Charlotte and Rebecca goes deeper than I can trace here and offers intriguing new ways to approach *Ivanhoe*.

5. Obviously, Charles Stuart's reign was long after *Ivanhoe*'s setting, but Scott often employs pointed anachronisms to ensure his historical settings remain relevant. Arguably, Scott drew on several royal stories (including the tragic life of Princess Charlotte) to make his novel both more relevant and more political.

6. The novel ends with the rueful comment that Wilfred "might have risen still higher, but for the premature death of the heroic Cœur-de-Lion...With the life of a generous, but rash and romantic monarch, perished all the projects which his ambition and his generosity had formed" (502). While Scott does not connect this final observation to a tree, a sense of waste and failure inflects his observation. He suggests that if Richard had survived and properly ruled, England might have been a more stable place.

7. Indeed, dwarf willows typically grow above the treeline on mountains located in the Arctic (Syme 14). I doubt Scott is referring to an actual dwarf willow; he is likely

describing young willows or willows that are growing in such substandard conditions that they cannot grow to the size of their brethren.

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CHAPTER III

THE TREES ARE US AND WE ARE THE TREES: VIOLENCE AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT IN *HOPE LESLIE*

He was Born, and grew up altogether amongst the Indians, like a Wild Tree in the  
Wilderness; but we hope, he is Cut down and we now Send him to you, to hew,  
and to Plain, and you may Polish him, if you think worth a While...—Samson  
Occom, letter to Rev. Jedediah Chapman, 1790

*Introduction*

When Disney released *Pocahontas* in 1995, the studio had no idea it was almost halfway through the era that would come to be known as the Disney Renaissance. The movies ahead of *Pocahontas* had been well-received; four of the five films that preceded it won multiple Academy Awards. Hopes were high for *Pocahontas*, and those aspirations were, basically, met. The romantic epic earned two Academy Awards for its soundtrack and critics praised its visuals. However, the film's beauty belies serious narrative issues that mark the film as being nearer the end, rather than the beginning, of Disney's most important decade. Roger Ebert outlines the issues succinctly: the film may be "the best-looking of the modern Disney animated features," it may be "about real issues, even if it treats them with naïve idealism," but in the end, the film is "based on myth, not history" and the protagonist "serves here more as simplified symbol" than a true historical person. The film is rife with historical and cultural missteps, resulting in a Eurocentric and deeply colonial retelling of Jamestown's founding, but its cultural impact

is obvious. Indeed, one of the film's most enduring characters is a talking tree, who tries to guide Pocahontas through the complicated, and ultimately disastrous, meeting of indigenous and English cultures.

Grandmother Willow sits at a pond's edge and shelters all sorts of animals, from owls to rabbits. The tree has clearly stood for generations; she frequently mentions Pocahontas's dead mother and provides the intergenerational perspective that a human would expect from a being that can live centuries. Ultimately, Grandmother Willow's advice is avowedly biotic. She tells Pocahontas "to listen" because "all around you are spirits, child. They live in the earth, the water, the sky. If you listen, they will guide you." That the spirits tell Pocahontas to ally with the newly arrive white settlers, even after they are shown shooting down trees with canons, undercuts the film's environmental edge, but still helps viewers question—and perhaps rethink—their approach to the natural world. While comparing a Disney film and an Early American novel might seem incongruous, the anachronistic juxtaposition is one that novelist Catharine Maria Sedgwick would approve.

Over 160 years before *Pocahontas* entered American theatres, Catharine Maria Sedgwick published *Hope Leslie* (1827), a novel that explores relations between the Pequots<sup>1</sup> and Puritan settlers during the mid-1600s and asks readers to rethink their understanding of history, particularly environmental history, and cultural supremacy. Much like Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, *Hope Leslie* does not confine itself to its historical setting. Indeed, Jeffrey Insko observes that rather than using what other scholars consider progressive, dialogic, relativistic, or polyvocal historical accounts (Burleigh 197),

Sedgwick purposefully uses anachronism to provide “an alternative conception of what history *is*” (180, emphasis original). While her novel’s lessons attempt to condemn her contemporary political situation, particularly Indian Removal Acts, Sedgwick also explores seventeenth-century animosity between Puritans and indigenous peoples, philosophical and political reverberations from the American Revolution, and Romantic-era understandings of nationalism. However, the author also includes a strong environmental message, utilizing personified trees, that begs readers to consider the violence that results from the opposition between nature and culture that is at white society’s heart.

I argue that Sedgwick utilizes personification to help her white, anglophone readers overcome the nature/culture binary and consider how religion and economics have ensured that nature and culture remain diametrically opposed. Sedgwick’s argument revolves around trees because they are the most humanlike part of the natural world; she purposefully contrasts trees with other natural elements, particularly water, to show that trees alone carry sufficient symbolic weight to display how the problems caused by dividing nature and culture impact readers. I divide my argument into three parts: first I explore how Magawisca, Everell Fletcher, and Hope Leslie use trees to overcome the Puritanical insistence on a nature/culture divide, then I examine how Puritans use trees to divide themselves from their surroundings, and conclude with the Pequot use of personification, which highlights their ability to mingle nature and culture. Even as Sedgwick anthropomorphizes trees to support her point that Native Americans, like the environment, deserve better treatment because they belong to the same community as



white settlers, she shows that white settlers refuse to connect to their surroundings, preferring to situate nature and culture as mutually exclusive, a stance that enables them to wildly mistreat nature and those associated with it. Sedgwick's novel suggests that belonging to a culture that divides nature and culture causes violence and enables white settlers to justify horrific violence. Illuminating Sedgwick's environmental argument complicates the traditionally male anglophone environmental perspective that tends to uphold a nature/culture binary; furthermore, using ecocriticism helps expand how scholars approach nineteenth-century genre fiction, particularly historical fiction that blurs boundaries between human and nonhuman and past and present.

While scholars frequently connect the novel to James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, published mere months before *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick's environmental stance ties her "historical romance" more closely to *The Pioneers*, published four years earlier, because both novels tackle white settlement and deforestation, though Sedgwick takes greater pains with her Native American characters than Cooper does. The author's frequent transatlantic allusions, particularly to Shakespeare, encourage scholars to place the novel in conversation with other Romantic-era novels like *Ivanhoe* and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, but scholars have, for the most part, kept *Hope Leslie* strictly within an American context. Furthermore, while scholars have worked hard to understand Sedgwick's historical, social, and feminist critiques, her environmental argument remains understudied; thus, situating her novel alongside other early-nineteenth-century historical fiction novels and explicating how these texts situate the natural world helps uncover not just Early American

environmentalism but also Romantic environmentalism more generally. Even now, Sedgwick's language characterization push readers to consider environmental justice, making the novel an early ecofeminist text and one of the few American novels to demonstrate that Native Americans offer an alternative environmental relationship that contrasts sharply with English settlers' bifurcated approach.

Scholars have reached few conclusions about *Hope Leslie* and few agree on any given point. Erica Burleigh offers an analysis that links incest and miscegenation, enabling readers to reconsider how Sedgwick characterizes relationships, while Philip Gould studies the author's revisionist history of the Pequot War. These two positions contrast with scholars like Maureen Tuthill, who argues that Sedgwick positions Magawisca and her potential relationship with Everell Fletcher as a threat and has the woman disappear at the novel's end to preserve Puritan authority (96), and Insko, who suggests that Sedgwick does not revise history so much as intermingle multiple time periods in a metahistorical discourse (180). The diverse array of critical approaches speaks to Sedgwick's ability to produce a multifaceted novel that deeply challenges readers.

That being said, most scholars agree that the text is a landmark feminist novel. Scholars like Amanda Emerson analyze how Sedgwick displays her response to "an untenable contradiction for many middle-class white women" in Early America: even as they self-identified "with a nation that proclaims equality as a founding truth," that very nation subordinates them (25). Others, like Gustavus Stadler, examine how Sedgwick's novel undermines the binary between public and private spheres, highlighting the sense

that people of color “wear the social on his or her skin,” thus collapsing the “distinction between politics and the personal before s/he has uttered a word” (41). The novel’s feminist overtones are strong, though scholars continue to debate Sedgwick’s exact message.

Very few have attempted to address Sedgwick’s environmental undertones, despite the fact most scholars link *Hope Leslie* to James Fenimore Cooper’s novels and argue that she traces similar cultural conversations. Those who have offered some examination of Sedgwick’s environmentalism typically link her to literary movements and conventions. Laurel V. Hankins, for instance, studies how the depiction of the natural world in *Hope Leslie* ties the novel to transatlantic Romantic literary conventions, helping us better understand how Romanticism evolved and flourished in Early America. An ecocritical approach to Sedgwick’s novel, then, offers scholars an almost entirely new way to approach a complicated novel that has rewarded a wide variety of critical approaches.

#### *Finding Hope in the Balance: Overcoming the Nature/Culture Binary*

Sedgwick uses her historical setting and the meeting of two different cultural paradigms to explore the necessity of developing a society that no longer opposes nature and culture but rather sees a reciprocal relationship between the two. The author offers this perspective through three of her main characters, enabling her to contrast the Native American approach to the white settler one. Indeed, Sedgwick does not suggest that white settlers ought to adopt Native American cultural traditions; her Pequot heroine explicitly

closes the door on a peaceable relationship between the two cultures. After her Puritan childhood companions urge her to stay with them, Magawisca tells them that this is impossible because ““the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night”” (330). Magawisca’s comment is not surprising; the entire novel has been building the argument that the contrast between European settlers and native people is too great for a single, assimilated culture to exist. While Sedgwick makes the gulf between native and nonnative culture obvious through various characters’ interactions with trees, using each group’s relationship with trees to encapsulate how each approach community differently, she still argues that Americans need to develop a culture that overcomes the nature/culture binary and establishes a unified “community” composed of humans and the natural world.

The narrator describes frequently mingles culture and nature, helping readers understand how the artificial binary between the two can be overcome. The narrator describes how “The [sun’s] horizontal rays passed over the valley, and flushed the upper branches of the trees, the summits of the hills, and the mountains, with a flood of light, whilst the low grounds reposing in deep shadow, presented one of those striking and accidental contrasts in nature, that a painter would have selected to give effect to his art” (82). As scholars like Laurel V. Hankins suggest, Sedgwick’s description adheres to Romantic picturesque expectations; the scene is beautiful, seemingly composed and ready to be painted. However, her description purposefully draws readers into the forest, using artistic language to help them process and interact with what they are visualizing. Furthermore, the contrast between lightness and darkness highlights the trees, suggesting

that they are the most important element. The scene's artificiality asks readers to concentrate on the forests and consider how the trees influence and complicate the nature/culture divide. Indeed, the scene suggests that there is no such divide; culture is in nature, in the form of naturally occurring picturesque views, and nature is in culture, in the form of repeated natural images in Romantic literature and painting.

The narrator commences personifying the view, a move that helps reveal the close connections between humans and the natural world. As the narrator describes "The gentle Housatonic," which winds "through the depths of the valley," she emphasizes that the water lingers "like a lover amidst the vines, trees, and flowers, that fringed its banks" (82-83). On the one hand, we have plants and trees acting as "fringe," a decorative band of nature that mingles human and nonhuman. On the other hand, we have a river that moves like a lover, a furthering of the almost surreal mingling of human and nonhuman. Sedgwick makes the lines between human and nonhuman so blurry that it is impossible to remove one without losing the other. Here, then, is a physical manifestation of nature and culture mingling successfully. The mingling nurtures life, including a hill "garlanded with laurels, now in full and profuse bloom; here and there surmounted by an intervening pine, spruce, or hemlock, whose seared winter foliage was fringed with the bright tender sprouts of spring" (83). By showing that when nature and culture are united, life flourishes, Sedgwick displays the rich benefits of building a culture that no longer divides nature and culture. She repeats her use of "fringe," though this time the decoration is even more abstract, with a season decorating the very plant life that fringe the river. The doubling not only reinforces the sense that humans and nonhumans are inextricably,

complexly linked but also shows the richness that results. The scene resembles a utopia, reminiscent of Eden before the Fall.

Magawisca's innocent but powerful relationship with the natural world reinforces the sense that North America was an Edenic wonderland. Magawisca stresses her connection to nature, exclaiming that "'My foot...is used to the wild-wood path. The deer tires not of his way on the mountains, nor the bird of its flight in the air'" (24). Sedgwick highlights that Magawisca does not see a divide between herself and the natural world; instead, she sees herself as part of the environment, helping readers look beyond the traditional nature/culture divide. Her connection to her surroundings contrasts her sharply with the white colonists she is settled among, thus helping readers see the settlement's artificiality. However, she also embodies the way humans and the natural world are interdependent. Without the natural world, humans cannot survive, whether they admit this or not.

The narrator frequently cites Magawisca's ability to integrate nature and culture, even during emotionally trying moments, and encourages readers to see how nature influences culture. As she is marched through the woods alongside the captive Everell, she takes a moment to note that "The branches of the trees that grew from the rocky and precipitous declivities on each side, met and interlaced, forming a sylvan canopy over the imprisoned stream. To Magawisca, whose imagination breathed a living spirit into all the objects of nature, it seemed as if the spirits of the wood had stooped to listen to its sweet music" (82). Curiously, the trees "imprison" the waterway, creating a claustrophobic image that under typical circumstances would create suspense. But Sedgwick deflates the

building anxiety through Magawisca's imagining that the trees are listening to the water's music. She mingles humanlike characteristics among various natural elements, thus creating a scene that emphasizes the deep and complicated relationship between humans and nonhumans. Furthermore, Sedgwick suggests that even in moments when nature is frightening or thoroughly nonhuman, there are still ways to prevent alienation and to reassert the connection between human and nonhuman. The author displays an almost stereotypically Romantic view of nature through Magawisca, but in so doing, she reasserts the importance of humans connecting and understanding the natural world and its importance to human culture and life.

Magawisca's Romantic relationship with trees causes her, like William Wordsworth's Wanderer in *The Excursion*, to turn to them in moments of emotional distress. As her father and his companions rest after fleeing from the Fletcher homestead, Magawisca sits "apart from the rest, her mantle wrapped closely around her, her head leaning against a tree, and apparently lost in deep meditation" (76-77). During this unsettled moment, the young Native American woman does not turn to her family or her friends; instead, she finds comfort and support in a tree, thus helping readers see the natural world as a source of support rather than an irrelevant or incomprehensible other. Magawisca in this moment sees a tree as more "human" than the humans that surround her and she finds the spiritual and emotional comfort she needs through her connection to the tree rather than her connection to humans.

Magawisca's method of navigating the forest reveals her ability to integrate nature and culture. While most white settlers assume that the forest is impassable, the

Native Americans know how to navigate the woods using symbols and landmarks.

Magawisca tries to help Everell, telling him to ““keep an eagle-eye on our path-way—our journey is always towards the setting sun—every turn we make is marked by a dead tree, a lopped branch, or an arrow’s head carved in the bark of a tree”” (76). The trees literally act as a map and guiding force, perfectly symbolizing balanced nature and culture. Rather than being an indistinguishable collection of interchangeable resources, each tree has a unique position and forms part of a code that can be used to interpret the “uncivilized” wilds. Magawisca can “read” the trees and decipher their symbols, and she tries to pass this along to Everell, though he is unable to make use of this knowledge.

While Everell cannot read the trees like Magawisca, he does manage to understand the benefits of a culture that does not place nature and culture in a binary relationship. Even after being captured by Mononotto and his companions, Everell still sees the community that Native Americans have with the natural world. Finally delivered to a native village, Sedgwick writes that “Everell looked on the smoke that curled from the huts of the village, embosomed in pine trees, on the adjacent plain. The scene, to him, breathed peace and happiness, and gushing thoughts of home filled his eyes with tears” (83). The Native American village is not alien and scary to the Puritan boy; instead, it is homey and oddly welcoming. Its placement in relation to the pines helps it appear even more welcoming, but perhaps more importantly, the village’s placement illustrates a settlement that does not divide nature and culture. Everell responds to this sense of unity painfully; it curiously reminds him of home, despite the fact the buildings and people



look utterly foreign. Indeed, Everell's acknowledgment that very little separates Native Americans and white settlers contrasts sharply with other Puritans.

Ultimately, Everell's time as a captive helps him further integrate nature and his culture. The narrator tells readers that "His mother's counsels and instructions, to which he had often lent a wearied attention—the passages from the sacred book he had been compelled to commit to memory, when his truant thoughts were ranging forest and field, now returned upon him as if a celestial spirit breathed them into his soul" (88). When he was young and before he had spent significant time among Native Americans, Everell had rehearsed the same nature/culture divide other Puritans propagate. His education and religion were separate from the natural world and he could not take part in one while remaining in touch with the other. Once he has traveled through the forests, though, he is able to connect his religious teachings and the natural world, reasserting the close connection between nature and culture. Suddenly he can use his culture to interpret nature and nature to interpret culture, bringing him even closer to the sort of unified community Magawisca experiences.

Hope Leslie similarly displays a relationship to the natural world that deviates from Puritanical norms. She works to overcome the nature/culture divide, using Everell and Magawisca as guides. When the story recommences seven years after Everell's captivity, the narrator introduces Hope through her art. She paints an image for Mr. Fletcher of his son's rescue from a wild animal, which she describes in a letter to Everell: "The scene is a forest glade—a boy is sleeping under a birch tree, near a thicket of hazel bushes, and from their deepest shadow peeps a gaunt wolf in the act of springing on him,

while just emerging from the depths of the wood, in the back ground, appears a man with a musket levelled at the animal”” (95). Superficially, the painting adheres to Puritan conventions. The forest is dark, chaotic, and dangerous; wild animals roam free and men must defend themselves with violence and technology. The scene seemingly pits humans against nature, implying that the two cannot be allied. However, the very fact that Hope has rendered a natural scene, with such attention to detail and care, enables the reader to question the image’s effect. The fact that the boy sleeps, undisturbed by the forest’s potential for violence, suggests he is more at home there than the man who approaches with a gun. He is enmeshed in nature, part of the scene rather than an intrusion. The scene Hope paints is based on Everell’s experience—he is the boy—but since she was not present for the situation, her rendering of the scene relies on culture (the stories she has heard) and nature (her understanding of the local environment). Only by uniting the two can she paint a successful image.

The response to the painting suggests that Hope offers a challenging picture that forces viewers to reconsider their relationship to the forest. Digby, who is the man with the musket, tells Hope that “““To be sure, Mr. Everell does not look quite so pale and famished as he did when I first saw him sleeping under that birch tree: as I live, she has put his name there, just as he had carved it. Well, it will be a kind of a history for Mr. Everell’s children, when we, and the forest too, are laid low””” (96). Digby connects Everell to the forests, thinking about how the boy left his mark on the woods as well as the mark that the woods left on him. Everell’s sickly state helps explain why he would be resting in the forest, though Hope of course does not capture that sickliness, which forces

viewers to wonder why the boy is resting. Digby then ties Everell even more closely to the woods, implying that both live—and will eventually perish—in tandem. Digby’s confused delight helps reinforce the painting’s complicated message, suggesting that the painter tried her best to merge humans and nature in a way that appealed to her audience. Hope’s complicated painting sparks further musings about the natural world, and Sedgwick has Hope pen what could pass for an environmental manifesto.

Hope begins her environmental musings by contrasting North America and England, personifying trees to support the former’s supremacy over the latter. She writes, “I hope you have not forgotten the autumnal brilliance of our woods. They say the foliage in England has a paler sickly hue, but for our western world—nature’s youngest child—she has reserved her many-coloured robe, the brightest and most beautiful of her garments” (99). Hope personifies the forests to effectively remind Everell of what he is missing: youthful color and vibrance. The world he lives in now is staid and sickly; England represents all that is old and used up, whereas America represents the future, a world of newness and health. Hope conveys the contrast between England and North America through the trees and their seasonal changes, a figure of speech that mingles culture and nature. She continues to merge the two when she highlights the forest’s wealth: “Last week the woods were as green as an emerald, and now they look as if all the summer-spirits had been wreathing them with flowers of the richest and most brilliant dyes” (99). Regardless of the season, the forests represent wealth and beauty. Hope finds the forest’s aesthetically pleasing regardless of season, helping support the idea that trees

have innate value whether humans find a use for them or not. Hope reinforces the relationship between trees and human values, helping merge nature and culture.

When Hope launches into a critique of philosophy and science, readers are offered a proto-environmental argument that relies on aesthetic value and, ultimately, culture. With her usual wry humor, Hope writes,

Philosophers may inquire into the process of nature, and find out, if they can, how such sudden [seasonal] changes are produced, though, after all, I fancy their inquiries will turn out like the experiment of the inquisitive boy, who cut open the drum to find the sound; but I love to lend my imagination to poets' dreams, and to fancy nature has her myriads of little spirits, who

“do wander every where,  
Swifter than the moone's sphere.”

He must have a torpid imagination, and a cold heart, I think, who does not fancy these vast forests filled with invisible intelligences. (99-100)<sup>2</sup>

While Hankins argues that Hope's “Romanticism anxiously circles around the white settlers' secondhand knowledge of natural law via a nostalgic pathos for a mythic time when natural law was the law of the land” (n.p.), I argue that Sedgwick has Hope demonstrate how white settlers could reunite culture and nature. Rather than suggest that white settlers should adopt a native perspective—a leap that Sedgwick demonstrates is likely impossible throughout the book—she has Hope illustrate how English immigrants can integrate their culture and the natural world. First, she suggests that people can leave the natural world alone; trees will continue growing, and changing with the seasons, whether or not humans know why. Then she connects a piece of white culture—a Shakespeare play—to nature, modeling how nature informs culture even as culture

informs how people understand nature. She ends on a spiritual/imaginative note, helping display how reuniting nature and culture can help people better understand their world.

Hope's Shakespearean allusion helps her meld nature and culture, but the allusion also situates the novel in a transatlantic context, connecting Sedgwick's deeply American novel to British counterparts. While few have tackled Sedgwick's engagement with Shakespeare, Margaret R. Higonnet analyzes some of the allusions in *Hope Leslie* and argues that they are included "in order to weigh contesting and contradictory kinds and narratives of love" and allow Sedgwick to examine "the hold of these literary forms on the disempowered, whose deceptive insertion as subjects into those narratives turns them ironically into social objects" (21), while Maria Lamonaca argues that, on the one hand, Sedgwick's allusions act as class marker, as only "the mistress of a comfortable, well-staffed household would have" the leisure time to read Shakespeare, and, on the other, "as a means of empowerment," as well-educated women could "effect social reform through their fathers, brothers and husbands" (247). Still, Hope's way of connecting to the environment through literature ties her closely with other English women like Austen's Fanny Price, who repeatedly quotes poetry to help her make sense of her environment or the destruction wrought on that environment. Indeed, given Hope's penchant for using literature to defend the natural world, it is likely that she and Fanny Price would be fast friends, a transatlantic connection that helps display how women during the early nineteenth century situated the environment and uncovers the roots of modern ecofeminism.

Even when Hope is situated far from relatively settled areas, she still manages to unite culture and the forests. Rather than experiencing fear or disorientation when she scales a mountain with Mr. Fletcher and other Puritan men, she writes that “‘My senses were enchanted on that high place. I listened to the mighty sound that rose from the forest depths of the abyss, like the roar of the distant ocean, and to the gentler voices of nature, bourne on the invisible waves of air’” (101). Hope sees the natural world as a welcoming, beautiful place. She is almost never frightened of the forests, despite her incredibly violent introduction to the Fletcher homestead. Rather than adopting the alienated perspective of her fellow Puritans, Hope uses culture to forge her own way, finding in nature beautiful elements that she translates through literature, song, and art.

Hope’s relationship to the woods shares more with Everell and Magawsica, a chain of influence that she acknowledges. Conversing with Mr. Fletcher, she “‘repeat[s] what I had often heard you, Everell, say, that Magawisca believed the mountain and the valley, the air, the trees, every little rivulet, had their present invisible spirit—and that the good might hold discourse with them’” (107). Hankins critiques the sense that “Hope is more receptive to Indian naturalism than Magawisca is to English domesticity” (n.p.), but in Sedgwick’s hands, Hope has more to learn from Magawisca than the latter does from the former. Hope has never directly met Magawisca at this point, but the two women remain connected through Everell and the trio’s relationship to the natural world. Furthermore, Hope admits that Magawisca has the strongest bond; rather than consciously connecting to the natural world, and translating each interaction through a piece of culture, Magawsica’s culture is nature; there is no divide that the Native

American needs to overcome. Hope does her best to emulate Magawisca, but she will always have a little extra distance between herself and the trees. The distance closes, though, when Hope is shaken out of her routine.

During moments of emotional distress, Hope receives messages from trees, reasserting the idea that culture and nature are intertwined. After learning that Nelema, who Hope indirectly caused to be unjustly jailed, has escaped, Hope has a dream that she relates to Everell: “‘‘Methought I stood, with the old woman, beneath the elm tree, at the end of Mr. Pynchon’s gardens; the moon, through an opening of the branches, shone brightly on her face—it was wet with tears’’” (112-113). Classically, elms are associated with death, memorializing those who have passed,<sup>3</sup> but in this case, the dream presages a reunion between Hope and her lost sister Faith. The darkness of the dream, and the specificity of the tree, encourages readers to question the dream and to worry about what will happen if Hope does encounter her sister again. The tree seems to be warning her, and if she had fully integrated nature and culture, she might be prepared for her failed meeting with her sister. Redeeming her sister from captivity is a vain dream, indeed, as her sister is happily married to Magawisca’s brother and content with her life. Hope ignores the tree, favoring instead the old woman’s promise to return her sister to her.

When Hope meets Magawisca secretly, hoping to reclaim her sister who has been living with Magawisca’s tribe for the preceding seven years, a tree again presides over the scene. As she approaches the meeting place, she is filled with “disappointment that her sister was not there—and awe inspired by the solemnity of the scene before her—the spirit-stirring figure of Magawisca—the duty she was performing—the flickering light—

the monumental stones—and the dark shadows that swept over them, as the breeze bowed the tall pines” (187). Magawisca appears almost mythical, a superhuman figure who controls the natural world and commands immense respect and awe. The pine trees seem to bow before her, acknowledging her as more powerful, even as darkness seems to cloak her, protecting her from sight. The bowing pine trees only increase Hope’s awe, but she, again, does not pay them much mind. Should she see a warning in the bowing trees? Or encouragement? Because she once again avoids connecting culture and nature, she ignores both possibilities, which only distances her from the natural world.

Later, Hope finds comfort in a tree after she acts rashly, suggesting that she has learned how to listen to nature when she experiences intense feelings. In the middle of an emotional conversation with Everell, “The truth flashed on Hope; she was beloved—she loved again—and she had rashly dashed away the happiness within her grasp. Her head became dizzy; she stopped, and gathering her veil over her face, she leaned against a tree for support” (221). As the realization that she has thrown away her future happiness washes over her, she connects with a tree, finding some comfort from the connection. While she does not translate the experience through culture, considering the scene’s artistic merit or reciting an appropriate quote from Shakespeare, the scene still reveals the extent to which she has managed to integrate nature into her life. The divide that kept her from paying attention to trees during earlier moments of emotional distress has all but vanished; now she sees trees as companions, friends who can help her as she processes what she has lost. In the end, of course, Hope’s method of combining nature and culture



does not take root and spread. Puritans throughout the book instead remain alienated from the natural world and maintain that trees and culture are utterly separate.

*Violent Opposition: White Settlers Upholding the Nature/Culture Divide*

When the minister Samuel Danforth delivered his election sermon in May 1670, he reminded colonists that they had transported “your selves with your Wives, Little Ones and Substance over the vast Ocean into this waste and howling Wilderness” to pursue liberty and religious freedom (9-10). Sedgwick recycles this phrase, anachronistically, in *Hope Leslie*, pointing out that the Fletcher homestead marks “the habitation of civilized man; but all else was a savage howling wilderness” (18). Sedgwick draws upon Puritan language to help convey the extent to which white settlers separate nature and culture, thereby alienating themselves from their surroundings. While Sedgwick’s young people identify with nature, though Everell builds his relationship upon familiarity while Hope builds hers upon mediated aesthetic experiences, and attempt to build a community that includes English settlers, Native Americans, and the forests, the novel’s Puritan characters, particularly Mrs. Fletcher and Digby, display an abiding fear of the “howling wilderness” that surrounds them and work hard to establish a community that separates rather than unifies. Sedgwick’s bifurcated depiction enables readers to consider their relationship to the natural world and how history has influenced that relationship, a construction that helps her audience ponder how they can change their culture to one that is more inclusive.

British settlement of the New England area displays the extent to which Puritan settlers adhered to—if not depended upon—maintaining a nature/culture binary.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) reminds us that “The invasion of North America by European peoples has been portrayed in history and literature as a benign movement directed by God, a movement of moral courage and physical endurance, a victory for all humanity” (29), and most modern histories fail to question the European invasion of North America. Indeed, Eric Rutkow writes that the “initial English efforts to colonize America depended” on their desire “to secure timber” so they could construct “the great naval fleet” that enabled them to spread around the globe (5).<sup>4</sup> From the beginning, England followed a colonial path rather different from its European neighbors. While Spain and Portugal used enslaved native people to extract resources, English colonial leaders like Richard Hakluyt endorsed populating North America with “transplanted Englishmen,” thereby extracting resources and utilizing the vast population of unemployed men currently raising hell in England (Rutkow 12). Hakluyt’s only way to persuade English rulers to colonize North America was to “translate into economic and political terms a majestic wooded landscape that Europeans could hardly comprehend” (Rutkow 15). Thus, when Rutkow writes that “Americans interact with trees that have been circumscribed, commoditized” (6), he implies that the white settlers saw no other option and that no one attempted to alter the general national character.<sup>5</sup> However, Sedgwick’s work shows that the commodification of trees was not a foregone conclusion and that many, from the very first years of the country’s existence, tried to convince citizens to reconsider their relationship to trees and the natural world more generally.

When the Massachusetts colony was still being established, trees played a particularly important religious role, suggesting that there is no mandate that the Puritans insist upon the nature/culture binary. One citizen of the Puritan colony tells a new arrival that “I can remember...for I was among the first comers to the wilderness, when for weeks the congregation met under an oak tree: and there was heart-worship there, gentlemen, if there ever was on the ball” (128). Sedgwick argues that the current extreme estrangement between white settlers and the natural world is new, thus suggesting that, with some effort, the colonists could reconnect to their surroundings. The oak also recalls Revolutionary-era Liberty Poles, though the fact the tree is one associated with England rather than an elm or pine highlights the transatlantic connections that drove the establishment of New England. The oak thus becomes a conflicted emblem of the colony’s initial nearness to nature and to England; the people and their political ideals may have evolved during the decades since the colony has been established, but their roots are literally in England.

Sedgwick further complicates the gulf between Puritans and the natural world when she describes the Fletcher farm. Readers are told that “The house of our pilgrim was a low-roofed modest structure, containing ample accommodation for a patriarchal family; where children, dependents, and servants were all to be sheltered under one roof-tree” (18). The author expands the Fletcher homestead to include nature and humans; the Puritan inhabitants may only see the white settlers as being sheltered under the “roof-tree,” but Sedgwick introduces an image that helps readers reconsider the nature/culture binary. Considering the roof a tree shifts how readers understand the frontier farm,

enabling them to question the strict boundaries placed between the human and nonhuman.

Furthermore, Everell draws attention to the relationship between Puritans and their surroundings when he is preparing for his father's return, furthering the sense that even trees are part of the Fletcher community. He tells his mother, "'Let us all go on the front portico where we can catch the first glimpse of them, as they come past the elm-trees'" (60). Just as the family gathers to celebrate the return of the patriarch, the trees seem prepared to welcome home Mr. Fletcher. Of course, the scene is not entirely joyful; in fact, Everell's suggestion invites readers to dread turning the page, as everyone braces from Mononotto's surprise attack on the settlement. The very trees that in Everell's words seem to welcome his father home hide the people who attack the settlement and then hide the bloodshed from Mr. Fletcher as he approaches. In the end, Everell's suggestion feels like too little, too late. Violence is upon him and his family and attempting to reconnect his family to the forest cannot stop the attack.

White settlers divide themselves from the natural world and Sedgwick shows how that approach influences their lives and, most importantly, their religion. The narrator describes the settlers, "An exiled and suffering people," being chosen by God "to open the forest to the sun-beam, and to the light of the Sun of Righteousness" but also "to restore man—man oppressed and trampled on by his fellow; to religious and civil liberty, and equal rights—to replace the creatures of God on their natural level—to bring down the hills, and make smooth the rough places, which the pride and cruelty of man had wrought on the fair creation of the Father of all" (73). Her description highlights that

white settlers arrived in North America prepared to be divided from the natural world and now consider themselves well above nature; their religion primes them to consider themselves “improvers” of the natural world, a stance that makes it hard for them to understand the world outside of a nature/culture binary. To Puritans, immigration to the New World involves conquering it and stripping it of its resources; the narrator might disguise their economic intentions with religious language, but there is no hiding the fact that white settlers do not see themselves as part of their surroundings.

The narrator further highlights that, despite intense resource extraction, the settlers are not materially wealthy, demonstrating the exploitation that results from the nature/culture divide. The narrator first asks a series of rhetorical questions, helping readers consider what might have motivated English settlers, though the author’s swift answer forestalls any deep engagement with the questions. The narrator asks, “What was their reward? Fortune?—distinctions?—the sweet charities of home?” and, without a pause, responds, “No—but their feet were planted on the mount of vision, and they saw, with sublime joy, a multitude of people where the solitary savage roamed the forest—the forest vanished, and pleasant villages and busy cities appeared—the tangled foot-path expanded to the thronged high-way—the consecrated church planted on the rock of heathen sacrifice” (73). Sedgwick highlights how the settlements have expanded, but she also indicates the strong contrasts between white settlements and Native American ones. Her “before and after” scene features a population explosion, one that results in “thronged” roads and “busy cities,” as well as Christianity’s total domination. By deforesting New England, the settlers have conquered the area—driving out Native

Americans and severing any possible environmental connection. However, white settlers remain indebted to England, a connection that costs them dearly.

Sedgwick offers slightly exaggerated language, but Rutkow's description of white settlement supports her description. He summarizes the approach of most white settlers, writing that "Americans started as people frightened of the woods, transitioned into a nation that consumed these woods for profit—along the way turning the tree into a lifeless, deracinated object" (7). Indeed, even as "no other country was populated because of its trees quite like the United States" (7), Rutkow argues that early British settlers failed "to live up to their commercial obligations;" because they were sponsored by for-profit companies, they were required to ready trees (and tree products) for export (23). While the British colonies initially established trade with Spain and Portugal, and their colonies, and the wood products of New England formed an integral part of the infamous Atlantic slave trade (24-25), by the 1700s, England set about controlling their colony's trees more carefully: trees with diameters over two feet belonged to the Crown (25-26), a law that, much like the Stamp Act, only caused ill-will and violent rebellion (26-32). In all, anglophone settlers set to work deforesting New England for economic and defensive reasons and achieved their goal handily. Of course, early Americans did not just destroy the forests; they also destroyed native communities, massacring people and forest with similar indiscriminateness.

Sedgwick describes the Puritan settlement in a way that underscores just how unlikely it is that white settlers will manage to rethink their environmental approach. When the narrator describes Fletcher's home, readers are treated to a description that

displays the immense, economically based divide between Puritans and the natural world. The narrator tells readers that “The beautiful hill that is now the residence of the gentry (for there yet lives such a class in the heart of our democratic community) and is embellished with stately edifices and expensive pleasure-grounds, was then the border of a dense forest, and so richly fringed with the original growth of trees, that scarce a sun-beam had penetrated to the parent earth” (17). The narrator first draws the reader’s attention to the historical outcome of the struggle between Puritans and Native Americans: whites settled the area, “winning” the battle and gaining cultural supremacy. However, the narrator clearly questions the culture that has supplanted Native Americans. A nation ostensibly established on the grounds of democracy still has all the symbols, particularly the economic ones, of a hierarchical society and nature serves as no more than a decorative border. Even as Sedgwick asks readers to “think both historically and presently” about the setting, thus creating a “cross-temporal community, a simultaneity among historical periods” (Insko 190), she asks them to think environmentally. How do people in the “present” continue the Puritan’s methods of interacting with the natural world? Sedgwick’s description of the Fletcher homestead suggests that the natural world remains sidelined, less important than various economic goals and that American culture continues to be fearful of a community that involves both trees and people.

Indeed, Sedgwick emphasizes the cultural debt the Puritan community owes England. When she writes that “The grounds about Mrs. Fletcher’s house had been prepared with the neatness of English taste” (61), a description jarringly out-of-place considering the frontier setting, readers begin to see how thoroughly immigrants are

working to recreate England in North America. Sedgwick's reference to English landscape practices echoes Jane Austen's environmental argument in *Mansfield Park*. Both women link landscape practices and female characters, highlighting that nature and women are similarly controlled. The author's comment enables readers to ask a pair of questions: to what extent is Mrs. Fletcher subjugated by her husband and how does her subjugation mirror the subjugation of the natural world? Sedgwick craftily leaves the answer to these questions up to her readers, and many have concluded that Sedgwick renders "colonial women—rather than the Puritan fathers—as America in embryo" (Inkso 190). That is, the male Puritan characters are closely aligned with English control while women like Hope, Martha Winthrop, and even perhaps Mrs. Fletcher are aligned with the values of the American Revolution. Sedgwick thus builds a community across time, linking Puritan women to Revolutionary War-era women to the women of "today," establishing an immense community that should reconsider how they interact with the natural world—and how men have influenced their approach to the environment.

Much like Cooper, who set *The Pioneers* in a bucolic valley full of agricultural industry, Sedgwick ensures that readers understand the "civilizing" effects of the settlers, though she does not include the same degree of environmental violence. While Cooper emphasized settlers' wastefulness and the ugly environment they foster, Sedgwick offers less detail, highlighting the living trees without emphasizing the destroyed forests. Sedgwick has Fletcher situate his homestead away from the Puritan's budding urban center, and the narrator emphasizes how he has "civilized" the area: "The border of the river was fringed with all the water-loving trees; but the broad meadows were quite



cleared, excepting that a few elms and sycamores had been spared by the Indians, and consecrated, by tradition, as the scene of revels or councils” (17-18). Oddly, Sedgwick makes it nearly impossible to tell what Fletcher has done and what Native Americans had accomplished before he settled in the clearing. However, the author’s careful cultivation of confusion underscores her point: native people had been tending the land, forming a strong inter-species community, for centuries before white settlers arrived and co-opted the land. The scene is beset by precariousness: water-loving trees merely “fringe” the river while a few isolated, if spiritually meaningful, trees manage to survive, threatened by European property laws. Nevertheless, while Fletcher attempts to control the wilderness around his homestead, he is, like Hawthorne’s Young Goodman Brown, beset by wilderness on all sides.

Some Puritans use trees to emphasize the wilderness’s dangers, indicating their concerns about an inclusive community that includes more than just English settlers. Indeed, Mrs. Fletcher typifies the consequences of dividing nature and culture. Rather than trying to make a home alongside the natural world, and among the people who already live there, she seeks to conquer and control. Mrs. Fletcher writes to her husband about Everell’s growing attachment to Magawisca and uses a plant-based metaphor to explain her concerns: ““Two young plants that have sprung up in close neighbourhood, may be separated while young; but if disjoined after their fibers are all intertwined, one, or perchance both, may perish”” (33). While Mrs. Fletcher’s metaphor does not explicitly use trees, it still demonstrates her concerns about mixing races and mingling humans and nonhumans. To her mind, her son is in imminent danger, and the only solution is to

remove Magawisca, the Native American “element” in order to “preserve” her son. While Everell’s mother uses a metaphor that implies she is a close observer of the natural world, her very vagueness indicates her alienation. Which plants does she mean? Why refer to their “fibers” rather than their roots? Indeed, Mrs. Fletcher’s analogy raises more questions than it ought to, encouraging readers to question her motives (why separate Everell and Magawisca, when the latter is clearly a morally upstanding young woman?) and her environmental relationship.

Furthermore, Mrs. Fletcher fears nature’s influence, a fear that betrays her deep, Puritanical divide from the natural world. She tells her husband that ““My womanish apprehensions had a hard struggle with my duty, so terrific was the hideous howling of the wolves, mingling with the blasts that swept through the forest; but I stilled my beating heart with the thought, that my children leant on me, and I must not betray my weakness”” (31). Mrs. Fletcher sees nothing valuable in the natural world; instead, it is a source of constant spiritual trial and violence. Like Mary Rowlandson before her, the forest challenges her faith and her body, forcing her to confront her weaknesses and giving her more reason to isolate herself from her natural surroundings.

Perhaps most frightening to Mrs. Fletcher is how trees “use” people to influence others and thus infiltrate Puritan settlements. Magawisca confounds Mrs. Fletcher with her ability to flourish in “civilization” and in the woods. She writes that ““I have, sometimes, marveled at the providence of God, in bestowing on this child of the forest, such rare gifts of mind, and other and outward beauties”” (32). To Mrs. Fletcher, Magawisca’s ability to combine the best of native and white society makes her vaguely

suspect. Why would God create people who blur the boundaries between English and Native American? Why would God blur the line between nature and culture? She cannot answer these questions, but more importantly Magawisca's presence starts to interfere with her faith. She implies that their son sees Magawisca almost like an idol, as "He bringeth home the treasures of the woods to please her—berries, and wild flowers, and the beautiful plumage of birds that are brought down by his unerring aim. Everell hath much advantage from the wood-craft of Oneco: the two boys daily enrich our table, which, in truth, hath need of such helps, with the spoils of the air and water" (34). She can acknowledge that the forest provides for her family, but she also fears its presence and influence. Her son can learn from it, and from the people who are closest to it, but he may also become too close to nature and lose his way. She is unsure about how to navigate this fine line, particularly since her survival in part depends on her son understanding how to hunt and gather in the forest, so she regards Magawisca, Oneco, and the forest with equal suspicion.

Sedgwick twists Mrs. Fletcher's suspicion into paranoia about racial violence, a turn that displays how white settlers could so easily commit heinous acts of violence. Mrs. Fletcher tells her husband that "There hath been some alarm here within the last few days, on account of certain Indians who have been seen lurking in the woods around us" (34). The trees shelter and encourage the native people, enabling them to hide their plans and potentially launch attacks against white settlements. At first glance, Mrs. Fletcher's experience undermines Sedgwick's proto-environmental argument. Her fears are realized, and she is destroyed. However, Mrs. Fletcher's life paradoxically supports

Sedgwick's point. The Puritan matriarch is so divided from nature and so enmeshed in English culture that she cannot connect to the world around her. She fears everything, which drives a wedge between her and North America, rendering her unable to see native people as fellow humans and trees as equal members of her community. In the end, Mrs. Fletcher can respect the forest for what it provides white people, even as she fears the relationship native people have with it. When she sees Everell "passing the window, flushed with exercise and triumphantly displaying a string of game that he had just brought from the forest," she tells the native woman who is trying to warn her about impending violence, "'Is there not sunshine in my boy's face! To him every day is bright, and every path is smooth'" (37). The forest provides Mrs. Fletcher with food and the basic elements of shelter, but it is only useful insofar as it accommodates human needs and so long as her son can tame it. She cannot relate to the forest except through domination. If white settlers control the forest, then it is an acceptable place that can provide useful resources. When white settlers do not control the forest, it is a frightening source of violence. For Mrs. Fletcher, there is no middle ground and there is no way for her to integrate the natural world into her life positively.

Mrs. Fletcher's environmental perspective reflects Puritan values, which readers do not fully grasp until after she dies, and Hope begins troubling the line between nature and culture. Other woman settlers betray Mrs. Fletcher's resistance to the natural world, causing themselves much grief and pain. When Hope offers one of her typical culture-heavy tree similes to describe her friend Esther, she evokes a tension that primes readers to worry about Esther. She tells Esther to "'Raise up your eyes and look at me...and do

not let those long eye-lashes droop over your pale check, like a weeping willow over the monumental marble” (134). Sedgwick builds the tension partially through allusion.

Shakespeare, for instance, frequently ties ill-fated women, like Desdemona and Ophelia,

to willow trees. Willows have myriad associations, from forsaken love to rebirth/death,

witchcraft, and (human) sacrifice (Syme 29), and Sedgwick draws on all these

associations to highlight (and foreshadow) Esther’s emotional situation. The willow tree

becomes a potent symbol of all that Esther does and could do. Hopelessly in love with

Everell, Esther spends the novel oscillating between silent suffering as she admires

Everell from afar, embarrassed public acknowledgement when her love for Everell

becomes known, and ultimately willing sacrifice as she removes herself from the love

triangle involving Hope, Everell, and herself.<sup>6</sup> Sedgwick helps her readers anticipate

Esther’s narrative arc through the willow tree, thus hinting at what could be (that Esther

refuses to commit suicide is something of a miracle, given her mistreatment and

positioning as a tragic heroine) and anticipating what happens (Esther’s embrace of

spinsterhood, which is positioned as a “willing” sacrifice). While Hope seeks to use the

willow tree to draw herself and Esther closer, repairing the community between the two

young women, she inadvertently pushes Esther away. Hope’s allusion to the willow is not

the only time a tree emotionally compromises Esther.

Digby occupies a liminal space between Puritanical nature/culture division and

native nature/culture integration. The difficulty of his position frequently emerges in

unclear metaphors that sow confusion rather than environmental or cultural healing. At

one of the low points of the relationship between Esther and Everell, Digby attempts to

use a tree metaphor to hint at a potential wedding, but rather than spreading cheer, as he expects to, he spreads emotional pain. He jovially winks at the relationship between Everell and Hope, proclaiming, ““The tree follows the bent of the twig; what think you, Miss Esther, is not there a wedding a brewing?”” (215). Digby uses a tree comparison positively; he seeks to encourage a marriage that he has supported from the first. For readers (and Esther), though, the metaphor sparks concern. Readers immediately wonder who is following which tree. If Esther is following the bent of her twig, then her removal—perhaps even death—seems imminent, as her absence would make a wedding between Everell and Hope much more likely. If Everell is following the bent of his twig, will he marry Hope, as Digby and his father expect? Or will he marry Magawisca, as Sedgwick hints is possible? What of Hope? The leaders of the Puritan settlement want her to marry someone who will settle her and make her into a model Puritan woman, and she has repeatedly, though accidentally, distanced herself from Everell. Part of why Digby’s metaphor is so ineffective (and, indeed, wounding) is its vagueness. He believes he is referencing Everell and Hope, but he could be talking about anyone and each reader (or listener, in Esther’s case) projects their own sense of who he is describing. However readers understand the figure of speech, Sedgwick makes it clear that Digby’s metaphor, which mingles humans and trees in a way that typically works for Magawisca, Everell, and Hope, divides the community, breaking people apart and furthering the divide between humans and therefore maintaining the culture/nature binary.

The uncomfortable tree analogies used by various English settlers only highlights the fact that Puritan culture has divided itself from the natural world. However, the

Puritans are not as separate from nature as they like to claim. The narrator hints at the close relationship the English settlers could have, if they only strove for one. As the narrator describes the pilgrims that settle in Massachusetts, readers are told that they had abandoned their homes, “consecrated by parental love, by the innocence and sports of childhood, by the first acquaintance with nature,” where “there is a living and breathing spirit infused into nature: every familiar object has a history—the trees have tongues, and the very air is vocal” (18). The image of trees having tongues is an additional Shakespearean reference; in *As You Like It*, the duke observes that now that he and his companions are free in the forest they are “exempt from public haunt, / Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything” (2.1.562-564). Combining allusion and personification enables Sedgwick to showcase how familiarity helps people build community; whatever surrounds a person becomes part of their life and they naturally work harder to defend and support the familiar. In one phrase, Sedgwick both explains why Puritans became alienated—the new environment they encountered when they arrived in North America was so foreign that they were unable to see it as part of their community—while also criticizing their subsequent actions. The unfamiliar environment of New England started as alien, but those who lived there—and those who were born there—should have reasserted the bonds that unite human and nonhuman. By associating the personification with childhood, Sedgwick makes her argument more palatable and relatable, ensuring that her readers take a moment to reflect on their own childhoods and the times they have considered trees companions and playmates.

Sedgwick does not merely hint at the issues with the Puritanical nature/culture divide. She explicitly addresses the violence that results from the binary, which helps readers question how the nature/culture divide functions in their present. The narrator comments that “Everell’s imagination, touched by the wand of feeling, presented a very different picture of those defenceless families of savages, pent in the recesses of their native forests, and there exterminated, not by superior natural force, but by the adventitious circumstances of arms, skill, and knowledge” (54). Everell, son of Puritan settlers and prospective leader of the colony, acknowledges that white settlers have very little to explain their might. Their local knowledge is clearly deficient and, what’s more, they refuse to learn about their local environment, preferring instead to import England into the New World. The fact that English settlers were able to massacre native people and steal their land has more to do with luck, cunning, and technologically advanced tools of violence. Sedgwick’s indictment connects the native people’s forested stronghold with English settlements, even as it hints at the cultural divide between the two sets of people. English settlers derive from a culture that divides nature and culture, and the resulting alienation has fostered technological advancements that give them an edge over nature, while native people have a culture that unites nature and culture, fostering a Romantic society that sees nature as part of its community and remains in tune with its spiritual side.



*Threatened and Displaced: Native American Nature/Culture Integration*

If the novel's Puritan characters emblemize the consequences of dividing nature and culture, the Native American characters offer a window onto a world that unites the two. While Sedgwick does not position her native characters as innocent, "noble savages" who passively accept white violence, she also carefully shows that every act of native violence is the result of white violence, displaying how white settlers and their nature/culture divide destroy and displace native communities through deforestation. Even from deep within their forest stronghold, native people are beset, constantly under attack. Sedgwick captures the conflicting associations native people have with the forests, helping readers understand the extent of the damage white settlers cause.

Sedgwick displays Native American communities as deeply connected to their natural surroundings, demonstrating how they unite nature and culture. However, she utilizes a western power dynamic that only partially captures how many native tribes understand the natural world so her audience understands her point, highlighting the relatively peaceful co-existence Native Americans have with the natural world and claiming that "The savage was rather the vassal, than the master; obeying her laws, but never usurping her dominion" (83). The author attempts to put the Native American environmental relationship into terms that Europeans would understand. She situates the relationship in terms of power but highlights the fact that indigenous people do not try to control the natural world. Instead, they follow its guidance, forming a strong, interdependent community that, to a white settler, might most closely resemble feudal Europe. Sedgwick emphasizes power and control, which enables her to appeal to her

primarily white audience. However, American Indians do not see their relationship with the natural world as one framed by power.

In general, American Indian cultures emphasize connectedness, thus helping individuals see how they are connected to everything and everyone that surrounds them. Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) summarizes native culture as an attempt to “bring the isolated, private self into harmony and balance with” what she calls “reality” (242). Native culture thus acknowledges “the essential harmony of all things and see[s] all things as being of equal value in the scheme of things, denying the opposition, dualism, and isolation...that characterizes non-Indian thought” (Allen 243). As she points out, because native peoples do not divide human and nonhuman, power dynamics do not exist as they do in European contexts; American Indian culture “discourages [them] from setting themselves up as potentates, tyrants, dictators, or leaders of any other kind” (Allen 254). Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) writes that for native people (she uses her own Pueblo as her example), “everything became a story” (268) and “the ancient Pueblo people could not conceive of themselves without a specific landscape” (269). For many native people, there is no divide between nature and culture because the two are interdependent. Sedgwick understands the broad sweep of native culture, but she also characterizes native characters and culture in terms that her predominately white audience understand. Ultimately, she shows that native culture cannot be assimilated; merging native and white cultures would destroy the former and, in all likelihood, have no effect on the latter.

Sedgwick uses trees as a specific emblem of the integrated community indigenous people have built. She suggests that the Native American “did not presume to hew down her trees, the proud crest of her uplands, and convert them into ‘russet lawns and fallows grey.’ The axman’s stroke, that music to the *settler’s* ear, never then violated the peace of nature, or made discord in her music” (83, emphasis original). She suggests that there is little dividing the indigenous people from their natural environment; rather than seeking to control and rule the land, they live alongside it, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that means both human and natural world are supported and thriving. Most importantly, Sedgwick contrasts how trees are treated. She argues that the native people do not glory in destroying the forests; instead, they consider the trees fellow living beings and protect that which cannot protect itself. Broadly speaking, Sedgwick’s characterization is accurate; Allen writes that American Indian communities are “not made up only of members of the tribe but necessarily [include] all beings that inhabit the tribe’s universe” (249), showing that the nature/culture divide integral to western culture is anathema to native communities.

The native people’s willingness to meld nature and culture means they can easily travel through the wilderness, making the forest a safe haven, while the white settlers, who reject any sense of fellowship with trees, consider the forest unnavigable and highly dangerous. The narrator directly contrasts white settlers and Native Americans, telling readers that Mononotto and his party are able to escape the settlers because of “their sagacity in traversing the forest; they knew how to wind around morasses, to shape their course to the margin of the rivulets, and to penetrate defiles, while their pursuers,

unpratised in that accurate observation of nature, by which the savage was guided, were clambering over mountains, arrested by precipices, or half buried in swamps” (73-74). Mononotto’s band know the forest and can travel through it safely; it is their home and they are comfortable there. Furthermore, they do not try to control or master it. The narrator highlights how the native people adapt to the land, learning from it rather than changing it. In contrast, the Puritan settlers are clumsy; they pay no mind to what surrounds them, content to be estranged from their natural surroundings and, as a result, cannot travel easily through the forest. Indeed, the white settlers acknowledge that they do not have sufficient local knowledge to pursue Mononotto. As they debate how they can pursue those taken from the destroyed Fletcher homestead, one man tells the assembled men that the Pequots ““thread the forest as handily as my good woman threads her needle; and for us to pursue them, is as vain a thing as for my old chimney-corner cat to chase a catamount through the woods”” (78). The white settlers relate the natural world back to their own communities, furthering their estrangement. Rather than approaching the forest on its own terms and learning from it, they try to force the forest to fit their expectations and use various anthropocentric similes to make sense of their surroundings. This approach contrasts sharply with the Pequot approach, and helps readers begin to see the evils of remaining estranged from the natural world.

As Native American characters traverse the forest, Sedgwick utilizes an authorial aside to mingle nature and culture. When Magawisca’s father and his band of warriors flee the Fletcher homestead after their attack, Sedgwick elides their progress, writing that she will not describe the party’s progress because “Their sagacity in traversing their

native forests; their skill in following and eluding an enemy, and all their politic devices, have been so well described in a recent popular work, that their usages have become familiar as household words, and nothing remains but to shelter defects of skill and knowledge under the veil of silence” (81). Scholars widely accept that Sedgwick is referencing Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* in this particular passage, but her lacuna forces readers to reflect on how their culture influences depictions of Native Americans and the natural world. Whether or not she could have described the path Mononotto takes through the forests, she refuses, requiring her readers to consult other texts or imagine the journey on their own. Whether she wants readers to consult culture or nature, Sedgwick’s gap successfully mingles nature and culture, helping her readers see how the two inform one another and helping them practice relating the two.

Sedgwick connects Mononotto’s seventeenth-century retreat through the forest to nineteenth-century travel, enabling readers to ponder how Puritans continue to influence American culture. She writes that Mononotto and his fellows “threaded the forest with as little apparent uncertainty as to their path, as is now felt by travellers who pass through the same still romantic country, in a stage-coach and on a broad turnpike. As they receded from the Connecticut, the pine levels disappeared; the country was broken into hills, and rose into high mountains” (81). Throughout the novel, Sedgwick mingles time periods alongside nature and culture, crafting a world where time is not precisely linear, and people do not separate culture and the natural world. As Mononotto traverses the woods, the narrator erases boundaries, drawing nineteenth-century readers into the action and encouraging them to project their own local knowledge onto the seventeenth-century

action. The blurred boundaries further help readers reconsider their own culture and how it remains divided from the natural world and allows them to ponder how trees and forests might help them reunite nature and culture.

After her elision, Sedgwick explores how trees form a protective barrier between English settlers and native people. As Mononotto and his followers flee from the Fletcher homestead, they shelter one night in “a smooth grassy area, where they were screened and defended on the river-side by a natural rampart, formed of intersecting branches of willows, sycamores, and elms” (76). Much like Scott and Cooper, Sedgwick suggests that the forests harbor lawlessness and freedom in equal measure; her description echoes Cooper’s *chevaux de fries* from *The Pioneers*. Only in the forests, defended by trees that seem more like a castle’s fortifications, can native people feel truly free. But that freedom is fleeting; native people are pursued through the wilds, even as trees defend them. Sedgwick’s use of “rampart” drives home the sense that the native people are under attack, only safe when they retreat to the forest’s fortified safety. Sedgwick forces readers to ask, though, whether those who retreat to the forests are truly free. The trees do what they can to protect native people, but Sedgwick reveals how the trees shield danger and injustice in addition to freedom.

The very trees that protect and defend can also block and contain. Despite how easily native characters navigate the woods, white settlement has made the natural world a metaphorical—and occasionally literal—prison. Associating trees with captivity helps readers see how white violence has ruptured a culture that never placed nature and culture in opposition. When Mononotto rescues Magawisca and brings her, Everell, and the

others to a settlement, she is separated from the others and “conducted to a wigwam standing on that part of the plain on which [she] had first entered. It was completely enclosed on three sides by dwarf oaks” (88). Magawisca’s resting place is less a safe haven that enables her to remain in touch with a way of life that unites nature and culture, and more a delicate bulwark, with oak trees—that ancient symbol of Englishness—acting as a tenuous and fragile barrier against white settlers. Sedgwick situates Magawisca’s prison/fortress as a mirror for the situation of all Native Americans in the Northeast: metaphorically surrounded on all sides by English settlers, indigenous people are being funneled away from their ancestral lands, an act that, more often than not, destroys tribes and eliminates their culture.

Trees furthermore block the path Everell’s jailers take to the sacrifice rock. Magawisca watches “the procession [enter] the wood, and for a few moments, [disappear] from her sight—again they were visible, mounting the acclivity of the hill, by a winding narrow foot-path, shaded on either side by laurels” (91).<sup>7</sup> Magawisca can see where the path begins and she can see the destination, but trees hide the route between those two points. On the one hand, the trees certainly protect her. Entombed in her oak shelter, trees prevent her from experiencing the injustice that is Everell’s execution. On the other hand, the very trees that protect her also form a barrier, preventing her from stopping the injustice. Magawisca ultimately has to sidestep the trees that block her view, climbing the rockface rather than following the tree-lined path in order to reach Everell and prevent his execution. Whether the trees are protecting her from seeing Everell’s execution or are forming a blockade to prevent her from stopping the sacrifice, from her

tree-lined prison, Magawisca cannot help free Everell or get word to those who could save him; instead, she, like native people throughout the region, resorts to violence, drugging her human jailer. Her act of violence against her own people generates still more violence, recoiling on her spectacularly: her own father, taken by surprise, cuts off her arm as he tries to sacrifice Everell. Violence, and its legacy, emanates from white settlement, displaying how white intervention and environmental destruction has irreparably altered native culture and how native people understand and interact with their surroundings.

Magawisca's experience leading up to the sacrifice scene mirrors her experience of white violence, and trees link both. When Magawisca describes the white settlers and their attack on her village, she tells Everell that "Our fort and wigwams were encompassed with a palisade, formed of young trees, and branches interwoven and sharply pointed" (47). Sedgwick's description of the native village once again echoes Cooper, who described Natty Bumppo's home being protected by a pine tree *chevaux de frise*, as well as Scott's description of Cedric's wooden palisade, linking her novel to other historical fiction while also emphasizing, as her predecessors do, how certain people can use natural defenses to protect themselves. All three novels are further linked by the utter failure of their treed defenses; every wall of trees is conquered by the protagonists' enemies, suggesting that the violence of those who divide nature and culture is almost overwhelmingly strong. Trees cannot protect against those who have no connection to the natural world and who would rather destroy the forests.



When the British attack, they destroy the trees in addition to the tribe, embodying the nature/culture divide they adhere to so unwaveringly. Magawisca recalls that “‘All day we heard the strokes of the English axes felling the trees that defended us, and when night came, they had approached so near that we could see the glimmering of their watch-lights through the branches of the trees’” (52). Rather than find a peaceful solution or a path through the woods, the English cut their way through, literally cutting down the Native American’s symbol of nature/culture integration. The settler’s outrageous violence helps readers understand that massacres of native people and extreme resource extraction are connected: both result from the utter divide between the settlers and the natural world. The forest cannot withstand English violence and the settlers “‘burst through the enclosure. We saw nothing more, but we heard the shout from the foe, as they issued from the wood’” (52). Magawisca’s description of the English attack shows that the forests are not always safe, even as the trees function as a symbol of freedom throughout the novel. English violence can penetrate the forest’s heart, rendering the entire natural environment unsafe.

Indeed, English violence renders the forest more of a prison than a haven. Magawisca tells Everell that “‘The English had penetrated the forest-screen, and were already on the little rising-ground where we had been entrenched. Death was dealt freely. None resisted—not a movement was made—not a voice lifted—not a sound escaped, save the wailings of the dying children’” (53). With nowhere else to run, the native people are decimated. The English settlers destroy trees and humans alike, thus eliminating a way of life that integrates nature and culture and thus ensuring that no rival

cultural philosophies survive. Magawisca's experiences somehow do not shake her belief that nature and culture ought to be integrated, but other native characters make it clear that being displaced from their ancestral lands has severed their connection to the natural world.

White colonialism and deforestation, forces that for many Americans deliver civilization to a howling wilderness, cause immense suffering. Near the novel's beginning, Nelema, an elderly Native American woman who lives alone in the forest, tells Mrs. Fletcher that "I had sons too—and grandsons; but where are they? They trod the earth as lightly as [your son]; but they have fallen like our forest trees, before the stroke of the English axe. Of all my race, there is not one, now, in whose veins my blood runs" (37). Nelema uses language that emphasizes her destroyed community. White settlers did not just harm the natural world and they did not just scatter her tribe; they obliterated both. She likens her family's destruction to the forest's devastation; equating the two enables her to imply that both were destroyed for the same, primarily economic, motivations. The tree analogy helps her make her point and indicates the degree to which native peoples are being violently removed from their land for economic reasons.

Furthermore, native characters highlight how the white insistence on a nature/culture divide causes violence, which will, in the end, destroy the English settlers. Nelema highlights how settlers have broken her community, then describes how that violence will recoil: "When the stream of vengeance rolls over the land, the tender shoot must be broken, and the goodly tree uprooted, that gave us its pleasant shade and fruits to all" (37). Nelema's metaphor functions on two levels. Not only does she accurately

describe the way that violence begets further violence—a point that foreshadows the extreme violence perpetuated at the Fletcher homestead when Mononotto frees his son and daughter in response to his tribe’s decimation—but she also captures how the native way of life is destroyed and how that particular destruction will have far reaching consequences. As white settlers destroy Pequots, they further alienate themselves from the natural world, leading to the sort of world we see today: one marked by pollution, environmental catastrophe, and complete disregard for how human action changes the natural world. While Sedgwick obviously could not predict the environmental situation we have today, she certainly understands that environmental alienation has terrible consequences. The violence started by English colonists—the violence that destroyed Nelema’s family and culture—continues today, still destroying the tree that ought to protect and shelter us all.

While Nelema equates environmental destruction and her family’s destruction, other native people equate destroying trees with destroying white influence. When Magawisca questions a fellow tribesman, who killed her father’s friend Sassacus, the man uses a tree analogy to explain his violence. He tells her that “‘Sassacus was a strange tree in our forests; but he struck his root deep, and lifted his tall head above our loftiest branches, and cast his shadow over us; and I cut him down’” (26). The man’s analogy begs some questions. What made the slain man a “strange tree” and why did he need to be cut down? Did Magawisca’s companion remove some sort of canker when he killed Sassacus? Or did he merely copy the actions of white settlers and “deforest” a man who successfully led incursions against Puritan settlements? Perhaps the man was defending

the forest, and by extension the entire biotic community, from Sassacus—perhaps he employs the metaphor, then, to justify the murder. Sedgwick’s use of the analogy complicates the typical relationship between Native Americans and the natural world, showcasing how Europeans have shattered the tradition nature/culture unity of native people and therefore drastically changed their culture.

Native characters use trees to bridge the nature/culture divide, but they do not always do so optimistically. While Magawisca repeatedly connects herself to trees to highlight her hope, her father connects himself to trees for the opposite effect. When he conveys just how thoroughly his tribe has been destroyed and how hopeless the future looks, he relies almost entirely on trees to illustrate his point.<sup>8</sup> The scene begins with Mononotto regarding “a solitary pine, scathed and blasted by tempests, that rooted in the ground where he stood, [which] lifted its topmost branches to the bare rock, where they seemed, in their wild desolation, to brave the elemental fury that had stripped them of beauty and life” (83-84). Sedgwick describes a pine that embodies what has happened to North America. The white settlers came like a sudden bolt of lightning and destroyed most everything they could touch, leaving behind desolation and death. Sedgwick uses the tree to illustrate how European settlers have destroyed and scattered native people, but the pine also displays the incredible environmental devastation white settlers have wrought.

She also suggests that a community includes both humans and the natural world, and that both are equally harmed by environmental violence. Mononotto reflects that “The leafless tree was truly...a fit emblem of the chieftain of a ruined tribe” and tells his

daughter, ““See you, child, those unearthed roots? the tree must fall—hear you the death-song that wails through those blasted branches?”” (84). His statement neatly echoes Cedric’s alignment with dead or uprooted trees in *Ivanhoe*, an allusion that helps readers connect the doomed Saxon leader and the likewise doomed Native American. Mononotto’s declaration furthers the sense that trees and Pequot tribespeople are connected. Prolonged violence has uprooted the chieftain and the tree, ensuring that both vanish and leave behind a vacuum that white settlers can fill. Mononotto’s personification helps readers see how the man, like the tree, is doomed. Both are wailing their death-songs, Sedgwick suggests, doomed because white settlers are ravenously extracting the continent’s resources and killing all who stand in their way.

Sedgwick has Magawisca try to reroute her father’s melancholy reflections by drawing his attention to other natural elements, a move that helps emphasize the strength found in overcoming the nature/culture binary. She tells him, ““Nay, father, listen not to the sad strain; it is but the spirit of the tree mourning over its decay; rather turn thine ear to the glad song of this bright stream, image of the good. She nourishes the aged trees, and cherishes the tender flowerets, and her song is ever of happiness, till she reaches the great sea—image of our eternity”” (84). Magawisca does not only personify trees; she also projects humanlike qualities onto water. She strives to convey the fact that trees may not be the strongest symbol for her people. Trees, as her father and others have repeatedly pointed out, die or are cut down. Water is not subject to the same violence and has a degree of power unavailable to trees. She tries to replace her father’s trees with a new

image, maintaining the connection between culture and nature without highlighting violence or death.

Mononotto's pessimism cannot be relieved, though, which furthers the sense that white settlement and cultural dominancy has broken the connection native people have with the natural world. Mononotto refuses to accept his daughter's alternative symbolism, telling her, "Speak not to me of happiness, Magawisca; it has vanished with the smoke of our homes. I tell ye, the spirits of our race are gathered about this blasted tree" (84). The Pequot chieftain reasserts his earlier personification, furthering the sense that trees are an apt metaphor for people *because* they die. Indeed, Magawisca's desire to use water to represent her people is, at best, an idealistic one. Certainly by Sedgwick's time, New England mills had started polluting the rivers, destroying fish populations and doing irreparable damage to riparian ecosystems. In the end, Sedgwick characterizes people through their relationship to trees. Native people are linked to trees, helping readers better understand that violence against the natural environment impacts humans—and vice versa. Humans are not separate from their environments and trying to remove them or divide them from the natural world causes tremendous suffering.

Despite his fading connection to his culture, Mononotto still relies on trees to demonstrate white untrustworthiness. Mononotto concludes his speech by telling his daughter that "their promises are like this," and he snapped a dead branch from the pine beside which he stood, and broke it in fragments" (92). Mononotto reaffirms the connection between culture, and white cultural artefacts like treaties and laws, and the natural world. His point, though, is that white culture does not protect; it leads to

alienation. Using a tree to demonstrate his point enables Mononotto to fully show the cultural gulf between white settlers and native people while also helping readers understand the costs of living in a culture that divides nature and humans. So long as humans remain alienated from the natural world, they will support unjust political moves, destroy other humans who have cultures unlike their own, and disregard the environment; most any move they make will lead to disaster and death. Mononotto knows that his culture, which the English find abhorrent, is endangered and his use of a tree to demonstrate his point about English treaties drives home the fact that white culture depends on the nature/culture divide and will never be able to accommodate others who approach the world differently.

### *Conclusion*

Near the end of her novel, Sedgwick includes a Robert Burns epigram. She quotes the final lines from “My Tocher’s the Jewel,” a poem about a woman who realizes that the man courting her just wants her money:

Ye’re like to the trimmer o’ yon rotten wood,  
Ye’re like to the bark o’ yon rotten tree,  
Ye’ll slip frae me like a knotless thread,  
And ye’ll crack your credit wi’ mae nor me. (295)

*Hope Leslie* includes many transatlantic connections, but Sedgwick’s use of British literature helps frame her proto-environmental argument. Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) reminds scholars that “the significance of a literature can be best understood in terms of the culture from which it springs, and the purpose of literature is clear only when

the reader understands and accepts the assumptions on which the literature is based” (241). Explicating how Sedgwick utilizes British literature helps readers understand how Americans divide nature and culture, creating a new nation that has more in common with its colonial history than any other culture. Critics like Judith Fetterley show that Sedgwick was deeply invested in helping create an American literature, one that set the new nation apart from all others and encouraged women writers in particular (491). What critics fail to note is how Sedgwick uses the nature/culture binary to complicate the uniqueness of America. America *could* be a new place and it *could* have a new culture, but rather than learning from the people that American citizens have displaced and massacred, citizens of the new nation maintain their predominately English cultural ways. Magawisca, Everell, and Hope Leslie try to offer alternative environmental relationships, thus showing the flaws in a nature/culture binary and seeking to reunite the two. That Magawisca ultimately flees white “civilization” and Hope and Everell marry shows just how difficult it is to escape the western paradigm. Magawisca cannot rescue white culture and understands that such a rescue is not her responsibility. White settlers have murdered her people, enslaved her, and broken every promise they have made. Hope and Everell suggest that given proper encouragement and education, white Americans could, possibly, overcome the nature/culture binary that enables them to rob and murder, but Magawisca does not have much hope. Modern stories like Disney’s *Pocahontas* suggest that her ultimate pessimism is justified.

Despite the various historical and cultural elements that *Pocahontas* gets wrong, the film does manage to convey the fact that native people integrate nature and culture.



Pocahontas sees no divide between nature and her culture. She consults a tree for advice, she uses a river to illustrate her sense that her life has various possibilities beyond her father's expectations that she marry well, and she attempts to help John Smith understand that while he divides nature and culture, she does not and can therefore understand the world around her. While the film does not convey Pocahontas's ability to mingle nature and culture with any complexity, it does manage to make an environmental argument that appeals to its audience. The film shows that "arriving settlers despoiled the forests and imposed their own version of civilization, whether or not it was wanted" but that Native Americans like Pocahontas can help them "free [themselves] of the moral constipation of European civilization" (Ebert). *Hope Leslie's* overall message follows a similar bent.

Magawisca remains a noble moral guide; she helps various white characters, and occasionally her fellow Pequots, remain connected to the natural world and to avoid dividing nature and culture. In general, most white-authored texts reinforce western stereotypes of Native Americans, situate white settlers as the appropriate guardians of North America, and closely associate indigenous characters with the natural world in an attempt to emphasize their innate nobility even as they suggest that both the natural world and native people are vanishing. What marks Sedgwick's novel as unusual is how she personifies trees to complicate the line between nature and culture. She displays an environmental ethic that asks readers to consider how their actions drastically change, and potentially harm, the natural world. Studying how Sedgwick utilizes trees to support her humanitarian argument opens her work to deeper ecocritical analysis, enabling

scholars to expand ecocriticism's canon and reconsider how early nineteenth-century texts combined humanitarian and environmental arguments.

My reading of *Hope Leslie* is primarily sympathetic. However, Sedgwick's complex novel invites less sympathetic readings that illustrate the author's cultural blind spots. For instance, Maureen Tuthill argues that, overall, the novel does more to support Indian Removal Acts than it does to help readers sympathize with Native Americans and that "Sedgwick's text transforms the American Indian from a living, breathing occupant of the soil into a poetic image that still resonates today in our national literary imagination" (96). Whether or not readers see the novel as fighting or upholding the status quo, Sedgwick undeniably influenced how Americans imagine Native Americans, particularly Native American women. Disney's attempt to commit Jamestown's history to film shows Magawisca's influence, even as the film displays the fact that to discuss North America's colonization is to also discuss its environmental history. While the film and the novel have good intentions, both reinforce western stereotypes of Native Americans, implicitly situate white settlers as the appropriate guardians of North America, and closely associate indigenous characters with the natural world to emphasize their innate nobility. However, both also personify trees, displaying an environmental ethic that asks readers and viewers to consider how their culture divides them from nature and how they can overcome that binary.

My next chapter returns to many of *Hope Leslie*'s concerns, but James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Pioneers* offers a different perspective, one grounded in the male experience and America's prolonged call to "civilize" North America. While *Hope Leslie*

was published four years after *The Pioneers*, it is set nearly two centuries before Cooper's text; the two novels have vastly different settings, though they come to nearly the same conclusion: white violence has doomed indigenous people and white and native cultures are irreconcilable. Furthermore, both novels strive to overcome the destructive nature/culture binary enshrined in western culture.

### *Notes*

1. As David Watson, among other scholars, points out, nineteenth-century writers favored "Pequod," but the accepted spelling now is "Pequot" (7). Whenever I quote Sedgwick, I use her language, but when I write my analysis, I use the modern, accepted spelling.
2. Sedgwick references *Midsummer's Night Dream*, highlighting a scene where fairies discuss traveling through the countryside (II.i.6-7). While Sedgwick's Shakespearean allusions are another example of her use of anachronism, as his plays were not widely read and reviewed till the mid-1600s, they once again work to unite disparate time periods, helping readers consider how to apply her Puritan-based observations to their own situations.
3. In the *Iliad*, an elm is planted on Andromache's father's tomb, but even more relevant is the Stygian Elm Aeneas encounters in the Underworld, a tree upon which vain dreams are said to roost (Richens 155). Classically, elms are associated with death and are an ill omen because their fruit is considered infertile—it bears no fruits "serviceable to man or animals" (Richens 155). Despite the elm's widespread association with death, there is also a strong strain of "paradisiac elms" (Richens 156). Shakespeare employs this valence

when Titania uses an elm simile to highlight Nick Bottom's masculinity in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*: "...the female ivy so / Enrings the barky fingers of the elm" (IV.i.48-49). Traditionally, vines were grown in conjunction with elms, and authors use the tree "as a symbol of married or free love" (Richens 156).

4. As deeply appreciative as I am for Rutkow's book, which to my knowledge remains the first and only text to treat "America's trees in all their dimensions as a subject for historical study," his work includes many of the typical problems of new research. His perspective tends to stress white men, creating a myopic view. For instance, in his introduction, he cites the "personal drama" that led to various milestones in the country's environmental history, listing those whose "drama" propel his history: the Sons of Liberty, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Chapman, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, J. Sterling Morton, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin Roosevelt (8). "Each man's story tells a small fragment of a much larger tale" (8), but how much more of that story could we hear if we included the stories of Black men and women and American Indians? My project offers a white woman's take on the nation's environmental history, but even that addition adds only a tiny fragment to the overall story.

5. Rutkow does admit that "nowhere else has the culture been so intimately associated with wood," though he does not significantly develop this argument. He seems to conflate culture with politics or perhaps population growth, but he does not analyze how the country's literature and arts position trees. However, Thomas Hallock does examine the cultural side, examining literary and rhetorical histories to argue that United States of America is deeply indebted to its trees. He shows that the people had to make sense of

their surroundings and therefore the nation's early literature "often take[s] unexpected—on the surface contradictory—turns" as settlers "grapple with the paradoxes of expansion" (4). Hallock's argument is indispensable, but his timetable makes it a complicated fit: he begins his study longer with literature published almost 100 years after *Hope Leslie*'s setting and concludes with James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*—published a year before *Hope Leslie*. My examination helps add to Hallock's study of Early American literature, but we do not tread the same ground.

6. Magawisca presents a third marriage possibility for Everell, as Mrs. Fletcher notes. However, much as Scott's Jewish heroine Rebecca is never taken seriously as a romantic option for Wilfred, Magawisca is never seriously in contention for Everell's hand. Indeed, if Sedgwick's hero married the Native American "princess," her book likely would have faced the same criticisms as Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok*, which was, in one review's words, "in very bad taste...and leaves upon the mind a disagreeable impression" ("Recent" 87).

7. It is hard to know exactly what type of tree Sedgwick means here. *Laurus nobilis*, famed for its Greco-Roman associations, is not native to New England, making it more likely that she is describing *Kalmia latifolia*, nicknamed mountain laurel or spoonwood; it is unlikely that she means sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*) because that tree primarily grows in bogs and does not grow particularly large. While Sedgwick's inclusion of laurel develops transatlantic links to other novels like *Mansfield Park* and to Greco-Roman culture, thereby tightly associating nature and culture as she does elsewhere, she sacrifices local knowledge. Rather than emphasizing a North American tree, she

highlights European flora, a move that creates a curious Old World intrusion in a novel that exists as part of an attempt to create a uniquely American literature.

8. Because *Hope Leslie* is written by a white woman, I analyze Mononotto's personification as a conscious literary and rhetorical move. However, Allen reminds scholars that this perspective is entirely western: "No Indian would regard personal perception as the basic, or only, unit of universal consciousness" and therefore would not consider a tree's symbolism as anthropomorphic (256-257). Sedgwick gestures towards a non-anthropocentric view, but arguably does not fully capture the native perspective.

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CHAPTER IV  
SUSTAINING A NEW COUNTRY: JAMES FENIMORE COOPER'S  
NATIONALISTIC TREES

...one of the misfortunes of living too long is the loss of all one's early friends and affections. when I review the ground over which I have passed since my youth, I see it strewn like a field of battle with the bodies of deceased friends. I stand like a solitary tree in a field, its trunk indeed erect, but its [sic] limbs fallen off, and its [sic] neighboring plants eradicated from around it.—Thomas Jefferson, letter to Dr. Samuel Brown, 1814

*Introduction*

“A nation born in revolution,” historian Carol Berkin writes, “carrie[s] a collective memory that violence [is] sometimes justified” (ch. 3). The newly minted United States of America saw almost immediate armed insurrection as the new country's citizens worked to understand who they were and to whom they were beholden. In early 1791, a particularly striking protest gained power as frontier settlers expressed their discontent with the Federal excise tax nicknamed the Whiskey Tax. By September, violence broke out and “throughout the rest of the year, delegate meetings and vigilante violence operated in tandem” (Berkin ch. 3). The debate over how to address the protests (and nascent rebellion) pitted North against South, East against West, and Federalist against Antifederalist, exposing “the tensions between agriculture and commerce and between coast and interior” (Berkin ch. 5). By mid-1794, violence had broken out and President Washington cautiously mobilized several state militias to restore order; in the

end, rebels were easily quashed, in part because they had “mistakenly believed that opposition to the excise law was universal across the country and that no troops would be willing to march against them” (Berkin ch. 12). The show of force resulted not in death or pitched battle but instead in surrender and “the only men...taken prisoner were the leaders...Their followers [were]...disarmed and sent home, unless they had been guilty of particularly violent acts” (Berkin ch. 12). This event allowed the brand-new nation to show that it was not a doomed “experiment in sustaining the unity of a country of diverse economies, demographics, and forms of social organization,” but a strong state that could “demonstrate its effectiveness and win the loyalty of the American public” (Berkin Part I).

The Whiskey Rebellion was pivotal because it helped establish American nationalism and ushered in a conversation about how the young country should define itself. Nearly thirty years after the Whiskey Rebellion, James Fenimore Cooper published his third novel *The Pioneers* (1823), a book set on the 1790s New York frontier. He had many reasons for writing the novel, but two of his greatest motivators were defining Americanness, thus helping readers better understand where America came from and its essential features, and offering a conservationist plea for the forests. Cooper, like other Romantic historical fiction authors, grounded his ecological argument in symbolic trees, using personification to help readers understand why overcoming the European nature/culture divide would help the nation succeed and develop an identity separate from England.

I argue that Cooper establishes three ways of interacting with the natural world, only one of which will help the new nation thrive. Judge Marmaduke Temple and his daughter Elizabeth model positive ways to integrate nature and culture, breaking from the European model, while other citizens of Templeton like Richard Jones and Billy Kirby emphasize economics to the exclusion of nature, repeating the same mistakes of English colonizers. Finally, Cooper contrasts the white settler environmental approach with the Native Americans, who privilege the natural world and therefore cannot survive in white society. Cooper pairs an argument for settling the frontier and a plea for conservation, suggesting that humans must responsibly settle and “civilize” the wilds.

Like most Romantic-era historical fiction, scholars have found *The Pioneers* to be a complicated book that lends itself to intense scrutiny. Some study the book’s physical objects, generating arguments like Michael Clark’s, which suggests that the author uses architecture “as metaphor and symbol” and contrasts religious architecture with buildings that blend with the natural landscape (228). Andrew Doolen, among others, studies how Cooper depicts race, demonstrating how the American Colonization Society and its desire for a homogeneous, white America influence Cooper’s depiction of law (132). Others like Nan Goodman and Brook Thomas analyze the novel’s legal ramifications, studying how the novel contrasts “the old law of strict liability” and “the new law of negligence” to show “how and why the new law emerged triumphant” (Goodman 2). Scholars like Chris Nesmith study how the novel “encodes a theory of ‘progress’ that implies” that American society evolves as inevitably as one generation succeeds another, with Cooper using the maturation of the male body (both physically and symbolically) to embody

progress's development (17). Ecocritical scholars like Sabri Mnassar offer examinations of Cooper's environmental ethics. Lawrence Buell suggests that "Cooper's *Pioneers* is a more faithful environmental text than the four ensuing Leatherstocking Tales" (8); Roderick Nash argues that "The Leatherstocking novels gave Cooper's countrymen reason to feel both proud and ashamed at conquering the wilderness" (77). James D. Wallace shows that *The Pioneers* is marked by "reverence for the landscape, personal experience in nature, and memory," making it "the first conservationist novel in America" (x). The author's focus on trees and tree harvesting make it almost uniquely suited to my project, and no other scholar has marked how the author depicts trees and the nature/culture binary.

#### *Nature as a Temple: The Frontier of Nature/Culture Unification*

Some people see trees as holy sites; others see them as inexhaustible mines. Cooper contrasts these two perspectives throughout *The Pioneers*, enabling readers to consider how their own perspective influences the treatment of trees. Two characters, Judge Temple and his daughter, each display an ability to value trees, without needing an economic justification. The pair instead see trees as inextricably connected to frontier life, supporting settlers and helping a new nation establish itself. Their example shows that the new nation needs to overcome its European legacy, particularly the emphasis on the nature/culture binary, to create a stronger, more sustainable society.

Like Scott, Cooper connects trees, especially pines, and history, emphasizing how the nation evolved out of its forests and its relationship to those forests. Laura Mason

details the pine's scientific and cultural significance in *Pine*, while Eric Rutkow begins *American Canopy* with a detailed history of how British control of pines helped inspire the Revolutionary War. Joan Maloof's *Teaching the Trees* includes many trees, but her chapters on pines help readers reconsider the relationship between humans, economics, and trees. All these texts illuminate how trees and their history complicate the nature/culture binary. Mason begins her book with the observation that pines "are of huge ecological and economic importance...They also have deep cultural and social significance," reminding readers that "the genus includes one of the oldest living life forms on the planet [a bristlecone pine]; perhaps more importantly, the products of pine trees were essential as preservatives and solvents in a pre-mineral oil world" (9). The crucial, but rare, products derived from pine trees—including pitch, turpentine, rosin, and the wood itself (Mason 72-101, 102-138)—made North America, and particularly New England, a tempting area for colonization. Rutkow writes that "the region seemed to have been designed for the building of ships," a fact that England attempted to exploit for its own profit (23). English kings and politicians attempted to control which trees colonists could harvest; unsurprisingly, their efforts resulted in violence and widespread rebellion (Rutkow 25-33). By the 1760s, New York colonists started erecting Liberty Poles, "typically pine masts or flagstaffs," which various groups used "as symbols opposing British oppression" (Rutkow 37). When, twenty years later, Thomas Jefferson wrote to William Stephens Smith that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants," his audience would have been hard pressed to know if he was referring to Boston's famous liberty elm (Rutkow 33) or the numerous pine Liberty

Poles that were associated with the Revolution (Rutkow 35). Near the beginning of the Whiskey Rebellion, dissidents again erected pine Liberty Poles (Rutkow 39), continuing the proud tradition. While Cooper positions maples as the best natural symbol of America, the young nation's history with pine trees showcases how the revolution was built on a rejection of the nature/culture binary.

The narrator personifies trees as he sets the scene, showcasing how people can mingle nature and culture. Cooper writes that the “pines waved majestically at their topmost boughs, sending forth a dull, plaintive sound, that was quite in consonance with the rest of the melancholy scene” (19). While the pines are outside all control, existing in their own, rather dangerous space, they still reflect human characteristics; humans and pines are still interconnected, despite the apparent distance between them. The pine trees might appear separate from humanity; they might denote dangerous areas, marking an area that, like the edges of early maps, is unknown and likely dangerous. But Cooper still encourages readers to see how the trees reflect humanity. When people attribute human characteristics to trees, they merge nature and culture; Cooper thus primes readers to see pines as fellow beings, as worthy of sympathy as any fellow human.

Cooper's descriptions of Susquehanna valley highlight the connections between nature and culture. As he describes the area around Templeton, he writes that “Although the evergreens still held dominion over many of the hills that rose on this side of the valley, yet the undulating outlines of the distant mountains, covered with forests of beech and maple, gave a relief to the eye, and the promise of a kinder soil” (40). Not only does his description fit ecologically (beech and maples signifying the pinnacle of plant



succession in northeastern forests [Preston and Braham 159]), the personification emphasizes his environmental appeal. Maples represent strong, healthy communities—a model for American citizens struggling in the wake of the revolution and the War of 1812. Neither an emblem of Old Europe nor a sign of the wilderness, honoring the contribution maple trees make to society separates Americans from that which came before (European exploitative environmental policies) without also separating them from the natural world. The maples form an ideal zone, an area where humans and the natural world can co-exist peacefully and beneficially.

The Templeton area is the pinnacle of picturesque, a fact Cooper underscores when he describes changing seasons. As the winter fades to spring, Cooper writes that “The leaf of the native poplar was seen quivering in the woods; the sides of the mountains began to lose their hue of brown, as the lively green of the different members of the forest blended their shades with the permanent colours of the pine and hemlock; and even the buds of the tardy oak were swelling with the promise of the coming summer” (251).<sup>1</sup> The scene’s artistry helps readers understand how culture draws from nature. Everything, from color to subject, is filtered through the natural world and trees help remind humans of their abiding dependence on the natural world. Cooper emphasizes color as the seasons change to highlight—literally—art’s debt to the natural world, thus reuniting nature and culture.

Cooper personifies trees, displaying how culture is in fact indebted to nature. The narrator describes how “The huge branches of the pines and hemlocks bent with the weight of the ice they supported, while their summits rose above the swelling tops of the

oaks, beeches, and maples, like spires of burnished silver issuing from domes of the same material” (213). He creates a forested scene that mimics the political situation, a truly expert merging of nature and culture, and shows that when trees and humans combine, something sacred—a cathedral—becomes possible. Cooper works towards a community, one that does not privilege English symbols like oaks but instead sees all trees’ importance. Strikingly, Cooper lists the tree with the most productive power—the maple tree—last, thereby emphasizing its importance. In many ways, the entire selection of trees builds to this final one; all give way before the tree that Cooper seeks to associate with America and success. The pines and hemlocks are well and good; oaks are acceptable, because they remind us of our past; beeches are useful for fuel, if little else. But maples—they are the enduring symbol of America because they are sustainable and can be cultivated for generations.

The author repeats the cathedral imagery, underscoring the relationship between sacredness and maples. The narrator describes “a grove of [maple] trees, covered the earth with their tall, straight trunks and spreading branches, in stately pride...a wide space of many acres was cleared, which might be likened to the dome of a mighty temple, to which the maples formed the columns, their tops composing the capitals, and the heavens the arch” (224). The scene is an oasis, a shining beacon of peace and safety. Forming a natural cathedral, the maples mingle nature and culture more clearly and powerfully than other trees.<sup>2</sup> Cooper evokes spirituality, suggesting that this grove is a respite from the frontier settlers who endlessly exploit the natural world for resources.

Furthermore, the clearing recalls ancient sacred groves, places of wisdom, faith, and magic. The maple grove therefore acts as a bridge between human and nonhuman.

Trees do not just resemble buildings; they are integral to the town's construction, a fact Cooper uses to complicate the nature/culture binary. Templeton's school building has "an arched compartment in the centre, with a square and small division on either side...deeply and laboriously moulded in pine wood...The 'steeple' was a little cupola, reared on the very centre of the roof, on four tall pillars of pine, that were fluted with a gouge, and loaded with mouldings" (100-101). Pine supports the school's distinctive features, drawing the natural world into the structure. Indeed, the building seems to merge the best of civilization with the best of the natural world. It is fitting that the settlement's institution of learning manages to combine culture and nature positively; it serves as a positive model for the younger residents, who might be able to escape their parent's emphasis on economics.

The school is not the only human construction that mixes human and nonhuman. Cooper highlights the intermingling of human and tree when he describes the relatively primitive frontier roads: "In many places, the marks on the trees were the only indications of a road, with, perhaps, an occasional remnant of a pine, that, by being cut close to the earth, so as to leave nothing visible but its base of roots, spreading for twenty feet in every direction, was apparently placed there as a beacon, to warn the traveller that it was the centre of a highway" (231). The scene is almost chaotic, as Cooper treeifies the road and personifies the trees and the two seem to inextricably coexist. Cooper implicitly

shows that trees and humans are related, members of a single community that is lessened when one or the other is excluded.

The Judge influences Templeton's construction, ensuring that the forest and the town remain connected. Additionally, the Judge verbally emphasizes the connection between his own home and the pine forest. He tells his daughter that "A pine of more than ordinary growth stood where my dwelling is now placed; a wind-row had been opened through the trees from thence to the lake, and my view was but little impeded. Under the branches of that tree I made my solitary dinner" (236). Marmaduke begins his acquaintance with the valley by sheltering under a pine tree; he does not lose this connection, even when the tree is gone, and a stone mansion is in its place. That early connection to a tree cements his relationship to the valley, helping him maintain his relationship to the forests and certainly enabling him to, in essence, speak for the trees.

The narrator underscores how Marmaduke's homestead offers a complicated, if contradictory, picture of how frontier life relies on trees even as it destroys them. The narrator describes the Judge's homestead, emphasizing the trees, where they are from, and their present state:

Although poplars had been brought from Europe to ornament the grounds, and willows and other trees were gradually springing up nigh the dwellings, yet many a pile of snow betrayed the presence of the stump of a pine; and even, in one or two instances, unsightly remnants of trees that had been partly destroyed by fire, were seen rearing their black, glistening columns twenty or thirty feet above the pure white snow. (45)

Nesmith argues that scenes like this one highlight how the novel “is about...transatlantic adaptations and renegotiations of European cultural norms and forms on American soil” (18), an argument that helps us see how these European trees change when planted in American soil. Cooper segregates various trees, implying some are useful and some are merely decorative. The “nonnative,” European trees are decorative, and Marmaduke uses them to denote his wealth and status. The intermediate willows are also decorative but do not confer the same prestige as the European imports; the willows clearly belong to the setting and thrive there, adding a note of practicality to an otherwise deeply artificial scene. Finally, there are the lingering remnants of the native pine trees, a deeply useful species used for firewood and building, presumably, ruthlessly destroyed so humans could thrive. The mingled trees illustrate Cooper’s cultural point. Europe and America unite to create a new identity, one that connects hard work and aesthetics through trees.

Despite his homestead’s uneven relationship to trees, Marmaduke himself is very protective of trees, especially maples. When Elizabeth first arrives home, “a cheerful fire, of the hard or sugar-maple, was burning on the hearth,” a fact that makes the Judge exclaim, ““How often have I forbidden the use of the sugar-maple, in my dwelling. The sight of that sap, as it exudes with the heat, is painful to me”” (105). Marmaduke’s argument is partially economic—maple trees are useful for a variety of reasons other than firewood, which makes burning the wood wasteful—but his emotional response displays just how thoroughly he connects with the tree. The vision of the maple logs burning is “painful,” not “enraging” or “aggravating.” He feels the flames on a visceral level and the fire threatens him as thoroughly as it threatens the trees. He further displays his bent

towards sustainability, and using trees appropriately, when he tells Richard that ““it behooves the owner of woods so extensive as mine, to be cautious what example he sets his people, who are already felling the forests, as if no end could be found to their treasures, nor any limits to their extent. If we go on in this way, twenty years hence, we shall want fuel”” (105). The Judge is not interested in the common short-term thinking, a form of planning his companions and dependents repeatedly display. Instead, he is thinking twenty years in the future—he is preserving his legacy and protecting the world his daughter will live in. He defends the forests, utilizing an economic argument that appeals to his fellow settlers.

Cooper infrequently treeifies people, which highlights how certain characters merge nature and culture. After a Sunday service, a group assembles at one of Templeton’s public houses to expound on various laws and the landlady tells Richard, ““And a mighty big error ye world make of it, Mister Todd...should ye be putting the matter into the law at all, with Joodge Temple, who has a purse as long as one of them pines on the hill, and who is an easy man to dale wid, if yees but mind the humour of him”” (153). Marmaduke, who consistently defends trees and cites the connection between trees and humans, comes to represent the forest for Templeton’s residents. Rather than see the Judge’s defense of the forests as an indication of his environmental awareness, Richard and the others consider Marmaduke’s passionate protection mere possessiveness. Cooper’s canny treeification contrasts Richard’s extractive relationship with trees to the Judge’s desire to overcome the nature/culture binary.

The Judge does not always connect nature and culture, particularly when the forest presents danger. After a falling tree nearly kills his daughter, Marmaduke ponders the dangers the forest poses, sparking a heated debate about how to guard against falling trees. The Judge eventually exclaims, ““But how is one to guard against the danger? canst thou go through the forests, measuring the bases, and calculating the centres of the oaks? answer me that, friend Jones, and I will say thou wilt do the country a service”” (241). While it might seem like a mere slip of the tongue, the fact that Marmaduke calls *all* the trees of the forest “oaks” is striking *because* the tree is so closely associated with England. Marmaduke is worried about his legacy—which readers can take as one citizen’s worries about America’s future—and everywhere he looks, that legacy is endangered. Following the War of 1812, a time when England invaded the new nation’s capital, this frightened speech becomes understandable and warranted. The English roots of American culture are no longer a strength; they have become a hazard, a reason for invasion and potential (re)colonization. When Marmaduke is under threat and when his daughter is threatened, he panics and begins to see danger everywhere. The forest needs to be settled and culture needs to be introduced to the wilds so that people are no longer threatened. To Marmaduke, a place can be too natural, and those places need human intervention.

Overall, Cooper highlights the male relationship to the natural world. The Judge, Richard, Natty Bumppo, and Elizabeth’s love interest, the mysterious Oliver, are repeatedly placed in natural settings and offer commentary on the world that surrounds them. Occasionally, however, the author connects the Judge’s daughter Elizabeth with

nature, showing that while the forests can be dangerous, she too sees nature and culture as deeply connected. When she steps outside on Christmas day, “drawing the folds of her pelisse more closely around her form, to guard against a cold that was yet great, though rapidly yielding, in[to] the small enclosure that opened in the rear of the house on a little thicket of low pines, that were springing up where trees of a mightier growth had lately stood, she was surprised at the voice of Mr. Jones” (179). Linking Marmaduke’s highly civilized house to the surrounding wilderness helps readers take his conservation arguments seriously; this is not a man who has cut himself off from the natural world, though at times his paranoia makes it appear so. He may live in a stone house, but his passion for trees—and by extension the entire natural world—is not hypocritical or feigned. He passes on his sense that nature and culture need to be interwoven to his daughter, who sees nature as a retreat spoiled by the presence of men like Richard Jones, who only cares for economic power.

Elizabeth is keenly aware of the balance that needs to be struck between civilization and the forest and she pays special attention to local environmental features. She tells Richard as they walk through Templeton, “I see no streets in the direction of our walk...unless you call the short avenues through these pine bushes by that name. Surely you do not contemplate building houses, very soon, in that forest before us, and in those swamps” (183). She critiques the frontier philosophy of “growth for growth’s sake” and encourages building in concert with the natural world, not draining the swamp and chopping down the forest just so humans can expand. Some natural areas need to be preserved and destroying them would harm the community’s integrity. The narrator



emphasizes that whatever humans do, nature responds, and that humans do not control the natural world as thoroughly as they seem to think they do. This fact frightens Marmaduke, but Elizabeth is more accepting of it.

Cooper highlights the close connection Elizabeth feels for the forest, a move that links Elizabeth to other fictional women like Hope Leslie. The narrator describes “The close of Christmas day,” writing that “When darkness had again hid the objects in the village from the gaze of Elizabeth, she turned from the window, where she had remained while the last vestige of light lingered over the tops of the dark pines, with a curiosity that was rather excited than appeased by the passing glimpses of woodland scenery that she had caught during the day” (209). Elizabeth is the only woman who repeatedly marks the forest, studying and appreciating it. Furthermore, she respects the natural world and seems to appreciate its innate value and beauty. Trees, even if they present some danger, are valuable because they support a strong frontier culture, and she seeks to celebrate that connection rather than warping it for economic ends.

Elizabeth brings Miss Grant into the forest with her, helping the other woman experience the connection between nature and culture. As the two women take a summer walk,

[they pursue] their course, under the shade of the stately trees that crowned the [mountain]. The day was becoming warm, and the girls plunged more deeply into the forest, as they found its invigorating coolness agreeably contrasted to the excessive heat they had experienced in the ascent. The conversation, as if by mutual consent, was entirely changed to the little incidents and scenes of their walk, and every tall pine, and every shrub or flower, called forth some simple expression of admiration. (305)

Miss Grant begins by showing great discomfort in nature; the natural world is dangerous, and she cannot see value in it. However, as the two women walk, we see Elizabeth helping Miss Grant appreciate nature, beginning with its aesthetic beauty. These are the first steps Louisa needs to take in order to appreciate the connection between nature and culture.

Louisa's introduction to the forest literally saves her life when a forest fire threatens the town, illustrating why readers ought to integrate nature and culture. The narrator sets the scene, describing how "She [Louisa] was stationed in the edge of the low pines and chestnuts that succeeded the first or large growth of the forest, and directly above the angle where the highway turned from the straight course to the village and ascended the mountain, laterally" (414). Protected by trees, Miss Grants remains safe from the fire, though she worries about Elizabeth. Still, the thin treed area between civilization and wild forest protects her, forming a natural firebreak. Once Louisa accepts that trees are part of her culture, she finds herself safer among the woods and can more easily exist at civilization's edge.

*Pursuing Wealth: Undermining Americanness and Upholding the Nature/Culture Binary*

*The Pioneers* is set a handful of years after the Revolutionary War, at a time when the lines between British and Americans were, at best, fuzzy. Whenever the author includes European trees—or trees closely associated with Europe—he carefully shows how those symbols do not work in America. Furthermore, when characters adhere too thoroughly to European philosophical or economic models, particularly the nature/culture

binary, Cooper includes examples of why those models do not work in America. Interestingly, he does not argue that European symbols need to be kept away from America but instead shows that American symbols need to replace European ones. Richard and Billy Kirby are the mouthpieces for a purely economic environmental relationship and their mistreatment of trees, particularly maples, signals their unwillingness to help develop a new environmental system for America. Cooper frequently turns to trees to illustrate how nationalism and the nature/culture debate connect.

Cooper's nationalistic argument begins with Elizabeth and her civilizing impact. Nesmith argues that Elizabeth's feminine influence is vital to Cooper's vision of settling the frontier: "as important as men are in the overarching plot of this novel, the domesticating influence of the feminine and of a woman's power to hold sway over this otherwise potentially dangerous male energy is encoded in the text" (19). Part of why Elizabeth is ostensibly successful as a civilizing influence is because of her environmental connection. Carolyn Merchant, studying the relationship between European humans and nonhumans, argues that "women and nature have an age-old association—an affiliation that has persisted throughout culture, language, and history" (xv), while Annette Kolodny points out that North America has always been subject to feminized metaphors, rendering resource extraction akin to female "despoliation" (3-6) and ensuring that "real flesh-and-blood women—at least metaphorically—were dispossessed of paradise" (3). Elizabeth's power, rooted in her ability to merge nature and culture, falters when she encounters the economically-motivated Richard and Billy

Kirby. While Elizabeth symbolizes America's future, the men who surround her in Templeton provide a variety of problematic and unsustainable alternatives.

European ideals and immigrants exert their influence throughout the novel and Cooper typically highlights how Europeanness is inappropriate, if not dangerous, in this new country. Near the story's beginning, he reminds readers of the association between oak trees and England, describing "an oak stretched forward, as if to overshadow, with its branches, a spot which its roots were forbidden to enter. It had released itself from the thralldom, that a growth of centuries had imposed on the branches of the surrounding forest trees, and threw its gnarled and fantastic arms abroad, in the wildness of liberty" (40-41). The oak, that abiding emblem of England, is an interloper, a colonizer; no longer confined to a single island, the English presence can be felt around the world, for better or worse. The tree seeks to conquer and control, having achieved its freedom only to impose injustice on others. Cooper parallels the American response to England, situating England as the oak that seeks to further its control, and America as the surrounding "wildness of liberty." However, his personification is twofold: the situation could also describe America, reveling in its new-found freedom and nationhood, colonizing the frontier. Read alongside historical fiction like Scott's, Cooper's personification takes on global valences, but most particularly, the personification critiques American environmental policy (or, more accurately, the lack thereof).

Cooper underscores both the cultural debt America owes the country and the necessity of adapting Englishness so it better suits the local scene. He shows that even English settlers must evolve, because "his native customs, in attire and living...usually

dr[iving] his plough, among the stumps, in the same manner as he had before done” will not work and that “dear-bought experience [teaches] him the useful lesson, that a sagacious people knew what was suited to their circumstances, better than a casual observer; or a sojourner, who was, perhaps, too much prejudiced to compare, and, peradventure, too conceited to learn” (124). While trees only appear as dead objects, Cooper honors an abiding connection to the local natural environment. Those who are not prepared to live in a place—those who only want to extract some resources or impose their traditional ways on a frontier area—will not last; Cooper hopes that they will fade away and be replaced by people who actually understand the local environment.

However, those responsible for designing the Judge’s house adhere to European ideals blindly, resulting in a structure that is entirely inappropriate for the location. In describing Marmaduke’s house and its construction, the narrator admits that the architects “found the [stone] material a little too solid for the tools of their workmen, which, in general, were employed on a substance no harder than the white pine of the adjacent mountains, a wood so proverbially soft, that it is commonly chosen by the hunters for pillows” (43). The narrator’s comic aside juxtaposes stone construction with wood, highlighting just how difficult it is to work with stone—it is a job that requires a degree of skill and training and is associated with deforested Europe—with the naturalness of wooden construction. Working with trees is almost second nature and anyone who has spent time in the woods is in some sense able to work with the material. Furthermore, the image of a hunter using a piece of wood for a pillow blurs the line between nature and culture. Wooden pillows help us see humans and trees as connected and interrelated.

Hunters rely on trees for everything from food to shelter and comfort. Clear-cutting the forests will remove this sense of sleepy security.

The Judge's foil is his cousin Richard, the town's sheriff and the novel's chief antagonist. Richard mocks Marmaduke, proclaiming derisively “that the Judge is particular with his beech and maple, beginning to dread, already, a scarcity of the precious articles. Ha! ha! ha! 'duke, you are a good, warm-hearted relation, I will own, as in duty bound, but you have some queer notions about you, after all” (210). Richard, who represents all that is greedy and unsustainable in most frontier settlers, sees no reason to protect the future. To his mind, there will always be more trees, there will always be more resources to consume, and the natural world is infinitely renewable. Richard is uninterested in Marmaduke's conservationism, because the Judge is less interested in accumulating fast wealth and power—he is more interested in a sustainable, balanced culture that protects settlers just as much as it protects the natural world. However, Marmaduke is wealthy enough that he can protect the natural world; he is not living from season to season, always worried that one misstep will spell disaster. Most of the other citizens of the small frontier town have no such cushion, showing, just as Jane Austen does in *Mansfield Park*, that environmental arguments often depend on economics.

Richard only cares about using the environment for financial or social gain, displaying a purely economic perspective that has more in common with the European division between nature and culture than Marmaduke's revolutionary nature/culture integration. When Marmaduke, Richard, Elizabeth, and several others tour Kirby's sugar

maple production site, Richard observes that ““This is your true sugar weather, ’duke...a frosty night, and a sunshiny day. I warrant me that the sap runs like a mill-tail up the maples, this warm morning. It is a pity, Judge, that you do not introduce a little more science into the manufacture of sugar, among your tenants”” (221). While Richard observes natural phenomena, he is only interested in conditions that result in better or more production. Indeed, comparing natural production to a human-made waterway drives home his anthropocentric worldview. The natural world is only ever interesting insofar as it is useful to him, personally. Indeed, Richard’s emphasis on science furthers the sense that he prizes efficiency and production above community or sustainability.

While Marmaduke argues that maples can be carefully and thoughtfully cultivated, displaying an interdependent relationship that benefits humans and nonhumans, Richard mocks the very thought, desiring quick profit over sustainability. He tells the Judge, ““Hoe and plough!...would you set a man hoeing round the root of a maple like this,’—pointing to one of the noble trees, that occur so frequently in that part of the country.—“Hoeing trees! are you mad, ’duke?”” (222). Cooper sharply contrasts Richard’s mockery with the narrator’s environmental sympathy. While the sheriff mocks Marmaduke’s plans to cultivate maple trees, the narrator highlights the trees’ nobility, personifying the objects of Richard’s incredulity. This act of personification helps readers contrast Richard’s unfeeling and inhumane treatment of maples, thus honoring environmental thinking that unites nature and culture and denigrating Richard’s insistence that nature is there to be used but is not a vital part of life.

Richard is deeply knowledgeable about maple trees, but his knowledge is scientific and does not recognize inherent value in the trees themselves. Richard tries to persuade Elizabeth to see the maples as he does by displaying his scientific knowledge, telling her that “‘cane is the vulgar name for it, but the real name is *saccharum officinarum*: and what we call the sugar, or hard maple, is *acer saccharinum*. These are the learned names...and are such as, doubtless, you well understand’” (223).<sup>3</sup> Richard’s use of scientific names furthers the divide between the man and the natural world. Richard’s unnecessary scientific interjection highlights the great divide between humans and nature, and Richard’s position as an unsympathetic (possibly villainous) character suggests that Cooper does not want readers to embody this position.

Richard derisively lists all the issues Marmaduke has taken up, inadvertently showcasing the interconnections between nature and culture. He condescendingly tells Marmaduke, “‘But this is always the way with you...first it’s the trees, then it’s the deer, after that it’s the maple sugar, and so on to the end of the chapter’” (260). Richard draws attention to the fact that Marmaduke makes all-encompassing environmental arguments; the Judge sees that conserving one part of the natural world (trees) will not be enough; he has many environmental campaigns, though all of them seem equally unfathomable to his companions. Cooper also draws attention to the medium, reminding readers that they are reading a book, a fact that blurs nature and culture, even as the character who speaks the words remains devoted to dividing the two. Richard’s language implicitly acknowledges that Marmaduke’s conservation argument revolves around uniting nature and culture; he mockingly deploys the Judge’s method to try to show how ridiculous it is.



Richard is not the only Templeton resident who cultivates the nature/culture divide; he is joined in his crusade by Billy Kirby, who similarly only sees economic value in trees. As Richard, the Judge, Elizabeth, and their companions come upon Kirby's grove of trees, they see that "a deep and careless incision had been made into each tree, near its root, into which little spouts, formed of the bark of the alder, or of the sumach, were fastened; and a trough, roughly dug out of the linden, or bass-wood, was laying at the root of each tree, to catch the sap that flowed from this extremely wasteful and inartificial arrangement" (224). This violent scene directly follows the almost heavenly initial description of the grove. Clearly, Kirby has desecrated an Eden, his industriousness and careless agriculture a harmful incursion into a peaceful grove. Technology's violent introduction is an enduring symbol; Leo Marx explores the concept at length, writing that technology "arouses a sense of dislocation, conflict, and anxiety," becoming an "emblem of the artificial, of the unfeeling utilitarian spirit, and of the fragmented, industrial style of life that allegedly follows from the premises of the empirical philosophy" (16, 18). Kirby's use of technology—in this case, the relatively primitive ax—destroys an otherwise pastoral scene, forcing readers to question the nature/culture binary that propels the man.

While Richard represents the entirely scientific approach to nature, and economic extraction from nature, Kirby offers the industrial approach. The narrator tells readers that "Marmaduke had dismounted, and was viewing the works and the trees very closely, and not without frequent expressions of dissatisfaction, at the careless manner in which the manufacture was conducted" (226). Marmaduke wanders around, tutting at Kirby's

misuse of resources, furthering the sense that the woodcutter has desecrated a temple.

While the others converse with Kirby, the Judge inspects his work, which is a better reflection of the man than his singing or his words.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the woodsman pays no regard to his ostensible subject is worrying. Kirby's carelessness is perhaps his most irredeemable feature and more concerning than his ignorance.

Despite the violence he inflicts on trees, Kirby is able to see how culture depends on trees. He tells Marmaduke,

Rome wasn't built in a day, nor, for that matter, Templetown 'ither, though it may be said to be a quick-growing place. I never put my axe into a stunty tree, or one that hasn't a good, fresh-looking bark; for trees have disorders like creaturs; and where's the policy of taking a tree that's sickly, any more than you'd choose a foundered horse to ride post, or an overheated ox to do your logging. (226-227).

Like *Ivanhoe*'s narrator, Kirby appeals to history to justify his actions. His predecessors were not careful with their resources and did not devote energy to debating whether or not nature and culture are related. Instead, like so many other foresters, he uses his experience to get good money from selling pristine, sound wood, and not the diseased, "stunty" trees (Leighton 196-197, Rutkow 28-29). Surrounded by mighty forests, he does not see the need to be careful with his resources. Like most of his fellow frontierspeople, Kirby see trees as endlessly renewable and present only for human consumption.

Kirby sings a ditty that summarizes the position of most like-minded frontiersmen who extract resources with no regard for the natural world. He sings, as the Judge and others approach, that

The Eastern States be full of men,  
The Western full of woods, sir;  
The hills be like a cattle-pen,  
The roads be full of goods, sir,  
Then flow away, my sweet sap,  
And I will make you boily;  
Nor catch a woodman's hasty nap,  
For fear you should get roily.

The maple-tree's a precious one,  
'Tis fuel, food, and timber;  
And when your stiff day's work is done,  
Its juice will make you limber.  
Then flow away, etc.

And what's a man without his glass,  
His wife without her tea, sir?  
But neither cup nor mug would pass,  
Without this honey-bee, sir.  
Then flow away, &c. (224-225)<sup>5</sup>

Kirby highlights maple's many different purposes (fuel, building material, food, recreational beverage), but cites only those uses that directly benefit humans materially; there is no mention of inherent value or even aesthetics. He begins by comparing humans and trees, implying the two are connected, but because he always relates the images back to human work or existence, he does not manage to unify nature and culture. The second stanza pivots, turning the focus entirely to the maple and its many uses. The final stanza turns yet again, this time reflecting only human concerns. Interestingly, the stanza begins with the image of a couple, one that does not at all apply to Kirby, given his fairly antisocial existence and his lack of a wife. Indeed, it builds a fairly clear demarcation between human and nonhuman, even as it acknowledges that humans rely on nonhumans in various ways. The song certainly gestures towards merging nature and culture, but

Kirby can only look for economic value; so long as the merging brings him a profit, he will merge the two. When it is no longer economically sound to combine nature and culture, he will stop.

Kirby further acknowledges that trees confer economic and social power. He reminds Marmaduke that ““I have heern the settlers from the old countries say, that their rich men keep great oaks and elms, that would make a barrel of pots to the tree, standing round their doors and humsteads, and scattered over their farms, just to look at”” (229). While Billy is in no way the novel’s hero—he is, in fact, representative of those who ignorantly fight against conservation—he draws attention to how trees distinguish between the powerful and the powerless by drawing attention to the fact that keeping nonproductive trees is a sign of wealth. Being able to keep land fallow is a privilege, one that few in America could afford. Unfortunately, Kirby does not follow this observation on inequity with a comment about protecting the resources one does have; his perspective is simply that the entire continent is open to his resource extraction and that there will always be more resources out there, somewhere. In this almost throw-away line, Cooper reminds readers of the topic Scott explored at length in *Ivanhoe*: private property is inherently unfair, even if it protects the forests. Private property pulls apart communities, whether or not those communities include the natural world.

Kirby reiterates his point about private property in a second song. As Marmaduke, deeply dissatisfied with Kirby’s maple syrup extraction methods, and his followers leave, Kirby sings a song of his own making:

Away! then, you lads who would buy land,  
Choose the oak that grows on the high land,  
Or the silvery pine<sup>6</sup> on the dry land,  
It matters but little to me. (230)

Kirby does not sharply contrast types of tree, but he does distinguish between private and “unclaimed” property. For Kirby, one tree is basically the same as another; a pine is not symbolic of anything other than potential wealth. All resources belong to Kirby and as long as there are trees to log, he will log them. Kirby’s careless attitude towards trees, particularly towards those with such different symbolic meanings, and property rights highlights his position that there is no worthwhile connection between nature and culture. While Cooper wishes to establish American symbols, he does not want to divide the human and natural communities. A sustainable country—one that wishes to claim as much power as England—must embrace both its human and natural elements and treat them both with care.

While Kirby appears able to merge nature and culture, even if it is only to generate income, he uses treeification to insult people. At the winter turkey shoot, Kirby misses when he takes his shot and responds angrily to the jeering directed at him. He yells at Brom Freeborn, the free black who organizes the shoot, ““Where is the man that can hit a turkey’s head at a hundred yards? I was a fool for trying. You needn’t make an uproar, like a falling pine tree, about it”” (197-198). Given that Kirby spends more of his life around falling trees than humans, his choice of imagery is not surprising. However, the fact that he treeifies Brom implies that he remains separate from the natural world. He sees trees and Brom as economic opportunities, not as beings with their own needs and

value. Kirby's outburst reflects early nineteenth-century cultural assumptions about people of African descent. Throughout the book, Cooper is not particularly kind to black characters, frequently having them speak in exaggerated dialect and describing them as dull, lazy, or excitable, and, in Doolen's words, Freeborn is a caricature that "reinforces an ideology of African-American inferiority, but more importantly, it depicts an African-American deformed by his self-possession, as well as his attempted assimilation into American society" (142-143).<sup>7</sup> Kirby's treeification begs several questions, all of which revolve around the nation and its future. If people like Kirby only strive for economic success, what will happen to the natural world and other people? If people of color are linked to the natural world, can Cooper's plea to protect the natural world also be extended to protect vulnerable people? Can America thrive if it includes slavery and deplorable environmental policies? Or, to survive, does its citizen need to reject slavery and consider humans and the environment interdependent and related?

Ultimately, one of the characters most closely associated with the natural world mocks Kirby's approach, helping readers understand why the woodcutter's positioning of the nature/culture binary is not a model to follow. After a posse including Kirby approaches Natty Bumppo's residence, Bumppo asks him, "'What would you have with me, Billy Kirby? ... I've no land to clear; and Heaven knows I would set out six trees afore I would cut down one'" (334-335). Kirby is marked as a man who only cuts down or injures trees, not as one who cultivates them, while Bumppo, widely regarded as the novel's most sympathetic protagonist, sees humans and the natural world as inseparably

connected. Bumpo's comment here helps readers differentiate between Kirby's extractive approach to nature and the former's more sustainable approach.

*Treeified Other: Native American Nature/Culture Integration, Redux*

As a whole, *The Pioneers* traces the experience of white settlers. Native characters are almost entirely absent, making Cooper's novel almost the inverse of Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*. However, Cooper does include one Native American character, the famed "last of the Mohicans" Chingachgook, and another who is Chingachgook's adopted brother, Nathaniel "Natty" Bumpo. These two characters provide a glimpse of an alternative way to merge nature and culture, a way that is fading as Native Americans "fade" away from the American frontier. Cooper establishes Chingachgook and Bumpo as embodying an unsustainable environmentalism; by the novel's end, the former is dead and the latter has vanished, seeking new frontiers. The two characters, however, provide a version of the nature/culture divide that privileges nature, displaying the traditional Romantic sense that civilization is corrupting while nature is inspiring and rejuvenating. Even as Cooper offers an alternative environmental perspective, he underscores the violence that appears "naturally" whenever the Native American approach meets the white one. Ultimately, Cooper, like Sedgwick, implies that assimilation is impossible: indigenous culture and white culture are just too different.

Cooper distinguishes an environmentalism that acknowledges the connections between nature and culture from an environmentalism that privileges nature over culture. The narrator describes how "The mountain...was covered with pines, that rose without a

branch some seventy or eighty feet, and which frequently doubled that height, by the addition of the tops” (19). Cooper emphasizes that the trees are outside human control, taller and stranger than any other tree around. He does not emphasize the trees’ economic value, suggesting that the trees still have inherent value, but the sheer size of them is staggering, if not frightening. The narrator continues by offering more details about the trees’ structure, describing how “The dark trunks of the trees, rose from the pure white of the snow, in regularly formed shafts, until, at a great height, their branches shot forth horizontal limbs, that were covered with the meagre foliage of an evergreen, affording a melancholy contrast to the torpor of nature below” (19). The trees cause a melancholy shadow to fall over the valley precisely because they are too much a part of nature. These are not trees that can be tamed or domesticated. They are too big and inhuman for that. They are beautiful, but that beauty is insufficient. The nature/culture connection can only go so far; it cannot touch these trees.

Those who travel into the forests frequently find themselves in an area entirely separate from civilization. The narrator describes the experience of a group of men who enter “into the low bushes of pines and chestnuts which had sprung up along the shores of the lake, where the plough had not succeeded the fall of the trees, and soon entered the forest itself” (354-355). Once again, the pines indicate the edge of civilization, distinguishing between land that has been settled (permanently) and areas that have not. Cooper acknowledges that culture needs these pockets of nature, but he still emphasizes the forest’s fecundity. The plough must eventually reach this area; that is inevitable and,



on the balance, good. Cooper is not trying to prevent expansion. He simply wants the right people leading the charge.

Like *Hope Leslie*, Native American characters (and white characters who spend more time with Native Americans than white Americans) integrate nature and culture. When readers first encounter “Natty” Bumppo’s house, Cooper writes that “Immense piles of snow lay against the log walls of this secluded habitation on one side; while fragments of small trees, and branches of oak and chestnut, that had been torn from their parent stems by the winds, were thrown into a pile on the other” (207). At first glance, Cooper simply highlights the connection between these three men and the natural world; they combine nature and culture seamlessly, carving an existence that has minimal impact on the natural world. They are careful with natural resources, putting them in sharp contrast to most of Templeton and their home stands as a monument to their ability to blend in seamlessly. Cooper furthers the sense that Bumppo and his family have a nearly mystical relationship with nature when he writes that the hill above the hut “held a soil that nourished trees of a gigantic growth” (208). This reference emphasizes the connection between the three men and the natural world; the trees grow strong in their presence, are perhaps protected *because* of their presence. But Cooper does not name specific trees; instead, he highlights the whole forest, connecting luxurious growth to these men who defend the natural world. That “gigantic growth” echoes the earlier scene describing monstrous pines. Once again, nature’s power is too much, and those who nurture that power are, likewise, too powerful. Unsurprising, then, that Natty Bumppo disappears as the novel ends, Chingachgook dies, and Oliver marries into white culture,

finally safely contained by domesticity. Left to their own devices, the three men and their trees become a threat.

Natty Bumppo, and his house, is always described as adjacent to trees, emphasizing the degree to which the man integrates nature and culture. When the Reverend Grant approaches the isolated house, he sees that “the hut inhabited by the Leather-stocking was situated, on the margin of the lake, under a rock, that was crowned by pines and hemlocks” (144). The hunters’ home is integrated into the landscape, more a part of nature than human society, a position that is problematic given the necessity Judge Temple sees in civilizing the wilds. Cooper’s use of personification merges nature and political culture, the crown implying that the trees, or perhaps the men who live beneath them, have some sort of authority. But if Bumppo or his trees are king of the forest, then they are actively resisting democracy, placing an obstacle before America’s civilizing power. Cooper admires Bumppo and his brethren, but he repeatedly emphasizes the danger of their environmental approach. Anyone who positions the natural world *above* nature creates a situation where civilization cannot advance.

Bumppo’s ability to mingle nature and culture grants him real, physical power, furthering the sense that he represents a significant problem. As a posse led by the sheriff approach Bumppo’s home, they stop “on the outside of the top of the fallen pine, which formed a chevaux-de-frize, to defend the approach to the fortress, on the side next the village” (334). *Chevaux de frise* were medieval anti-cavalry defenses and consisted of a portable frame covered in spikes (“chevaux de frise, n.”). A variation of this effective defense was important during the Revolutionary War for both land and river defense.

Cooper's recalling of this defensive measure not only recalls the story's historical setting (both the recent war and the earlier struggles against French settlement), once again situating history in and among the trees, but also reinforces the sense that the man and his way of life are literally under attack. Transforming a tree into a violent (though defensive, not offensive) object highlights Natty Bumppo's position in the story. He feels he needs to defend himself against the residents of Templeton, a concern that is not unfounded. Cooper literally positions a tree between Bumppo and the village, highlighting the each group's different values and the existential threat the hunter represents.

While Sedgwick's *Mononotto* used treeification to highlight his precarious position, Cooper instead uses actual dead trees to foreshadow Chingachgook's impending death. Entering a clearing, Elizabeth finds the "Mohegan...seated on the trunk of a fallen oak, with his tawny visage turned towards her, and his eyes fixed on her face with an expression of wildness and fire that would have terrified a less resolute female" (399). The fallen oak reminds readers of the cultural influences that need to be cleared away before America can fully form. England and its power over America need to die, a fact connected to the dead oak. However, Cooper sees no room for Native Americans within America; they too need to fade away, leaving the frontier "empty" for white settlers. Chingachgook's expression and close connection to the tree underscore why he and other indigenous people need to leave: they present a real danger and make America's civilizing project dangerous. Cooper furthers the sense that Native Americans are vanishing when he writes that "most of the trees...had already died, during the intense heats of preceding summers. Those which still retained the appearance of life, bore a few

dry and withered leaves, while the others were merely the wrecks of pines, oaks, and maples. No better materials to feed the fire could be found, had there been a communication with the flames” (409). The author connects trees that have died of natural causes to the Native Americans who used to live in the area. Both are becoming extinct, in the face of white expansion. There are still scuffles, little flare ups that burn hot as a forest fire and more quickly, and these scuffles are dangerous, but Cooper implies that the forest and the Native Americans are losing their power. Both will soon be civilized.

Additionally, Chingachgook treeifies himself, illustrating that indigenous people see no divide between nature and culture. As Chingachgook contemplates his impending death, he tells Elizabeth, ““Daughter...listen:—Six times ten hot summers have passed, since John was young; tall like a pine; straight like the bullet of Hawk-eye; strong as the buffalo; spry as the cat of the mountains”” (400). Cooper’s simile marks Chingachgook and differentiates him from the novel’s other human characters, placing him more firmly in the natural world, but also reveals the man’s dangerous strength. He does not compare himself to innocuous natural items. Instead, he picks large, powerful creatures and a particularly violent man-made product. He is a fading threat, though. It has been years since he could make good on his threat, and when he dies, Cooper implies, his dangerous way of merging nature and culture will die with him.

Chingachgook’s close identification with dead trees reinforces Cooper’s “vanishing Indian” trope, offering a sympathetic, though racist, portrait of displaced tribespeople who see no difference between nature and culture. When Chingachgook

recounts the history between white settlers and indigenous peoples, he tells Oliver, ““But the warriors and traders with light eyes followed them. One brought the long knife, and one brought rum. They were more than the pines on the mountains; and they broke up the councils, and they took the lands”” (185). While Cooper suggests the indigenous people were fairly passive as white settlers arrived, thus casting the many destroyed tribes as doomed to extinction, he offers a strange instance of treeification. Cooper likens the white settlers to trees, so plentiful that they practically choke out all other life, an association that returns to his earlier, monstrous pines. However, these pines are different: they bring civilization with them, clearing space for a new culture that integrates the natural world without privileging it. While Cooper does seem conflicted about the displacement of American Indians, he also seems to see white settlement as a necessary and even good process.

The relationship between native people and the natural world arises again when Natty Bumppo reflects on his life. He tells the Reverend Grant, ““I’m sure I never was so great a fool as to expect to live for ever...no man need do that, who trails the savages through the woods, as I have done, and lives, for the hot months, on the lake-streams...you might look a week now, and not find even the stump of a pine on them; and that’s a wood, that lasts in the ground the better part of a hundred years after the tree is dead”” (135). Bumppo’s comments about trees’ longevity (and his own sense of mortality) serve two purposes. Firstly, his monologue reminds readers why trees are so important to most human cultures. Trees live far longer than humans, a fact that has given them an unusually important role in human spirituality (Maloof 124-125). The trees’

spiritual aid is not Cooper's primary concern here, though. Bumpo's comment also recalls the "vanishing Indian" trope: an entire people have "vanished," just as vast stretches of forest have vanished, in the face of white settlement. The marks that these people and forests have left on the land will last decades and centuries, but the fact is they are gone, never to return. Instead, a new culture is taking root, one that will be, in Cooper's view, stronger and more successful.

In addition to associating Chingachgook with dead trees, Cooper repeatedly highlights the violence that occurs when the Native American environmental ethic meets the American. When Cooper first introduces Bumpo and his companions, they are hunting deer on the Judge's land and the scene is marked by violence and trees. To begin, "A loud shout was given by the unseen marksman, and a couple of men instantly appeared from behind the trunks of two of the pines, where they had evidently placed themselves in expectation of the passage of the deer" (21). Readers are primed to suspect these two new men, a sense that Cooper heightens by placing the characters in monstrous pines, not within an overly civilized oak grove or in a field of cultivated maples. These two mysterious figures are the story's main heroes, but this introduction seems ominous. Natty Bumpo and Oliver Edwards, Elizabeth's love interest, are introduced as one might expect villains to be—lurking in the pine forest and poaching meat. Their presence and way of violence causes violence, highlighting the unsustainability of their method of combining nature and culture.

The violence continues and ultimately Marmaduke shoots Oliver, an accident that the trees witness and record. The narrator tells readers that "The Judge examined the

fresh marks in the bark of the pine” as he tries to establish who shot the deer and who therefore deserves the meat (24). Marmaduke’s examination helps cement the idea that pine trees and violence are intimately connected. Humans commit violence in the relative freedom of the pine-demarcated wilderness, and pines archive it. Pines are too powerful, in a way; their presence and the presence of those who travel easily among them poses a real threat to Templeton, which means that any interaction between a citizen of the town and Bumpo or one of his companions can only result in violence.

### *Conclusion*

The Whiskey Rebellion was a pivotal event in early American history because it pitted so many conflicting political and national philosophies. The rebellion forced the federal government “to concede [that] an inability to enforce laws passed by Congress would be fatal to the new government, while to issue threats would be as damaging to the government’s reputation as surrendering to the demands of lawbreakers” (Berkin ch. 5). Strikingly, the government managed to thwart the rebellion without destroying itself, in large part because it relied on laws and courts to appropriately punish the leaders and pardon the participants, thereby avoiding needless bloodshed and lasting ill will.

However, the federal government’s measured response was largely based in elitism. As Hamilton argued, “the antidote to rebellion was to act quickly and firmly to punish the demagogues and restore the sanity of the gullible ordinary citizens who had followed them” (Berkin ch. 12). The elitist, if politically generous, belief that ordinary citizens could be “restored to sanity” saved the nation, because it showed citizens that the

government could maintain law and order without costing people their lives.

Furthermore, because the Whiskey Rebellion was settled by states working together, the uprising paradoxically “promoted nationalism rather than the provincialism so prominent in the Antifederalist battle against ratification” (Berkin “Epilogue”). As writers and thinkers began working to define the country, they would turn time and again to early revolts like the Whiskey Rebellion to parse what made an American uniquely American. Cooper’s answer to this nationalistic question borrowed from the federal government’s use of legal routes to squash the Whiskey Rebellion and the democratic unity that was born from these legal machinations, but he added an environmental element that few other early nineteenth-century writers thought to include.

Cooper’s sustained defense of forest conservation entails other, related arguments. He does not merely argue that settlers need to treat their natural resources, particularly trees, with care and that those natural resources powerfully symbolize American nationalism. He also argues that newly minted Americans need to balance nature and culture. Anyone who leans too far towards culture, as Richard and Kirby do, disregard the environment as they try to amass wealth. Anyone who leans too far towards nature, as Natty Bumpoo and Chingachgook do, inadvertently cause violence that threatens the white settler’s civilizing project. There is a spot in the middle that acknowledges the importance of nature while still extracting resource from the natural world. This spot, occupied by Judge Marmaduke and his daughter, ought to be America’s foundation because it conserves the natural resources while still ensuring wealth for generations to come, a noble goal for any government. Cooper’s frontier communities are not just a



collection of ramshackle houses, simmering resentments, and hard-won farms. He argues that the natural environment, especially the forests, should be an integral part of the community; ignoring and even excluding the environment leads to deeply harmful practices and dangerous, potentially fatal, situations. Cooper extends his argument, teasing out the differences between white and Native American relationships to nature. However, other authors like Sedgwick more thoroughly examine Native Americans and their removal from land colonized by white immigrants, putting Cooper's nostalgic and mostly symbolic inclusion of America's native peoples to shame, while others like Jane Austen highlight how offer similar economic arguments that help reveal the way environmental arguments of any sort depend entirely on economics.

### *Notes*

1. Admittedly, there are many species of American oak tree (of the 500 species worldwide, about 90 occur in North America) (Preston and Braham 259), but America has never been associated with its oak trees as England has. I argue that part of the reason for America not being connected to its oak trees is because during the nation's early years, politicians and artists worked hard to break free from England's influence, and they therefore distanced themselves from English symbols.
2. Cathedrals were based on forests, so this act of personification is mildly circular.
3. Richard's scientific knowledge is accurate and remains true today. However, he neglects a significant amount of history. Mohegan tribespeople used the inner bark of sugar maples to make a cough syrup and used the sap to make a sweetener

(Tantaquidgeon 69). While Cooper does not acknowledge the relationship between the tree and native knowledge, and Richard's scientific litany certainly elides the Native American local knowledge, the fact remains that New York state's white settlers relied on native knowledge.

4. Ecocritics take a particular interest in work, especially work that is done in a natural setting. Richard White cites this interest—and the continued divide between environmental academics and those who have to work outside—in his essay, writing, “Both destructive work and constructive work bring a knowledge of nature, and sometimes work is destructive and restorative at the same time, as when we cut or burn a meadow to prevent the encroachment of forest” (181). White's nuanced approach to work within the natural world can help us better understand Bill Kirby, who, from Cooper's perspective, does not offer a particularly environmentalist point of view, but from a work perspective, actually offers a strong condemnation of the elitist perspective offered by the Judge.

5. He tells the assembled party that “I'll turn my back to no man in the Ostego hills, for chopping and logging; for boiling down the maple sap; for tending brick-kiln' splitting out rails; making potash, and parling too; or hoeing corn. Though I keep myself, pretty much, to the first business, seeing that the axe comes most natural to me” (226).

6. Kirby is likely referring to a white pine (*Pinus strobus*), which was not only important to the Haudenosaunee, who called it “Tree of Peace” (Parker 608) but also to white settlers, who logged the trees (Preston and Braham 123). It can grow in sandy soil, as

well as boggy areas and rocky highlands, and is famous for being a “common pioneer on old agricultural fields” (Preston and Braham 123).

7. Doolen argues that because “the dilemma of black identity is repeatedly pushed outside...the law...African-American characters...—many of whom live and work in Templeton, virtually unnoticed by readers or critics—are subject to physical abuse” (138) and that “One might bristle at Cooper’s limited treatment of race in *The Pioneers*, but his depiction of the dangerous liminal space occupied by slaves and free African-Americans, a space lacking constitutional protection, effectively contradicts an incipient ideology of Manifest Destiny” (148), particular since “Cooper’s meditations on race relations in *The Pioneers* are those of a sober, if conservative, realist” (149).

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## CHAPTER V

### POETIC TREES, TREES AS POETRY: JANE AUSTEN'S PUSH TO REUNITE

#### NATURE AND CULTURE

And in some circumstances, I have seen beauty arise even from an unbalanced tree; but it must arise from some peculiar situation, which gives it a local propriety... We do not, in these cases, admire it as a tree; but as the adjunct of an effect; the beauty of which does not give the eye leisure to attend to the deformity of the instrument, through which the effect is produced.—William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views*

#### *Introduction*

Much has been made of Lord Mansfield's grandniece, who was born in the British West Indies to a white naval officer and an enslaved African woman. Dido Belle was brought to Mansfield's English estate in 1765 and raised alongside her orphaned white cousin, Lady Elizabeth Murray, whom Lord Mansfield had also adopted; she was, socially, her cousin's equal and visitors to her great-uncle's house confirm that she was a beloved family member, though as an illegitimate daughter she was not granted the same financial opportunities as Elizabeth.<sup>1</sup> While Dido might have been remembered primarily because her great-uncle played such a pivotal role in abolishing slavery in England, many know her less because of her adopted father and more because of a famous painting that depicts Dido and Elizabeth. Both are dressed in sumptuous dresses, Elizabeth in pink silk and Dido in white satin, and are seated outside, "on a terrace overlooking the grounds of Kenwood House..., [which] had been redesigned by Robert Adam in the 1760s, and later

in the century its grounds were laid out with a lake and parklands by Humphry Repton” (Byrne 213). Indistinct but lofty trees occupy nearly half of the painting’s background; their dark branches and leaves frame the two girls, emphasizing their brightness and vitality (Martin). Dido is exoticized; she holds a bowl of foreign fruit and wears a turban, while her cousin holds a book and has flowers woven into her hair. Paula Byrne emphasizes the painting’s background, highlighting the connection between the painting and improvement, a landscape movement that, typically, sought to develop picturesque views.

The portrait of Dido and Elizabeth is rightly considered an important part of English abolition history, but this is partially because the two girls’ guardian was an instrumental, if slightly accidental, part of outlawing slavery in England. Mansfield’s famous decision regarding James Somersett was used to justify freeing all English slaves. His judgment “gave great momentum to the abolitionists” (Byrne 215) but also inspired many artists, from William Cowper to Jane Austen.<sup>2</sup> While postcolonial scholars like Edward Said criticize Austen for ignoring slavery, recent scholarship contextualizes her work, illuminating how the fiercely abolitionist Austen incorporated anti-slavery elements into her stories, but most particularly her third novel, *Mansfield Park* (1814). Byrne highlights how the novel includes abolition elements, contextualizing Austen’s work and the portrait:

Mansfield Park, the great English country house, has often been seen by critics as a symbol of England itself. The interlopers, who create havoc, are London strangers, Mary and Henry Crawford, who threaten the ways and values of the country. But the Crawfords are merely the agents of change: the real corruption



rests at the door of the flawed custodians of the house, Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram and Mrs Norris. Furthermore, Mansfield Park is not an ancient English home, redolent of the paternalistic English gentry...It is a new build, erected on the fruits of the slave trade. (216-217)

While other historical fiction authors like Scott incorporated reactions to colonialism into specific objects, Austen offers an entire estate, and its inhabitants, as a metaphor for colonialism and slavery.<sup>3</sup> Dido's portrait and biography thus undergird her novel, complicating a text that already eludes critics. Furthermore, the painting and its inclusion of improved land neatly capture an understudied element of Austen's novel: nature, specifically trees, and culture are intertwined and any separation between the two is artificial.

I argue that Austen's proto-environmental argument becomes clear when we examine how characters interact with trees: those who connect to the natural world see trees and culture as united, but those who see trees as lifeless social or economic emblems adhere to the philosophy that nature and culture are inextricably divided. I begin with Fanny, who often uses poetry and science to understand her surroundings; her method of combining nature and culture offers one way to avoid the nature/culture binary, though Austen shows that Fanny's approach relies on economic comfort and geographic location. Fanny's female relatives offer the clearest examples of the consequences of dividing nature and culture, as do the Crawford siblings and Fanny's uncle. These people use trees to showcase their own economic and social position but otherwise see no value in the natural world. Finally, Edmund offers an alternative perspective, one that depends entirely on social context. He has an inconsistent

relationship to the nature/culture binary, but his open-mindedness means that he regularly sees the connections between culture and nature and therefore sees trees as having inherent value. My argument illuminates Austen's complicated proto-environmental argument, helping show why ecocritics need to study historical fiction more closely.

I owe much to various feminist scholars, who have devoted considerable time to unraveling Austen's text. Germaine Paulo Walsh summarizes the scholarly situation well, writing that "literary critics have tended to regard Fanny as at best 'essentially passive and uninteresting,' and at worst 'morally detestable,' 'a monster of complacency and pride...under a cloak of cringing self-abasement'" (17). Scholars offer contradictory examinations, with some arguing that "Austen's novels pose 'rational restraint' as superior to 'emotional display,' and thereby support conventional morality," while others suggest that Austen is either a "defender of late eighteenth-early nineteenth century English society" or that she "in fact subtly undermine[s]" "conventional moral standards," rendering her "a defender of individual happiness" and a preeminent Romantic author (Walsh 16). Other feminist scholars like Barbara Britton Wenner and P. Keiko Kagawa, explicate how Austen rectifies "the asymmetrical power relations in class and gender" (Kagawa 127). All these perspectives help encapsulate why *Mansfield Park* continues to garner scholarly interest, even as it fades from popular culture.

Furthermore, I draw from scholars who study how the author discusses improvement and economics. Some scholars identify Austen's transatlantic ties, as Fraser Easton does, and observe that Austen discusses 1790s economic theory, particularly "rural capitalism," and "portrays [the] fundamental conflict between...a new productive

and financial economy, with which West Indian plantocracy is identified, and a customary or 'moral' economy, to which certain forms of service are related" (459). Gerry Brenner outlines how Austen emphasizes "the principle of improvement—the notion of increasing the value, condition, or quality of something" (26) while other scholars like Duckworth argue that, because "estates function not only as the settings...but as indexes to the character and social responsibility of their owners" (38), those willing to "indiscriminate[ly cut] down...trees," magically create rivers and lakes, and relocate "whole villages which [block] the prospect and [redirect]...roads by special acts of Parliament" are morally suspect (44-45). Scholars have covered so many of *Mansfield Park's* angles, but even the few ecocritical approaches neglect Austen's trees, favoring instead her era's abstract landscape debates.

*An Unwelcome Example: Fanny and Her Ability to Integrate Nature and Culture*

Austen's protagonist does not offer simple answers, a fact most critics note when they write about *Mansfield Park*. Fanny Price does not generate the same response as Austen's other female heroines; in fact, despite her steadfastness and intriguing environmental example, Fanny is easily Austen's most disliked character. Michiel Heyns writes that "Our lack of enthusiasm [for Fanny] may be partly prompted by Jane Austen's tone, the dry, unecstatic manner in which she closes her novel" (1), while Brenner cites "the polite hostility" the novel "creates," ultimately arguing that many readers miss the author's ironic and "feigned choice between" "moral stability" and "egoistic animation" (24-25). Others note Fanny's passivity, though Easton points out that Fanny's rejection of

Henry Crawford signals she is far from submissive (461) and that it is Fanny who questions her uncle's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade (459-460). Austen's characterization helps her readers ask questions: how do they relate to the natural world? How does culture interfere with or support their relationship to the natural world? What could they do better? Fanny models one way that readers can strive to integrate nature and culture, using poetry and scientific knowledge to better understand her surroundings.

Austen's era was characterized by a push towards improvement. Landscape theorists like Humphry Repton helped improve country estates and produced detailed texts designed to help others improve their landscape. When Repton was asked to improve a garden, he would produce detailed written and illustrated plans, taking local features into account, even if sometimes those features were removed. Repton saw a clear relationship between culture and landscape, writing in the Advertisement for *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* that "both taste and understanding require cultivation and improvement... Thus in poetry, in painting, and in architecture, *false taste is propagated by the sanction given to mediocrity*" (10, original emphasis). Repton advocates for careful improvement, completed with full awareness of the place and the people who live there, a stance that Austen also supports. Critics often criticize the landscaper, and Austen's own thoughts on his methods remain debated, with many seeing her work as a firm rebuttal of improvement. However, some, like Richard Quaintance, offer a sustained defense of Austen's depiction of Repton, establishing what he "consider[s] genuine congenialities between them, of wit about words and of values about behavior" (365). Regardless of her stance on one particular improver, Austen

criticizes improvement in general, particularly when those who are undereducated or careless undertake the alterations. Fanny Price, however, demonstrates how women can appropriately identify with the natural world, reintegrating nature and culture to construct a viable and beautiful scene.

One of the first times Austen shows Fanny verbally discussing the natural world, she showcases how people can use culture to understand the natural world. After her cousin's fiancé describes his plans for a row of trees at Sotherton, his country estate, Fanny speaks softly to Edmund, her only sympathetic listener, telling him, "'Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does it not make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited'''" (83).<sup>4</sup> Fanny's first discussion of the natural world, and her relationship to it, involves a poem, displaying her keen ability to merge nature and culture. Cowper's poem helps Fanny articulate her issues with destroying the trees, underscoring the value she sees in the trees. For her, the trees are as much part of her culture as the poem; likewise, the poem is as much a part of nature as the trees. Additionally, Fanny's citation of Cowper's poem also serves as a criticism of slavery, albeit a veiled one. *The Task* is an abolition poem and Fanny's knowledge of it helps display an anti-slavery bent that troubles the Bertram family (Byrne 216). With one simple reference, Austen illustrates how Fanny differs from her family, helping readers make sense of her responses to the actions and items that surround her.

Fanny's use of poetry helps her relate to the trees, an act of personification that helps her overcome the nature/culture split and sympathize with the trees, but Cowper's poem also helps her establish the copse's value. After quoting the poem, Fanny admits

that ““I should like to see Sotherton before it [the row of trees] is cut down, to see the place as it is now, in its old state”” (84). To Fanny’s mind, the trees have inherent value; her comment echoes Scott’s sense that trees observe and embody history. Cutting the old, established trees will drastically change the estate but it will also destroy a piece of history. Furthermore, Fanny’s statement establishes a critique of improvement. Certainly there are reasons to alter the natural world, but thoughtless tree-felling meant to emphasize economic wealth is not among them. Fanny’s use of poetry helps readers connect trees to culture, while also offering an implicit criticism of a culture that recommends cutting down trees.

Austen repeatedly emphasizes how Fanny mingles human and nonhuman, and her empathy evolves out of her ability to see trees as humanlike. Fanny’s “own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions; and in observing the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children, she found entertainment” (106). Her list of observations mixes human and nonhuman and ultimately all are considered equally. The road and the soil, the cattle and the children: all deserve sustained interest. Furthermore, the list implicitly links human and nonhuman, displaying the countryside’s complex interrelations. For instance, soil types influence road construction and harvest, and humans are dependent upon the natural world that surrounds them, though Fanny seems to be the only character in the book willing to admit as much. She sees how nature and culture are mingled and seeks to keep them united, rather than reproducing the alienation that marks her family members and companions.

While Fanny manages to unite nature and culture repeatedly, her ability contrasts her sharply with others, particularly Mary Crawford. The narrator cites one time when “Fanny, having been sent into the village on some errand by her aunt Norris, was overtaken by a heavy shower close to the Parsonage; and being descried from one of the windows endeavouring to find shelter under the branches and lingering leaves of an oak just beyond their premises, was forced, though not without some modest reluctance on her part, to come in” (220). While a tree does not make ideal shelter for a storm, Fanny considers the tree better company than Mary. The fact that she huddles under an oak lends the scene an inescapable symbolism. Fanny connects to England’s ancient symbol, much like Locksley and his oaken throne, while Mary attempts to pull her away, severing her connection with nature and with the ancient values that make England great. Mary, an interloper, takes the role of an invader, symbolically cutting Fanny off from the natural world and the forests and thereby reenacting the Norman invasion. Still, just as Scott recognized that England had much to learn from its invaders, Fanny recognizes that she cannot stay outside. She needs shelter, even if she must find it with someone she dislikes. The scene thus helps readers reflect on compromise and what price they are willing to pay for luxury.

Fanny’s ability to see value in trees inspires her second monologue, a speech that furthers the sense that she and Mary are opposites. During one afternoon as Mary and Fanny socialize in Dr. Grant’s shrubbery, Fanny offers her opinion on trees:

I am so glad to see the evergreens thrive!...My uncle’s gardener always says the soil here is better than his own, and so it appears from the growth of the laurels

and evergreens in general.—The evergreen!—How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen!—When one thinks of it, how astonishing a variety of nature!—In some countries we know the tree that sheds its leaf is the variety, but that does not make it less amazing, that the same soil and the same sun should nurture plants differing in the first rule and law of their existence. You will think me rhapsodizing; but when I am out of doors, especially when I am sitting out of doors, I am very apt to get into this sort of wondering strain. One cannot fix one's eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy. (224)

Kathleen Anderson draws attention to the particular tree that Fanny chooses to extol, emphasizing that evergreen trees are typically held to be immortal and unchanging because they remain green, a fact she connects to the author's moral: all humans should seek "the maintenance of rootedness and the continuous achievement of growth and renewal, for themselves as for their naturescapes. Positive change is only that which preserves the ability to self-sustain" (91). However, in addition to contrasting potential approaches to change and improvement, Fanny's speech demonstrates how scientific knowledge can combine with aesthetic appreciation to form a strong attachment to the natural world, an attachment that does not demand nature and culture remain separate but instead allows observers the chance to mingle all they know and feel and thus become clearer, more creative thinkers.

Austen depicts Fanny responding negatively to human-managed trees, furthering the sense that she connects emotionally to her surroundings. As Fanny walks with Edmund and Mary through a built wilderness<sup>5</sup> at Sotherton, she comments, "I wonder that I should be tired with only walking in this sweet wood; but the next time we come to a seat, if it is not disagreeable to you, I should be glad to sit down for a little while"



(118). Much is wrong with Sotherton's managed wilderness and Fanny is the only character who seems to notice that the area is off. While Fanny is repeatedly shown to be sickly and while her family, particularly Mrs. Norris, frequently use exercise to control and abuse her, usually when she is among trees, she is strong and hale. The woods at Sotherton, however, have the opposite effect. Partially, Fanny seems overwhelmed by her companions' actions, who are taking full advantage of the freedom the wood affords. However, the wood itself troubles her as well. The artificial design and complete disregard for what would suit the space—that is, the complete privileging of culture over nature—causes readers to question Fanny's ill-health and how their own health might be related to the (un)natural world.

Fanny also reacts negatively when she is divided from the natural world, showing that when she is in challenging circumstances, she retreats to her culture's environmental norms. When Fanny's uncle exiles her to Portsmouth, the loss of trees hits her particularly hard. Passing several months in an urban environment, the narrator writes that "It was sad to Fanny to lose all the pleasures of spring. She had not known before what pleasures she *had* to lose in passing March and April in a town. She had not known before how much the beginnings and progress of vegetation had delighted her" (430). Fanny's reaction to living in Portsmouth again reflects the social elitism she has learned as Mansfield; many of her complaints arises from her expectation of privilege and relative luxury. However, her lack of access to the natural environment—or at least picturesque natural environments—affects her the most, impacting her health and her emotions.

Of course, Portsmouth does not actually lack the natural world. The narrator describes a Sunday that has a “brisk soft wind, and bright sun, occasionally clouded for a minute” and notes that Fanny becomes distracted because “everything looked so beautiful under the influence of such a sky, the effects of the shadows pursuing each other on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond, with the ever-varying hues of the sea, now at high water, dancing in its glee and dashing against the ramparts with so fine a sound” (410). Oddly, Portsmouth’s natural environment is lesser than Mansfield’s; some days, when the weather and tide make the scene picturesque, Fanny can appreciate her surroundings with the same artistic eye that marks her observations of Mansfield’s natural setting. The rest of the time, though, the scene is not worth observing. During her time at Portsmouth, Fanny reflects her society’s norms: she divides herself from nature, retreating to culture to remain above (or at least separate from) her family members.

Fanny’s willingness to retreat from and ignore her natural surroundings saps her health. The narrator comments that “What animation, both of body and mind, she had derived from watching the advance of that season which cannot, in spite of its capriciousness, be unlovely, and seeing its increasing beauties from the earliest flowers in the warmest divisions of her aunt’s garden, to the opening of leaves of her uncle’s plantations, and the glory of his woods” is lost because she is living in a cramped house in the middle of a busy city (430). More than anything, Fanny misses the trees; however, the trees’ presence also implies a certain standard of living, making the trees a symbol of upper-class life. Fanny’s memories of her uncle’s forest echoes the time when she stood outside under an oak during a rainstorm and had to make a decision about whether she

ought to associate with Mary Crawford. She again has a choice: try to be content with life in Portsmouth or accept Henry Crawford and regain access to invigorating, picturesque natural environments through a questionable marriage. The memories of her life among the trees of Mansfield make an otherwise untenable decision more attractive, perhaps helping explain why those who do not have regular access to forested natural environments make questionable, greedy, or counterproductive decisions. Readers are as relieved as Fanny when the decision is taken out of her hands and she returns to Mansfield in the wake of Henry Crawford and Maria's adulterous affair, Mary Crawford's mercenary suggestions for handling the affair, and Julia's elopement.

When Fanny returns to her uncle's estate, she lingers over the natural world more than the people or buildings. As she approaches the house, "her eye fell every where on lawns and plantations of the freshest green; and the trees, though not fully clothed, were in that delightful state, when farther beauty is known to be at hand, and when, while much is actually given to the sight, more yet remains for the imagination" (445). Again, the narrator highlights Fanny's ability to merge nature and culture; nature sparks the imagination and fuels the spirit in direct contrast to Portsmouth. Reunited with her trees, Fanny is finally able to reconnect to the natural world and she emphasizes the beauty that surrounds her in the place where she was transplanted. She senses that she can thrive here, in a way she was unable to in the city.

However, when she is not mired in a city, Fanny can connect nature and culture even from within built environments. Fanny and Edmund stand before one of Sotherton's windows, staring out across a landscape "where all that was solemn, and soothing, and

lovely, appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and [in] the contrast of the deep shade of the woods” (135). While the scene nearly recalls the portrait of Dido and Elizabeth, with dark trees highlighting a civilized and tended scene, it is missing the human element. Fanny and Edmund observe the area from a distance, rendering the view more like a painting than a living and breathing environment. However, the scene’s artistry helps establish what improvement can do, under certain circumstances. The fact that the woods form an integral part of the view and that the narrator, through Fanny’s perspective, renders the scene akin to a painting helps demonstrate how nature and culture can be integrated. Fanny sees before her a living painting, one that relies on her ability to use culture and to value nature, even if nighttime hides the scene’s deficient improvements.

Fanny highlights her natural surrounding’s cultural resonance, using human artistry to connect with the picturesque natural scene. In the first of her two monologues, she tells Edmund,

Here’s harmony!...here’s repose! Here’s what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe! Here’s what may tranquillise every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene. (135)

Austen no longer couches her sense of the nature/culture divide through the narrator but instead has Fanny speak directly, and her speech is electric. She not only emphasizes what people can gain through the natural world, but she also highlights how human

culture draws from the natural world. Austen makes the same point as Scott, Sedgwick, and Cooper: those who uphold the nature/culture binary end up trapped in a violent system, while those who work hard to reconnect nature and culture typically offer a nuanced, just, and equitable perspective. Austen adds an additional valence to her argument, though. To her mind, improvement can help people connect nature and culture; the heavy emphasis on artistry helps people realize that nature influences culture. Fanny ranks nature above culture, but her exaggeration pushes readers to consider the natural world's influences and how they connect culture and nature.

*Power, But at What Cost?: Upholding the Nature/Culture Binary*

While Fanny frequently mingles nature and culture when she interacts with trees, her ability to do so marks her as unique. Her female relatives, particularly her aunt Mrs. Norris and her cousin Maria Bertram, see no inherent value in nature and only pay attention to trees when they can grant the women some sort of social power. Similarly, Maria's fiancé Mr. Rushworth structures his built environment and his improvement plans specifically to exclude trees and thereby demonstrate his financial power, privileging the nature/culture divide; his approach frequently results in mismanaged trees, generating a legacy of environmental violence. The Crawford siblings also uphold the nature/culture binary, and their ultimate exile from Mansfield showcases their approach's costs. Henry feels free when he is among trees and his most socially problematic actions occur within wooded areas, generating tremendous suffering for his women companions. However, he also recommends improvements that help fabricate social and familial

histories, playing off of the sense that Scott underlines in *Ivanhoe* that trees embody history, but his manipulation of the land and its history further upholds the nature/culture binary. His sister, much like Mrs. Norris and Maria, uses the natural world for her own social gain, though Mary is also the only character who explicitly discusses the divide between humans and nature. Fanny's uncle and her cousin Tom both use trees to control others, the latter trying to control his father's impression of Tom's actions and the former trying to control Fanny and her relationship to the Bertram family. In all, those who surround Fanny uphold the nature/culture binary to display and gain social and economic power, causing widespread environmental and emotional violence.

Many Romantic-era political commentators used personification and tree metaphors to describe various governmental and social failings. Playwright Oliver Goldsmith's analogy in "On National Prejudices" offers a particularly compelling metaphor:

...for let a man's birth be ever so high, his station ever so exalted, or his fortune ever so large, yet, if he is not free from the national and all other prejudices, I should make bold to tell him, that he had a low and vulgar mind, and had no just claim to the character of a gentleman. And, in fact, you will always find, that those are most apt to boast of national merit, who have little or no merit of their own to depend on, than which, to be sure, nothing is more natural: the slender vine twists around the sturdy oak for no other reason in the world, but because it has not strength sufficient to support itself. (222-223)

His image of a vine climbing up an oak, that perennial symbol of England, contains implicit menace: the vine could always choke out the tree, destroying the very support it needs to survive. Goldsmith thus draws a parallel between upper-class English citizens

and those who ignorantly and mistakenly tie their merit and their nation's. Though he does not directly critique the rich, his parallel leaves little doubt: the wealthy rely on the nation to protect and support them but offer little in return. Goldsmith's metaphor combines nature and culture to produce an implicit but pointed critique of England's social structure, a critique that Austen echoes throughout her novel.

Mrs. Norris is the character who most obviously (and most unsuccessfully) manipulates nature to gain social prestige, a use of nature that does not integrate nature and culture but rather further divides the two. Mrs. Norris tells Dr. Grant, who occupies the house where she used to live with her husband, that "We did a vast deal in that way at the parsonage; we made it quite a different place from what it was when we first had it... It was only the spring twelvemonth before Mr Norris's death, that we put in the apricot against the stable wall, which is now grown such a noble tree, and getting to such perfection" (81-82). Byrne calls Austen's depiction of Mrs. Norris her "most unrelenting portrait of meanness and corrupted power," particularly because she treats Fanny "like a slave" (222); indeed, her name matches that of Robert Norris, a slaver who was famous for betraying abolitionists by testifying against them and arguing that "the slave trade had positive effects in Africa" (Byrne 222-3). Her description of her work at the parsonage and her "improvements" only underlines her "corruption." The tree, which is no longer hers, confers value on the land, which is also no longer hers, and she takes complete credit for the tree. Mrs. Norris considers the tree an emblem of her superior taste and social understanding, and she tries to use the tree to elevate herself. In so doing, she only

proves her utter separation from the natural world, because she is, in fact, utterly wrong about the whole situation.

Because Mrs. Norris's version of events is inaccurate, she demonstrates the unrealistic perspective of those who adhere to the nature/culture binary in an effort to gain social power. Dr. Grant reveals the truth, telling Mrs. Norris that "'The tree thrives well, beyond a doubt...The soil is good; and I never pass it without regretting that the fruit should be so little worth the trouble of gathering'" (82). Austen offers two versions of the same tree: Mrs. Norris's perfect apricot, which produces expensive and therefore socially useful fruit, and Dr. Grant's imperfect interloper, which produces little of value despite the fact it is situated well. Both characters want to derive value from the tree, and neither is satisfied by the actual tree. While Dr. Grant offers observations of the tree that integrate science and nature, he still wants the tree to offer something. He does not cite the apricot's aesthetics, nor does he suggest that it is enough for the tree to simply exist; he wants more, wants a productive tree with fruit he can use. He may offer a more "realistic" portrayal than Mrs. Norris, but he is similarly mired in the nature/culture binary, and the only use he seems to find for the tree is as a way to undermine Mrs. Norris.

Mrs. Norris insists on the financial value of her tree, which Austen uses to highlight how the character separates human and nonhuman. "'Sir,'" she tells Dr. Grant, "'it is a moor park, we bought it as a moor park, and it cost us—that is, it was a present from Sir Thomas, but I saw the bill, and I know it cost seven shillings, and was charged as a moor park'" (82).<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Norris offers several examples of the nature/culture binary in



her short rebuttal. She first highlights her own unreliableness, as she attempts to lie about the tree's provenance then retracts her statement before someone else can correct her. Her attempt at a lie and subsequent correction highlight her sense that trees confer social value, though that value relies on how the tree was procured. Obviously, it would be better for Mrs. Norris if she could claim her husband purchased the tree; it would prove their wealth and sophistication. Furthermore, she emphasizes the tree's cost as well as its label, disregarding the actual tree itself. The apricot is not an actual tree; it is a receptacle, an emblem designed to showcase the Norris's superiority and social clout. The tree's physicality does not matter to her, leading Mrs. Norris to alienate herself from the actual tree.

Mrs. Norris's niece similarly oscillates between indifference and greed, displaying her desire to use the nature/culture binary to increase her own social clout. Maria Bertram tells her fiancé heedlessly, "'The avenue! Oh! I do not recollect it. I really know very little of Sotherton'" (83). Her attitude recalls her aunt's careless attitude towards actual trees; she is only interested in what will grant her social clout, and to her mind, the trees at her future home do not directly help her. However, her thoughtless comment also reflects her feelings towards Mr. Rushworth. She desires his wealth and (relative) social prestige, but she does not care about the man himself and therefore does not care about his plans.

However, Maria's carelessness dissipates as she realizes the social power and freedom she might gain from having access to Rushworth's extensive grounds. As a party composed of Mrs. Norris, Fanny, and others from Mansfield approach Sotherton, Miss

Bertram “could not tell Miss Crawford that ‘those woods belonged to Sotherton,’ she could not carelessly observe that ‘she believed that it was now all Mr Rushworth’s property on each side of the road,’ without elation of heart; and it was a pleasure to increase with their approach to the capital freehold mansion, and ancient manorial residence of the family” (107). Austen’s negatives highlight Miss Bertram’s complicated social motivations. For Miss Bertram, the natural world is only valuable when it adds to her own social standing; when the land marks her as a person of wealth and power, she is willing to observe it carefully and closely, though her comments do not reflect any understanding of the nature/culture binary’s consequences, but when her surroundings have no impact on her social standing, she stops caring.

Like her aunt, Maria uses the natural world to display material wealth, hoping to gain power from her surroundings without admitting that the natural world has any inherent value. When Fanny asks about the avenue of trees that are likely to be cut down, Miss Bertram points them out, telling her, ““You may see something of it here—something of the more distant trees. It is oak entirely”” (108). Peter Young writes that “the reputation of the oak is based not on superlatives but on its character...it is not a celebrity but a reliable, solid citizen, somebody with integrity” (23), which helps showcase Maria’s cluelessness and the shortsightedness of her fiancé’s improvements. Rather than celebrate and preserve a highly respected tree, Maria and her fiancé want a way to show off wealth. Cutting down a row of trees drastically changes the approach to the house, thereby proving to visitors that the inhabitants have the money to make drastic

improvements. Once again, trees are used to display economic power, regardless of the actual, physical trees or what is best for the natural world.

Other characters likewise use improvement and the movement's picturesque goals to justify their abiding alienation from the natural world. Mr. Rushworth, Fanny's cousin's fiancé, tells his in-laws that at another estate, "“There have been two or three fine old trees cut down, that grew too near the house, and it opens the prospect amazingly, which makes me think that Repton [his landscaper]...would certainly have the avenue at Sotherton down”" (83). On the one hand, consulting an actual improver certainly suggests that Rushworth has some sense of his own design shortcomings. However, he displays a certain arrogance that implies he will not listen to Repton's advice and may override the expert's opinions in an effort to better show off his property. That his decisions will likely harm the natural world (and his property's value) does not occur to him; he is intent on displaying his wealth and using the natural world to do so.

Indeed, rather than creating a picturesque scene that celebrates the intermingling of nature and culture, Sotherton appears to be a monument to the divide. The narrator tells us that "“The lawn, bounded on each side by a high wall, contained beyond the first planted area a bowling-green, and beyond the bowling-green a long terrace walk, backed by iron palisades, and commanding a view over them into the tops of the trees of the wilderness immediately adjoining”" (115). Rushworth has installed a literal wall between the house and the natural world, ensuring that the two areas cannot merge. The "iron palisades" (the polar opposite of Natty Bumppo's oaken version) demarcate the human area and cut it off from nonhuman influences. The tightly controlled natural area within

the palisades are a further tribute to Rushworth's alienation from the natural world. The character sees no connection between nature and culture and strives to keep the two as separate as physically possible.

Rushworth's built environment is not the only emblem of his adherence to the nature/culture binary. The natural environment surrounding his country seat are tailored to uphold the binary. As the visitors to Sotherton enter the estate's wilderness, an area cultivated to resemble an old-growth forest, they pass through "a planted wood of about two acres, and though chiefly of larch and laurel, and beech cut down, and though laid out with too much regularity, was darkness and shade, and natural beauty, compared with the bowling-green and the terrace" (115-116). Austen contrasts the small planted trees, ones more commonly planted in shrubberies than forests (Shapard 177, 179), with the missing beeches, a type of tree that would have been more appropriate for a shady wilderness (Shapard 179), ultimately describing a natural area that has been poorly managed. The managed wilderness still offers some respite from Rushworth's dogged adherence to the nature/culture binary, especially when the trees are contrasted with the highly managed and isolated area near his house, but every decision about the wilderness displays his utter disconnect from the natural world. Rather than leave the trees he had already or plant trees that suit the area, Rushworth selected a seemingly random array of trees and had them planted without regard for aesthetics. The wilderness flaunts Rushworth's money, certainly, but the trees also indicate the degree to which the man alienates himself from the natural world as well as underscoring his incomplete understanding of improvement. The wilderness is thus a folly, an artificial element

included to increase a scene's picturesqueness but often at great cost and to middling results.

The mismanaged wilderness area, and the nature/culture binary that created it, results in a variety of transgressive acts, hinting at the social and political upset, if not emotional violence, the binary causes. Henry Crawford uses the wilderness, and Mr. Rushworth's absence, to have a romantic interlude with Maria and appeals to Fanny, saying, "If we are [missed], Miss Price will be so good as to tell [Mr. Rushworth] that he will find us near that knoll: the grove of oak on the knoll" (123), then slides through the gate with Miss Bertram. Crawford provides an alternative relationship to the natural world: he sees the natural world as providing the freedom that culture prohibits. While in other texts, particularly Scott's *Ivanhoe*, the forests are a haven from repressive political/cultural regimes, Austen emphasizes such freedom's dark social aspects. Those who enter natural areas with base intentions find that forested areas especially support their misdeeds. Crawford can romance an engaged woman in the forest because there are no chaperons; even the oak trees, with their various cultural/historical associations, do not stop him. Crawford sees the woods as a covert ally, sheltering him and his various libertine plans, but considering the trees an ally does not mean he tries to overcome the nature/culture binary.

Like Henry, Mr. Yates, Tom's companion and Julia's future husband, experiences greater freedom in the forest than among other people. While Tom attempts to redirect his father's ire, Mr. Yates feels strongly that Sir Thomas ought to be chided for cancelling the play, and "He believed this very stoutly while he was in Mansfield Wood,

and all the way home; but there was a something in Sir Thomas, when they sat round the same table, which made Mr. Yates think it wiser to let him pursue his own way, and feel the folly of it without opposition” (207). Among the trees, Mr. Yates feels free and justified; he, like Henry, is able to think and act as he sees fit. But when he reenters society, he returns to social convention, bowing to Sir Thomas and accepting his judgment. While Mr. Yates later elopes with Julia, suggesting, again, that time among trees fosters some degree of sexual license, in general he follows social convention.

Men like Henry Crawford and Mr. Yates take advantage of the natural world and the relative freedom it allows, but the narrator also highlights how Henry uses the natural world to display his desire for family history and prestige. When Henry broaches the subject of Edmund’s eventual living, he explains that, while he was wandering through the countryside because he lost his way ““after passing that old farm house with the yew trees,”” he found himself standing before ““a church standing on a sort of knoll”” and “the Parsonage, within a stone’s throw of the said knoll and church”” (252-253). By the 1700s, yews were almost uniquely linked to graveyards, where they were protected from logging; throughout Europe, though, the tree species had been driven nearly to extinction by bow production (Hageneder 103-113). Associated with graveyards and “the mass longbow slaughters of the Middle Ages” (122), Henry Crawford’s citation of the tree evokes long history, one associated with violence and environmental destruction, lending an unsettled air to the scene and to the laundry list of improvements he suggests.

The strangeness of his effort to find Edmund’s living is compounded by his immediate description of all that needs to change to ensure the house reflects Edmund’s

position as a gentleman and, implicitly, the nature/culture binary. Henry declares that ““There will be work for five summers at least before the place is live-able,”” and proceeds to list all the various changes he would make:

The farm-yard must be cleared away entirely, and planted up to shut out the blacksmith’s shop. The house must be turned to front the east instead of the north—the entrance and principal rooms, I mean, must be on that side, where the view is really very pretty; I am sure it may be done. And *there* must be your approach—through what is at present the garden. You must make a new garden at what is now the back of the house; which will be giving it the best aspect in the world, sloping to the south-east. The ground seems precisely formed for it. I rode fifty yards up the lane between the church and the house in order to look about me; and saw how it might all be. Nothing can be easier. The meadows beyond what *will be* the garden, as well as what now *is*, sweeping round from the lane I stood in to the north-east, that is, to the principal road through the village, must be all laid together, of course; very pretty meadows they are, finely sprinkled with timber. They belong to the living, I suppose; if not, you must purchase them. Then the stream—something must be done with the stream; but I could not quite determine what. I had two or three ideas. (253-254)

Edmund Burke writes that “a spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors... Thus, by preserving the method of nature..., in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete” (275), and Henry Crawford’s ambitious improvement plans certainly showcase why thoughtless improvement raises difficulties. Henry wants to erase Edmund’s future living and rebuild it from the ground up, all so Edmund can showcase his status as a gentleman. The estate he imagines belongs to a very wealthy man indeed, and following his advice would establish an exaggerated, if not entirely falsified, sense of Edmund’s material worth and would not suit his occupation. Like Mrs. Norris and Maria, Henry seeks to use

the natural world to establish social power, “improving” the living so it suits a man of means—and, implicitly, a woman like his sister Mary, who has plans to marry Edmund.

Henry’s sister matches his alienation, which helps readers question her motives and influence. However, she is the only character who explicitly questions the divide between wealthy people and the natural world. When she finds that she cannot enter the Sotherton wood, she whines, ““Here is a nice little wood, if one can but get into it. What happiness if the door should not be locked! but of course it is; for in these great places the gardeners are the only people who can go where they like”” (115). Easton argues that scenes like this one reveal that Mary views other people as “as instruments awaiting the command of her money” and “assumes that there is a market in human beings: everyone—like everything—should be subject to exchange and available for a price” (470), a stance that highlights the novel’s subversive commentary on slavery. However, this scene further questions the relationship between people and the natural world. Mary is blocked from accessing the natural world because of her social position and gender, a fact she hints at when she claims Sotherton’s wilderness is inaccessible. Her comment further highlights the way nature and culture are separated, providing a visual just as powerful as Rushworth’s iron palisade. Mary’s offer the perspective that English culture demands people remain alienated from the natural world and that her isolation from the natural world is not her fault. However, regardless of whether Mary is responsible for the division between nature and culture, she certainly embraces the distance.

Austen directly contrasts Mary and Fanny, drawing attention to the former’s alienation and disregard for the natural world. The narrator points out that Mary “had



none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw nature, inanimate nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively" (106). Mary embraces culture to the exclusion of nature; her world revolves around social interaction and, more particularly, social power. To maintain her place, she must carefully observe others and in so doing, she neglects the natural world. After Fanny's monologue about pines, Mary responds carelessly, telling her that "'To say the truth...I am something like the famous Doge at the court of Lewis XIV; and may declare that I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it'" (224). Wenner offers a sympathetic reading of Mary's comments. She argues that Mary places "herself as an object in the landscape," mimicking the way a "male landscape proprietor might observe her" (69). Furthermore, Mary aligns herself with a canny political figure, highlighting her own social maneuverings. Her comment's political and cultural valences do not alter the fact that Mary once again appreciates the natural world only as background. The natural world, and trees especially, can highlight her social position, but other than that, natural spaces have little value.

The Bertram men are little different from Mrs. Norris, Maria, or the Crawfords: they too position themselves as separate from the natural world and work to disconnect nature and culture. Tom Bertram rarely speaks, but when he tries to deflect his father's questions about the highly inappropriate play he tried to stage in his father's absence, he uses the estate's woods as a distraction. He tells his father,

The first day I went over Mansfield Wood, and Edmund took the copses beyond Easton, and we brought home six brace between us, and might each have killed

six times as many, but we respect your pheasants, sir, I assure you, as much as you could desire. I do not think you will find your woods by any means worse stocked than they were. *I* never saw Mansfield Wood so full of pheasants in my life as this year. (198-199)

As happens throughout the novel, Tom falls back on an economic argument. He cites the value of the forest, which is contained entirely in its ability to produce birds for the Bertrams to hunt, and stresses that he helped preserve the wooded area's value rather than decrease it. He thus hopes to gain favor, echoing his sister's attempts to gain social value through her fiancé's property. If he can prove to his father that he can care for Mansfield as carefully as his father would wish, then perhaps he can avert a discussion of his attempt to stage a play.

Tom's appeal to value is logical, given that Sir Thomas's perspective repeatedly revolves around value. When he admires Fanny at one point, "without attributing all her personal beauty, as Mrs. Norris seemed to do, to her transplantation to Mansfield, he [admits that he] was pleased with himself for having supplied everything else: education and manners she owed to him" (285). While transplant does not exclusively refer to plants, readers are immediately reminded of plants being moved ("transplant, v.") and begin to wonder what exactly Fanny's forcible move to Mansfield has cost her. Overall, Austen implies that the move is a good one; Fanny flourishes at the country estate and her close connection to the natural world would have been unlikely, if not impossible, if she had remained in Portsmouth for her entire life. Her uncle's use of a botanical metaphor, however, reveals the extent to which he emphasizes value, whether he seeks value from the natural world or from his ward. Still, it is clear enough given the trust he extends to

the Crawfords and his daughters' sexual misadventures that Sir Thomas fails as a father and a guardian. The fact that it is Fanny, "not the adulterous Maria or the flighty Julia," who is "the true daughter of Mansfield" is not due to Sir Thomas (Byrne 223). Fanny manages to retain her ability to speak "truth to power" (Byrne 223) *despite* being transplanted to Mansfield, rather than because of it, and the issue of what she "owes" remains an open question.

*Alternative Options: Edmund's Tenuous Environmental Relationship*

While Fanny relates cultural elements back to trees as often as she can, and while her relatives and acquaintances use trees to establish power and prestige, Edmund oscillates between the two. Depending on his social context, Edmund either relates directly to the natural world like Fanny or tries to distance himself like his relatives. Edmund's vacillation is understandable, but Austen also implies that with his open mind and Fanny's continued influence, he will learn to ignore social convention and always merge cultural artifacts and trees. Ultimately, his approach to the nature/culture binary displays an awareness that trees have inherent value and situates him as an appropriate husband for Fanny.

If the Crawfords represent the political and social ramifications of inappropriate improvement, Edmund displays the opposite. He repeatedly supports careful, subtle improvement, especially when the improvements involve trees. Austen's interest in depicting the natural world carefully remains undebatable, even if, as R.H. Richens observes, Austen is one of the few authors who "observes precisely but writes generally"

about tree. Her “letters reveal precise recognition of kinds of tree” but “particularization is largely absent from her novels” (134). Thus, *Mansfield Park* offers a remarkable attention to trees, both in passing and when they are threatened by improvement.

Many of Austen’s trees are informed by the writings of landscape theorists like William Gilpin, who writes, for instance, carefully distinguishes between larches. Alpine larches grow to “a very great size” and have been used as masts (*Remarks* 74), while English ones are “diminutive” and “little more than the puny inhabitant of a garden” (*Remarks* 76). Furthermore, the Alpine larch appears almost artificial: “The characters of grand noble seldom belong to it. It is however an elegant tree; tho, in our soil at least, too formal in its growth. Among it’s [sic] native steeps it’s [sic] form, no doubt, is fully picturesque” (*Remarks* 76). Indeed, Gilpin typically emphasizes a tree’s artistic properties, condemning beeches as “very deficient,” though its “trunk...is often highly picturesque” (*Remarks* 46). Still, a beech “has sometimes it’s beauty, and oftener it’s [sic] use,” particularly when one is planted alone (*Remarks* 49). Interestingly, Gilpin concludes his section on beeches by remarking that the most beautiful scenes “arise from the union of oak, and beech. We often see a wonderful effect from this combination” (*Remarks* 50). An emphasis on trees’ artistry reoccurs throughout landscape theory. Capability Brown’s frequently insists on cutting down straight lines of trees, while Price describes a situation eerily similar to Rushworth’s: “At a gentleman’s place in Cheshire, there is an avenue of oaks situated much in the manner I have described; Mr. Brown absolutely condemned it; but it now stands, a noble monument of the triumph of the natural feelings of the owner, over the narrow and systematic ideas of a professed

improver” (*Essays*, 249-250). The complicated, and unsettled, relationship between trees and art provides one avenue for reuniting nature and culture, but, as Edmund demonstrates, the approach is far from ideal because it frequently involves appealing to those who are alienated from the natural world and risking corpses of ancient trees.

Edmund thus offers a weak alternative to the nature/culture binary, one that shifts depending on the situation and social context. As he approaches Sotherton, he remarks that, while he does not wish to influence his future brother-in-law, ““had I a place to new fashion, I should not put myself into the hands of an improver. I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty, of my own choice, and acquired progressively. I would rather abide by my own blunders than by his”” (84). Edmund’s comment is risky; certainly none of his companions demonstrate the same committed work ethic and those who do want to direct the improvement of their property do not display any discernment. Readers have seen Rushworth’s preferences and know that his tastes are ill-informed, primarily because he is more interested in using his property’s trees to gain social clout. Edmund’s comment thus represents a fresh point of view. Indeed, his potential as an improver is cemented when he goes on to tell Fanny and Mary that Rushworth’s house, which ““was built in Elizabeth’s time, and is a large, regular, brick building; heavy, but respectable looking, and has many good rooms,”” ““is ill placed. It stands in one of the lowest spots of the park; in that respect, unfavourable for improvement. But the woods are fine, and there is a stream, which, I dare say, might be made a good deal of”” (84). Unlike Crawford, Edmund has respect for the estate’s history and does not see the need to fabricate an identity for the place revolving around wealth and power. He acknowledges

that there are aspects that could be improved, but he suggests that those issues are also related to the area's history: those who first built Sotherton picked inappropriate places for the buildings. However, he also acknowledges the natural world, drawing together nature and culture into one setting. Indeed, the natural world is Sotherton's saving grace; without the fine woods, the whole property might be unsalvageable. Edmund's realistic approach is understated, especially when compared to Henry's effusive plans, but he also has more respect for the place itself and sees how nature and culture can be appropriately mingled.

As he walks the wilderness with Mary and Fanny, however, he displays a contentious adherence to the nature/culture binary that still finds value in the natural world. When Mary comments, "I am really not tired, which I almost wonder at; for we must have walked at least a mile in this wood," Edmunds responds, "Not half a mile,'...for he was not yet so much in love as to measure distance, or reckon time, with feminine lawlessness" (118-119). The narrator suggests that he willfully retreats from mingling love and rationality; he approaches the wilderness and, apparently, courting with the same logical approach. If Mary relies on her emotional experience, then Edmund uses science, and the divide between them neatly encapsulates the conception of modern science "as a universal, value-free system of knowledge, which by the logic of its method claims to arrive at objective conclusions about life, the universe and almost everything" (Mies and Shiva 22). Austen does not directly criticize his approach, and by comparing his scientific response to the wilderness to Mary's imprecise approach, she generates sympathy for Edmund and his careful observations. Mary does not accurately respond to

the natural world; instead, she mimics the uncaring and ignorant response Maria Bertram displays. Alternatively, Edmund offers careful observation that takes into account the wilderness. He manages to unite his careful reckoning with the actual space in front of him, displaying an alternative version of what Fanny manages with poetry. Both use aspects of culture to navigate and understand the trees that surround them.

Ultimately, Edmund's approach appeals more to Mary than Fanny's. Austen writes that Edmund "still reasoned with her, but in vain. She would not calculate, she would not compare. She would only smile and assert. The greatest degree of rational consistency could not have been more engaging, and they talked with mutual satisfaction" and they ultimately decide "that they should endeavour to determine the dimensions of the wood by walking a little more about it" (120). While further walking leaves room for Mary's actual goal—wooing Edmund—the fact she is willing to continue exploring the particularities of the wooded area is unusual. Austen suggests that Mary can see value in Edmund's scientific approach because it will give her a chance to show that there is no "wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing [her] in it" (224). Spending more time with Edmund amongst the trees as he measures the area will help advance her machinations, so she agrees to his plan.

Edmund is the only one who respects and understands Fanny's willingness to integrate nature and culture. After she admires Sotherton's grounds, he tells her, "I like to hear your enthusiasm, Fanny. It is a lovely night, and they are much to be pitied who have not been taught to feel, in some degree, as you do; who have not, at least, been given a taste for Nature in early life. They lose a great deal" (135). Edmund's kindness

to Fanny is his most redeeming feature; he consistently values Fanny and her additions to his life. Of course, his praise feels mildly patronizing, given his earlier flirtation with Mary, but overall, he values Fanny's ability to mingle culture and nature, and he always seems to gain something from her ability to tie poetry especially to trees. Edmund's admiration facilitates readers similarly admiring Fanny, making it easier for readers to see why they ought to reconnect nature and culture.

After learning Mary's true nature, Fanny and the estate's trees restore him to emotional health. The narrator explains that "after wandering about and sitting under trees with Fanny all the summer evenings, [Edmund] had so well talked his mind into submission as to be very tolerably cheerful again" (458). Austen's language inverts the usual male/female relationship; Edmund is associated with "submission" while Fanny has the more active, guiding role, but her language hints at a deeper argument: those like Fanny who are connected to the natural world have some degree of power. They can influence and heal, unlike Mrs. Norris, who is banished with her beloved niece, and Mary Crawford, who is estranged from the Bertrams when she reveals her lax moral code. Ultimately, Austen "rewards" Fanny's perspective with marriage; readers finish the story with the sense that Fanny will continue influencing Edmund, who will likewise continue to learn how to integrate nature and culture regardless of situation or social setting.

### *Conclusion*

The Broadview Editions' version of *The Woman of Colour* (1808), an anonymously published story of a biracial orphan who is forced to choose between



remaining dependent on her vile uncle or marrying a man she has never met, features a detail from Dido Belle's portrait. The cover isolates Dido's face, making her impish smile and exotic turban the cover's centerpiece and eliminating the figure's surroundings. The painting is rendered in black and white, which means the image loses some of its vitality even as it further accents the figure's race. The cover is striking and influences how readers approach Olivia Fairfield's and her careful legal machinations, but the novel's introduction does not mention Dido Belle, despite the fact the protagonist's closest companion is an enslaved woman named Dido. Lyndon J. Dominique's introduction does highlight the parallels between *The Woman of Colour* and *Mansfield Park*, arguing that "the disempowered heroines seated in the company of nouveau riche families...are, indeed, spiritually and fraternally blended with West Indian slaves," though Fanny's connection to slavery is implicit while Olivia's is explicit, a fact that "underscores the way white and black women of empire politically diverge" (29). If the painting helps highlight *Mansfield Park*'s abolition elements, even as Austen's novel helps illuminate how the painting situates improvement, *The Woman of Colour* helps accentuate the economic situations implicit in both pieces of art.

In *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen's depiction of trees helps readers begin to question the nature/culture binary. She critiques men who emphasize mindless improvement, highlighting their wastefulness, and women who use their gardens to reflect their social and economic status, showcasing their ignorance; her characterizations display how the nature/culture opposition influences both approaches. The novel's protagonist, Fanny Price, repeatedly uses culture, whether she deploys poetry or science,

to connect with and understand trees, while Fanny's love interest, her cousin Edmund, offers a tepid alternative that depends on social setting and expectations. Thus, neither character manages to maintain a constant connection to their natural surroundings. When Fanny is in economic distress, her openness to the natural world vanishes, leaving her ill and emotionally drained; similarly, when Edmund is in emotional distress, Fanny must reintroduce him to trees. Studying Austen's trees offers a new way to approach how she incorporates criticisms of improvement but also enables scholars to better understand how modern environmental arguments evolved out of cultural conversations like the one *Mansfield Park* offers. Her novel demonstrates why examining historical fiction set in the recent past can help readers question how they interact with and understand their natural surroundings and helps illustrate why ecocritics need to study a wider array of voices, texts, and genres.

The nineteenth-century's early decades saw a strong turn towards historical fiction; Austen did not begin this trend and she certainly was not the lone purveyor of historical romances. Indeed, for many critics, Sir Walter Scott dominates the historical fiction genre more than any other writer. Scott looms large over the early nineteenth century; his novels are widely considered the strongest influence on the genre and on Scottish nationalism. While his so-called "Scottish novels" are among his most famous, *Ivanhoe*, published five years after Austen's novel to wildly more acclaim and public interest, is a stronger companion for *Mansfield Park* because both novels are deeply invested in national forests and the inescapable connection between economics, social power, and trees. Reading *Mansfield Park* and *Ivanhoe* together allows us to see two ends

of the spectrum: at one end, Austen's anti-improvement rhetoric that focuses ties social power to the nature/culture binary and, at the other end, Scott's nationalistic argument, which merges nature and culture by locating physical power in the forests. Both authors develop similar arguments: humans need to reintegrate nature and culture, and trees are the best vehicle to help readers understand how to repair their relationship with the natural world. Together, these two novels change how we see English Romantic novels and their relationship to environmentalism's roots. Pairing *Mansfield Park* and *Ivanhoe* with two American historical fiction novels further illuminates the strong relationship between the genre and proto-environmentalism and creates a transatlantic conversation that has gone unnoticed for far too long.

#### *Notes*

1. Dido Belle's story has finally started receiving the attention it deserves. Paula Byrne published a biography in 2014, a portion of which is also used to illuminate Jane Austen's life and writing in *The Real Jane Austen* (2014), which was commissioned to accompany the film *Belle* (2013). My brief exploration of Dido owes much to Byrne's work.

2. Byrne describes Austen's connection to the portrait: Elizabeth "was a friend and neighbour of her wealthy brother Edward" and Austen wrote about meeting the woman at an 1805 dinner (214). Her letter reveals that Elizabeth disappointed her because she had "astonishingly little to say for herself," but Austen liked her two young sons (214).

3. Even as the estate itself becomes an object imbued with colonial undertones, critics like Sandie Byrne study how characters rank others “on the basis of their monetary value, possessions or value on the marriage market” and argues that “*Mansfield Park* is unusual for the extent to which characters openly audit [their] relationships, making ledger-entries of duty, responsibility, gift and reciprocation, command and obedience” (81). While I do not have room here to discuss particular objects, the topic deserves more study, especially given the various coded ways Austen refers to slavery and abolitionism.

4. This is not the only time Fanny quotes Cowper. During her later exile to Portsmouth, Fanny reflects on how much she misses Mansfield Park and its residents: “her longings to be with them, were such as to bring a line or two of Cowper’s *Tirocinium* for ever before her. ‘With what intense desire she wants her home,’ was continually on her tongue” (429). Fanny’s prolonged engagement with Cowper helps tie *Mansfield Park* more closely to the late 1700s and with the various authors and texts that helped inspire the Romantic movement, while also showcasing her repeated use of poetry to understand and relate to the natural environment.

5. “Wilderness” is a technical term, referring to an area in a garden “planted with trees, and laid out in an ornamental or fantastic style, often in the form of a maze or labyrinth” (“wilderness, n.”). While we cannot consider the space a wilderness in the sense that the grove is “untouched,” the reminder that the area is confusing and mazelike helps convey why most of the young people ignore social convention and engage in questionable activities.

6. The narrator notes that the disagreement between Dr. Grant and Mrs. Norris continues till Mrs. Grant intervenes and that “Dr Grant and Mrs Norris were seldom good friends; their acquaintance had begun in dilapidations, and their habits were totally dissimilar” (82). In this context, “dilapidations” specifically refers to the parsonage’s state. David M. Shapard points out that “it was the responsibility of the holder of a clerical living to maintain the parsonage;” if the holder failed to do so, the new holder could “then charge him or his heirs the appropriate sum” to fix the parsonage (105). The fact that Mrs. Norris and her late husband allowed the parsonage to fall into such disrepair suggests that all her talk about the apricot tree is merely window dressing: she thought the tree would serve as a strong symbol of her economic standing, when all it did was highlight her alienation and cluelessness.

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## CHAPTER VI

### WHAT NEXT?: TREES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

On the last day of the world  
I would want to plant a tree  
—W. S. Merwin, “Place”

so i have come to live  
among the men who kill the trees  
—Lucille Clifton, “the killing of the trees”

My awareness of literary trees was planted in an environmental literature class at my junior college, but my interest in the topic would not become an actual object of inquiry until I started noticing that most of the media I was consuming had sentient trees of one sort or another. From Nintendo’s *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (2017) to recent historical fiction like Annie Proulx’s *Barkskins* (2016), I realized that personified trees surround me. As I started hunting down other examples, I kept moving further back in time and I began to see that the nineteenth century was a pivotal time for personifying trees. My project thus became my chance to begin understanding why we have so many personified trees now and why the tree, of all things, is such an enduring symbol.

Personified trees show up in many genres, from historical fiction to fantasy, but midway through my work, I encountered a television episode that enabled me to better understand my project’s stakes and future. Much of the show *Voltron: Legendary*

*Defender*, an animated science fiction show aimed at children, is set in deep space, far from planetary environments, but occasional episodes explore specific planets, modelling alternative environmental and social relationships. Typically, *Voltron: Legendary Defender* is a standard science fiction show; there are spaceships and alien planets, galactic threats and quasi-magical technology. But in one episode, the *Voltron* crew find themselves on a mission to liberate Olkarion, which is home to a race of people who gain physical and political power through their connection to the natural world, specifically trees. Their connection avoids western society's nature/culture binary, thus providing a revolutionary model for viewers living at a time when politicians publicly debate whether environmental topics like climate science are relevant or scientifically sound, while also helping viewers and scholars reconsider how science fiction texts model alternative environmental relationships and help overcome the nature/culture divide. Science fiction's ability to recast the nature/culture binary ties it directly to my work on historical fiction, offering an obvious evolution of my project.

The connections between science fiction and historical fiction offer intriguing opportunities for linking the two genres and creating projects that connect them. Both historical fiction and science fiction gained power and solidified as genre in the late 1700s and early 1800s, meaning that they have evolved nearly in tandem (Thomas 22-24). Indeed, one of the first texts that can be reliably considered science fiction is also considered historical fiction; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* not only postulates about our medical and scientific future, it does so from the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The novel is not unique in combining science fiction and historical fiction; critics often observe that

science fiction has “a historical situatedness, whether in some reshaped past or imagine future” (Thomas 23-24). Additionally, as Farah Mendlesohn observes, science fiction stories rely on how events are described and can be defined by “the critical tools with which the reader is expected to approach the text” (1), details that are frequently also attributed to historical fiction. Authors typically try to shake readers out of their usual reading habits; Mendlesohn argues that in science fiction stories, “language is not trustworthy...metaphor becomes literal” (5). Furthermore, much like time separates readers from historical fiction stories, readers are alienated from science fiction settings, forever kept at a distance by time, place, and even biology (Mendlesohn 10). Adam Roberts also highlights alienation, writing that science fiction is “a fiction of the imagination rather than observed reality” (1) and is “predicated on some substantive difference...between the world described and the world in which readers actually live” (3). Few critics have ever paired the two genres, offering a unique opportunity for me to study how personified trees function in both, a study that gains power given how similarly the two genres approach the nature/culture divide and the role trees can play in dispersing the divide.

Much as fiction set in historical periods provides distance, lessening the sting of the author’s criticisms, science fiction allows room for deeply critical environmental arguments. Literary critics, particularly ecocritics, however, favor recent sf that tell Earth-based stories, ignoring stories set on other planets or those detailing travels between Earth and new planets. I find that narratives set deep in outer space still have much to offer, primarily because they often showcase alternative relationships to the

natural world. In general, ecocriticism explores how representations of nature influence how people understand their environments, but many ecocritics also seek to understand how anthropocentric texts can help humans reintegrate into environmental, biotic, and even planetary relationships (Rosendale 2002: xvii). Thus, ecocritics prefer to examine “mundane science fiction,” texts that “focus on the Earth, on the near future, on characters inhabiting both” (Cokinos 2010), because outer space stories often support irresponsible escapism, consequently suggesting that the only available response to climate change is to find a new planet (and, typically, repeat the deeply destructive extractive practices that render Earth inhabitable). While alternate environmental relations may seem impossible on Earth because various social and political histories confine western culture and ensure that people consider themselves utterly separate from their natural surroundings, stories set on distant planets populated by people who bear little resemblance to humans offer new environmental approaches and help readers imagine new environmental paradigms. Studying deep space science fiction, especially alongside historical fiction, offers a chance to explore how authors critique the nature/culture binary and how they imagine a new relationship between humans and the natural world developing.

Furthermore, my work on Romantic-era historical fiction throws into sharper relief science fiction’s reliance on the sublime. Mendlesohn argues that science fiction’s primary characteristic is a “sense of wonder,” or some appreciation “of the sublime whether natural, such as the rings of Saturn, or technological: a space station or rocket ship” (3). Authors extend sublimity to an extreme that critics call “cognitive

estrangement,” or the “sense that something in the fictive world is dissonant with the reader’s experienced world” (Mendlesohn 5). Furthermore, as in many Romantic texts, science fiction authors elevate “place to the level of character” (Mendlesohn 8). The ties between various Romantic-era literary moves and science fiction suggest that the two need to be more closely tied. Arguably, Romantic era fiction evolved into modern science fiction, a contentious point that deserves further examination, especially as climate change (and climate change denial) establishes itself as the primary topic of twenty-first century life. Authors since the early 1800s, in genres as seemingly disparate as historical fiction and science fiction, have been working to overcome the nature/culture, and yet environmental apathy is as prevalent as ever. Examining the evolution of both genres and how both owe their existence to Romantic environmentalism might help scholars better understand why so little has changed and, more importantly, what we can do to appeal to the general public and begin helping them reassert their connection to the natural world.

I preface this chapter with two poems that link trees and the death. Both poets use trees as symbols of hope, endurance, and survival, and both highlight ongoing human-caused environmental violence. Despite their publication in the twentieth century, the personification in both poems echoes the humanlike trees of the Romantic era fiction I study. Many early-1800s writers, responding to industrialization, turned to the natural world and established many of the basic environmental tenets we still discuss today, and I study these texts to uncover modern environmentalism’s roots. Furthermore, ecocritics continue to privilege post-1900s fiction, leading to an incomplete understanding anglophone environmentalism, and most continue to study overtly environmental texts,

such as the recent turn towards “climate fiction,” rather than studying how genres like historical fiction critique environmental relationships. Therefore, I study historical fiction to help uncover how environmental arguments appear in unlikely places—and how those arguments influence how readers understand the natural world and their relationship to it. *Mansfield Park*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Pioneers*, and *Hope Leslie* are just the first four novels that could help expand the texts available to ecocritics. Genres like historical fiction and science fiction offer new realms to explore, and their inclusion of trees, specifically, provides an opportunity for ecocritics to study how environmental messages reach audiences and how fiction both reflects and critiques a culture’s prevalent environmental positioning.

#### *Notes*

1. Any critic that traces the history of science fiction at least alludes to the contentious beginnings of science fiction. While the genre solidified during the twentieth century, the first science fiction story is variously cited as *Frankenstein* (1818), *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), *The Blazing World* (1666), or even *Utopia* (1516) (Stableford 15, Roberts 3). As with any genre history, no definitive answer is possible, though for obvious reasons I prefer to think of *Frankenstein* as the true start of science fiction.

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