Changeable Conditions:
British Writing About the Weather in Canada, 1700-1775

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the politics of the weather in eighteenth-century British literature. From Swift’s “City Shower” to Smollett’s complaints about Bath’s “perpetual rain,” eighteenth-century literature is saturated with the rhetoric of meteorological science – so much so that, like Samuel Johnson, we have come to assume that “when two Englishmen meet” to talk “of the weather, they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know.” Changeable Conditions argues we know only half the story – and explains how, in the midst of the technological and epistemological changes reconceiving the weather as a “natural fact,” eighteenth-century anxiety about environmental influence also turned the weather into a prominent and productive term in public debate about Britain’s imperial obligations. Prior to the 1759 turn in British fortunes during the Seven Years War, British writers treated inclement weather as a levelling condition, a check on human hubris, or, as in Johnson’s Rasselas, a metaphor for all that seemed too far away to verify and too “changeable” to control about the diverse environments of empire. As British imperial interests turned away from territory and towards trade and settlement, however, a new pattern emerged: vivid descriptions of bad weather continued to cast the risk of being overwhelmed
as inevitable and dire, but now, “weather-beaten” bodies – like those that litter Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* – appeared not to mark the limits of human agency, but rather to call the reader to action, the sure sign of a place and people that could be managed more effectively.

How, in so little time, did weather turn from a force that governs the mind and marks the body into a force that could be mitigated by more forward-thinking governance? To answer this question, the case studies in *Changeable Conditions* propose that eighteenth-century writers amplified the threat of environmental influence to justify a British right to govern all over the world, and demonstrate how this the process helped to entrench the limited view of human agency and narrow sense of responsibility for change in the weather that continue to drive debate about the anthropogenic origins of the present climate crisis.
Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to the staff of the Lewis Walpole Library and the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, who helped me to uncover the archival sources in which some of the surprising meteorological histories of the British empire have been written, including those illustrated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. I am also grateful to audiences at the Toronto Eighteenth-Century Group and the Northrop Frye Centre at Victoria College, who permitted me to try out early versions of the arguments that now appear in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Portions of this dissertation have appeared elsewhere in print, and I am grateful to these publishers for permission to reprint sections of these essays here. Chapter 2 expands “The politics of the weather: The Hudson’s Bay Company and the Dobbs affair,” which appeared in the Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 38.3 (2015): 395-411. Parts of Chapter 3 have been accepted for publication as “‘Set the winter at defiance’: Emily Montague’s weather reports and political sensibility,” forthcoming in Eighteenth-Century Fiction (April 2016). I thank the editorial staff at each of these journals for their responsiveness to my permissions requests, and my anonymous readers at the Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies and Eighteenth-Century Fiction for their helpful comments.
I am also very grateful to the administrative staff in the Department of English at the University of Toronto for all of the timely advice and words of encouragement they have shared to help me navigate the Ph.D. program.

Over the years I have spent on this study of the weather, I have been lucky enough to learn from many wonderful teachers, colleagues, mentors, and friends – and though the list of those who have supported my work on this dissertation is too long to include in its entirety here, I hope what follows will stand as a partial acknowledgement of my debt and gratitude. As my supervisor, Alan Bewell has taught me how to ask thoughtful questions, to choose my words carefully, and to carry my commitments to citizenship and collegiality into my scholarly work. From the day he accepted the role of thesis supervisor late in my fourth year of the Ph.D. program, Alan has also been a generous mentor and advocate, and I feel especially fortunate to have completed my dissertation under the direction of an advisor who shares my commitment to academic service and political engagement on and off the page. As members of my thesis committee, Heather Murray and Tom Keymer have helped me to interrogate and balance my occasionally rambling research interests in early Canadian and eighteenth-century British literature, and I am very grateful for the challenging questions, keen attention, and encouraging words they have offered me in equal measure. My external appraiser, Jayne Lewis, has shared with me both an incredibly generous assessment of the dissertation and a fruitful list of new archives and future avenues of inquiry, and I am indebted to her for the warmth she has shown me both as a member of my final oral examination committee and as a correspondent over the last three years. As my internal appraiser, Alex Hernandez has helped me to refine this dissertation’s key terms, and I thank him for the good humour, perspective, and advice he has shared throughout the job search that shaped the last two years of work on this project. As my first faculty advisor, Sara Salih taught me to articulate the research questions that set this project in motion, and I continue to appreciate the patience and compassion she extended to me during an especially challenging period of my graduate career.

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supervisors, Nick Mount, Robert McGill, and Jeremy Lopez, who showed me how to use the curiosity that drives our sometimes solitary research to capture the attention and imagination of even very large classes. I am especially grateful to Alison Conway, who has been both a wonderful ally and model for the kind of writer, teacher, and colleague I also hope to be, and who has taught me how to build the kind of scholarly community I will need to meet those goals. I am indebted to Paula Backscheider for her invaluable comments on what is now Chapter 3; to Katie Trumpener for her help directing a summer of archival research towards what would eventually become Chapter 1; and to Terry Robinson, Susan Glover, Tobias Menely, and David Taylor for many conversations surrounding our shared conference panels and presentations. In Josh Gang, I found both a friend and a mentor, and I am grateful to him both for the long weekends of writing that got my first drafts finished and for the surprising questions that have made this dissertation’s final draft better in so many ways. From the first days of the Ph.D. program to the days after my defense, I have also felt very grateful for the camaraderie and intellectual community I have found in my graduate cohort. In particular, I thank Brittany Pladek, who has shown me, over our years of writing elbow-to-elbow, how to balance rigorous inquiry with compassion; Abi Dennis, Letitia Henville, and Dara Greaves, who helped me talk through and eventually find the words to write both Chapter 2 and Chapter 4; and Jay Rajiva, Andrea Day, and Miriam Novick, who remind me every day that we can create the communities we need. I also thank the colleagues and friends I have found through CUPE 3902, the Teaching Assistants’ Training Program, Trinity College, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

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Last but first, I thank my mother, Barbara Busche, who first taught me to read and then showed me how to make it through a marathon. This dissertation is for her.
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Introduction

From Jonathan Swift’s “City Shower” to Tobias Smollett’s complaints about Bath’s “perpetual rain,” eighteenth-century literature is saturated with the rhetoric of modern meteorological science – so much so that, like Samuel Johnson, we have come to assume that “when two Englishmen meet” to talk “of the weather, they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know.”\(^1\) In the dissertation to follow, I argue that we know only half the story – and that where our cultural histories of British weather have omitted the political controversy surrounding reports on colonial meteorological extremes, we have obscured a vital aspect of eighteenth-century environmental consciousness.

Weather, for eighteenth-century Britons, was a highly changeable condition, its cultural significance evolving at the same time as its day-to-day changes were becoming established as a natural fact. Even Johnson’s complaints about small talk on predictable and self-evident change turn on ideas about the weather that his first readers would have found relatively new, grounded in an approach to weather-watching only recently enabled by technologies – like the barometer and thermometer – that made it possible to observe and compare meteorological data changing over time. Alongside the technological innovations that helped to redefine daily change in the weather as a natural fact, however, the eighteenth century also witnessed a significant change in thinking about the origins and meaning of weather itself: superstitious interpretations of meteorological events as omens (or signs of divine punishment) were falling slowly out of favour, giving way to a rising sense that the weather just happened, happened every day, and happened to us, rather than because of something we’ve done. Up to this point, scholarly writing on this cultural history of the weather has emphasized how these empirical tools and rhetorical forms helped first to distinguish weather from climate for the eighteenth-century imagination, and then to establish the collective experience of temperate weather as a prominent part of a British national identity. Perhaps to counterbalance the longstanding emphasis on climatic determinism in research on the relationship between empire and

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environmental thought, however, this recent writing about the eighteenth-century reinvention of the weather has so far focused its case studies on British reactions to local weather conditions, devoting little space to rumours of or contact with the colonial extremes that made Britons’ local weather look temperate only by comparison. To more thoroughly articulate the politics of the weather – both local and global – for this age of contact and conquest, this dissertation will demonstrate that reports of colonial weather behave quite differently from these descriptions of local weather both in the British cultural imagination and in the public sphere. At the same time that British weather-watchers began to accept their local weather reports as records of a “natural fact,” reports on weather from the “frigid zones” of empire seemed to become more “changeable,” more mysterious, and more difficult to verify – and so, by exploring the gap between this emerging faith in the records of local weather conditions and enduring scepticism about the facts of the weather elsewhere, this dissertation will illustrate how eighteenth-century British writers used the rhetoric of modern meteorological science to evaluate the risks of imperial expansion.

Tracking bad or otherwise remarkable weather through eighteenth-century poetry and prose, this dissertation also aims to answer a number of questions about how eighteenth-century readers might have understood or interpreted these persistent rumours about overwhelming meteorological extremes where they cropped up – as they often did – in writing about the expanding British Empire. How, precisely, did the political and economic priorities of this imperial age shape the ways that eighteenth-century Britons wrote about the weather? When were hyperbolic descriptions of colonial weather used to support these priorities – and how, as a result, does the form of eighteenth-century writing about the weather come to naturalize, justify, or otherwise entrench British imperial claims? Finally, how would eighteenth-century British readers have recognized and interpreted what this dissertation will call “the politics of the weather” where it

For two foundational studies on the eighteenth-century reinvention of the weather, see Golinski, British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment and Janković, Reading the Skies. For exceptions to the trend mentioned here, see Sudan, “Chilling Allahabad”; Markley, “Monsoon Cultures”; and Markley, “A Putridness in the Air.” For more on the eighteenth-century enthusiasm for climatic determinist explanations for cultural difference and their relationship to this emerging weather consciousness, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.
appeared in their literature – and how might their scepticism about facts as seemingly unchangeable as rain help to unsettle our contemporary sense of which aspects of the weather report are available to interpretation?\textsuperscript{3} By investigating the form and function of the weather report where it appears in eighteenth-century British writing about empire, this dissertation will explain how the very quality that most worried eighteenth-century readers – its “changeable” condition – also turned the weather into a prominent and productive term in public sphere debate about Britain’s imperial claims. From Daniel Defoe to Jonathan Swift, and from Samuel Johnson to Tobias Smollett, British writers of the long eighteenth century witnessed weather more and more often associated with overwhelming influence, or interpreted as a reminder of our shared vulnerability to the pressure of external forces. As this association was entrenched by the epistemological and technological changes that helped to transform the daily practice of meteorological observation, eighteenth-century weather-watching became increasingly convinced they could not change the weather – and more anxious about the possibility that the weather could change them.\textsuperscript{4} In other words, the very empirical methods that cast the weather out of the world of human superstition and divine punishment also turned it into a risk, or something that promised to overwhelm the order human culture had imposed on the world if it ever managed to get back in. As texts like Johnson’s \textit{Rasselas} demonstrate, these new ways of imagining the weather as an omnipresent external threat had special

\textsuperscript{3} By “weather report,” this dissertation refers to descriptions of the weather that are presented as matters of fact. Although this definition of the weather report is informed by Jan Golinski’s research on the role of the new meteorological measuring technologies that helped to reconstitute the standard description of the weather as a collection of numbers representing temperature, precipitation, or air pressure, the chapters to follow will interpret this term broadly, taking as their subjects treatments of the weather as diverse as Defoe’s journalistic experiments in \textit{The Storm}, records of the weather returned by explorers and other travellers to North America, and literary representations of meteorological events from sudden storms to charming sunshine. In each case, what distinguishes the “matter of fact” description of the weather is the implication that it treats some meteorological event that has really occurred; neither merely figurative nor, as this dissertation will argue, first and foremost a reality effect, this descriptive approach identifies the weather as, in Mary Poovey’s phrase, an “observable” and “concrete particular,” or something that can be known (as well as interpreted). Golinski, \textit{British Weather}, 77-136; Mary Poovey, \textit{A History of The Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 92-213. For more of the lively critical debate on the operations of figurative and descriptive language in eighteenth-century scientific writing, see Shapin and Schaffer, \textit{Leviathan and the Air-Pump}; Bender and Marrinan, \textit{Regimes of Description}; and Pasanek, \textit{Metaphors of Mind}.

\textsuperscript{4} Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.” As in note 3 above, by “facts,” I refer to Poovey’s “concrete particulars,” and specifically to the numbers that had “by the early eighteenth century…acquired a set of connotations that would soon make them central to what counted as knowledge.” For more on “disinterested” knowledge production, see Poovey, \textit{Modern Fact}, 92-213; and Shapin, \textit{A Social History of Truth}, 193-309.
implications for British writing about empire: because this new and growing fear of being changed by such a changeable condition had emerged at the same time that Britons’ new obligations to far-away (and unfamiliar) colonies had turned the possibility of being overwhelmed by external influence into an acute concern, many eighteenth-century writers critical of Britain’s imperial overreaching also found in the weather an especially potent symbol for this danger.

Yet another changeable condition, however, the nature of the weather’s association with the colonies would change – along with the nature of Britain’s hopes for its empire – over the course of the long eighteenth century. In the fifty years before the fall of Quebec (1759), a victory and turn in the Seven Years War that would ultimately establish Britain’s dominance among the world’s imperial powers, writing about the weather near and far tended to focus on its levelling effects, or its unsettling ability to strip away the distinctions that organise the hierarchies of human culture. Although some, like Swift, were most interested in bad weather of this kind for its ability to puncture human hubris, others, like Johnson, saw something more dangerous in this possibility that we all might share a common experience under the weather: if it turned out to be true that people everywhere were similarly vulnerable, or even enslaved, to the day-to-day changes of the weather, this discovery would undermine the theories of essentially different – and climatically-determined – constitutions so often leveraged to justify Britain’s right to “rule the waves.” As British imperial interests turned away from territory and raw resources and towards trade and settlement, however, the threat the weather posed to would-be travellers turned out to be politically productive in a number of other unpredictable ways. To illustrate this shift, this dissertation will compare two case studies on the politics of the weather in reports from – as Johnson put it – one especially “cold, uncomfortable, uninviting region”: early Canada. In the midst of a 1749 fight for a monopoly over Rupert’s Land (and its possible Northwest Passage), for instance, the Hudson’s Bay Company found that emphasizing the region’s rumoured extremes of heat

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and cold could help to rebuff competitors who claimed they would better map and manage the contested territory and to refocus a debate about the Company’s governance on the failures of British measuring technologies overwhelmed by colonial conditions. By the time that Frances Brooke published *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), however, in the midst of Canada’s difficult transition from military occupation to peaceful civil government, the struggle to justify a British right to govern those who had not chosen their own leaders had become a more pressing problem – and so Brooke further emphasizes the overwhelming effects of Canada’s rumoured cold, highlighting its stultifying effects on both the land and colonists in order to position any “arts of persuasion” the British might exert to alter these conditions as liberating, or at least the lesser of two local evils. In both cases, the persistent references to the weather within public sphere debate about Britain’s imperial obligations helped to establish the risk of being overwhelmed by external influences as inevitable and dire – a pattern so bold that good governance, by the end of the century, seemed to be associated with any intervention that could make this vulnerability to “the most variable of all variations,” Britons’ common changeable condition, even somewhat easier to bear.

These are the changes in the weather that this dissertation will track: its transformation from superstitious omen to natural fact, and how this shift helps to facilitate a similar shift in thinking about the “changeable” human condition in an age of growing empire; its life (and political significance) first as a useful deterrent to Britain’s competitors in trade and then as even more useful evidence of local tyranny complicating Britain’s settlement projects; and, finally, its evolution from a reminder of human powerlessness to a marker of poor governance, used most often to stake a British right to rule during this period of imperial expansion. Too far away to verify, too changeable to control, colonial weather reminded eighteenth-century readers of the immeasurable differences that now defined the environments of the British Empire – and as the two case studies at the centre of this dissertation will demonstrate, this increasingly commonplace association between weather and overwhelming external influence helped both to make the former an important term in political debate about Britain’s North American colonies in particular, and to ensure that otherwise straightforward literary treatments of colonial weather now
seemed to telegraph the political debates in which they had acquired such a prominent role. Altogether, then, this dissertation aims to prove that eighteenth-century writing about the weather is political, and that understanding the history of its political function can help illuminate the arguments that detailed descriptions of the weather were most often used to underpin where they appeared in eighteenth-century literature: to secure, as above, British claims to its territory against contest and competition; to position the existing British imperial administration as a relatively less overwhelming – and relatively more attractive – force than the weather; and to recommend, again and again, passivity, inaction, and restraint for those who might pose a threat to British profit.

I. Form, weather, and a method “adequate to the situation of our time”

In conversation with other recent research on the epistemological legacies of Enlightenment entangled with the contemporary climate crisis, this dissertation also argues that understanding the political forces that have shaped the modern weather report can help to reveal assumptions about the weather that these now well-established forms of meteorological description have helped to naturalize. In 2000, Paul J. Crutzen, a chemist, and Eugene Stoermer, a marine science specialist, proposed a new name for our “present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch”: they called it the Anthropocene, and Crutzen placed its origin in the second half of the eighteenth century, when “air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane.” In the decade since Crutzen’s announcement, researchers across the physical sciences and humanities have worked to identify the specific epistemological and technological changes that coincide with these rising levels of greenhouse gases –

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7 Paul J. Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” *Nature* 415 (2002): 23. The scientific justification and use value of this term are still up for discussion. The International Committee on Stratigraphy, or the group responsible for establishing the “standard, globally-applicable” divisions of time reflected in the International Geologic Time Scale, has formed a Working Group to determine whether the term describes a meaningful slice of geological time, and currently aims to reach its conclusions at some point in 2016. Likewise, Tobias Boes and Kate Marshall have recently observed “[m]ovement within the concept of the Anthropocene” among “those who first coined” it (60): in their first article that mentions the term, Crutzen and Stoermer described the Anthropocene with reference to the “central role of mankind in geology and ecology” lasting over long periods, but by 2011, Crutzen and his colleagues refocused this definition to conclude that our species’ activity “rivals some of the great forces of nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system,” and now argue that “humankind has become a geological force in its own right.” Crutzen 2000 and Steffen et al. 2011 qtd. in Tobias Boes and Kate Marshall, “Writing the Anthropocene: An Introduction,” *the minnesota review* 83 (2014): 60.
and for literary scholars of the long eighteenth century, this search has reinvigorated scholarship on the seeming separation of “human acts” from “natural facts” in the period’s poetry and prose. Up to this point, however, these studies have been preoccupied with problems of obfuscation: how, at the very moment that Enlightenment science made air visible, did forms like the georgic, the pastoral, or the rise of literary realism make the human hand in climate change so difficult to see? The dissertation to follow will take the opposite approach, emphasizing instead the ways that eighteenth-century British writers addressed the points of connection between nature and culture left in plain sight, and exploring moments in which weather reports in particular were interpreted as obviously “interested” – very likely to be biased, or even patently untrue. When it came to rumours about Canada’s meteorological extremes, eighteenth-century readers had no trouble recognizing the human hand in records of far-away “facts”; in fact, many were frustrated by the obvious political and economic interests shaping the reports circulating in the public sphere. In this view, the period we might now call the Anthropocene is also marked by the increasingly frequent appearance of weather in literature – and where this literature is concerned with the expansion of empire, I argue, the politics of the weather were both transparent to eighteenth-century readers and vital to British imperial claims.

Across the field of recent writing about what this new stratigraphic definition might mean for disciplinary difference, the Anthropocene proposal has also tapped into broad questions about formal limits, or why it is so hard to describe either an activity or the scale of an impact that stretches far beyond the lifespan of an individual, an epoch, or even the history of the species that might have initiated it. Because “[w]e humans never

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8 For more on the formal shifts in eighteenth-century poetry that seemed to obscure the role of human culture in shaping natural history, see Menely, “The Present Obfuscation”; and Gidal, “Civic Melancholy.” For more on the Enlightenment technologies that helped to make both air and literary atmosphere newly visible, see Lewis, Air’s Appearance, 36-60. For more on credulity, scepticism, and obfuscation in a range of eighteenth-century genres that insisted upon their own realism, see Daston; Lewis, “Spectral Currencies and the Air of Reality”; and markley, “Casualties and Disasters.”

9 For more on the Anthropocene as a concept that tests the limits of the current forms, methods, and subjects of literary criticism, see the articles collected in “Special Focus: Writing the Anthropocene,” the minnesota review 83 (2014), including Boes and Marshall, “Writing the Anthropocene”; Pulizzi, “Predicting the End of History”; and Menely, “Anthropocene Air.” For a broad discussion of the challenge the Anthropocene proposal offers to the humanities’ working theories of history, see the articles collected in The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry 1 (2014): Baucom, “History 4°”; Chakrabarty,
experience ourselves as a species,” as Dipesh Chakrabarty explains, “[t]o call human beings geological agents is to scale up our imagination of the human,” or to attempt to generate a conception of the human that is distinct from either our present sense of ourselves as political agents, as historians typically have it, or as biological agents, as scientists assume.10 Unsurprisingly, this formal dimension of the Anthropocene proposal has attracted the special interest of literary scholars, perhaps because this suggestion that the human species has acquired a geological force poses, in Frances Ferguson’s phrase, “a problem to all of the usual ways that we have of conceiving of our actions.”11 As a structure or container for thought, form expresses the relationships of cause and effect we use to understand the world and locate ourselves within it. When, after some kind of metaphysical shock, we find ourselves looking for a new form with which to describe the world, our search suggests that something has changed enough that old modes of expression no longer accurately reflect the relationships between events, people, and things that now organize the world. This seems to be the impetus for observations, like Ian Baucom’s, that the Anthropocene proposal calls for a “new method,” one “adequate to the situation of our time”12 – and yet there is still some disagreement about the precise subject of this search. For Chakrabarty, writing back to Baucom, there is an important difference between a “perspective,” or “a vantage point from which one looks at (human) history,” and a “method,” which “involves questions of identifying strategies for practical research and…the necessary archives.”13 For others, the more relevant distinction seems to refer to the archive that the new method in question might expose. For Srinivas Aravamudan, for instance, Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory and the rise of object-


10 Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” Critical Inquiry 35.2 (2009): 206, 220. By “experience,” Chakrabarty is referring to what he elsewhere describes as “historical consciousness”, or as what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls “‘mode of self-knowledge’ garnered through critical reflections on one’s own and others’ (historical actors’) experiences.” When he refutes the suggestion that we should or could “achieve self-understanding as a species,” Chakrabarty thus declares that this “statement does not correspond to any historical way of understanding or connecting pasts with futures through the assumption of there being an element of continuity to human experience.” Gadamer qtd. in Chakrabarty, “Climate of History,” 220. See also Chakrabarty, “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change.”


oriented ontology have helped both to illuminate new relationships of cause and effect and to expand the archive of “things” available for analysis.\textsuperscript{14} For others, like Karen Pinkus, focusing this search for a “method” on the literary genres most appropriate to the Anthropocene has been more productive; Noah Heringman, likewise, has proposed that allegory, as a rhetorical gesture, might “help situate the history of the species in [the] deep time” of the Anthropocene (76).\textsuperscript{15} So far, then, this search for a new and more “adequate” method remains divided, both in its approach and in its anticipated outcome. Are we, as Ferguson and Richard Klein suggest, looking for a form that will help us imagine the end of the world – or are we, as Chakrabarty, Aravamudan, and Heringman imply, trying to understand and describe the relationships and patterns of history that have brought us to this point?\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, when Baucom calls for a method “adequate to the situation of our time,” what does he mean by “situation”?\textsuperscript{17} Following Chakrabarty, and reformulating the question so it seems to be more about our “vantage point” (or “situation”) than a particular way of seeing, the various positions in this debate look closer together: from here, all of these questions are really about ways of locating human history within a wider chronological context. In other words, both threads of critical conversation about the problem of form in the Anthropocene reflect an impulse to historicize, to explain how the Anthropocene is a product of a particular moment, and to make something of its co-incidence with a specific set of other ideas or literary forms emerging at the same time – and to this end, though this dissertation will attempt neither to justify the Anthropocene proposal nor to stake a claim for the eighteenth century as the origin of this new slice of geological time, this project does aim to contribute to the debate that the proposal has opened. Motivated by Baucom’s call for a new method “adequate” to the present moment of slow catastrophe, this project offers to that search the story of formal change it will unfold: a story about how one of the forms used to describe a seeming natural “fact” has been shaped by the politics, economics, and

\textsuperscript{16}Ferguson, “Climate Change and Us,” 32-38; Richard Klein, “Climate Change through the Lens of Nuclear Criticism,” \textit{Diacritics} 41.3 (2013): 82-87.
\textsuperscript{17}Baucom, “History 4°,” 123.
epistemologies of the moment in which it was re-invented, and a story about how that process also changed what we imagine Johnson’s two Englishmen must “already know” when they meet to talk about the weather.

II.  Foreshadowing: Daniel Defoe, The Storm

Writing at the front edge of many of these changes, Daniel Defoe’s responses to the Great Storm of 1703 illustrate this shift in thinking about the weather in action. Comparing a sermon and satirical poem that Defoe wrote on the subject, both of which demonstrate a conventional early modern commitment to interpreting bad weather, to the experiment with collective eyewitness accounts better known as The Storm, we watch Defoe turn away from old modes of searching for divine instruction in the sky to take up self-evident lists of numbers – and yet Defoe does not embrace these empirical records without suspicion.18 Rather, Defoe seems concerned about the way this form insists the story it tells is no longer open to alternative interpretations or debate, and so he lingers over ambiguous examples of the fearful behaviour (and blind obedience) his weather report seems to recommend, as if to demonstrate the danger that could come with taking this new mode of meteorological description too much at face value. Thus foreshadowing many of the themes the four chapters to follow will investigate, Defoe’s work marks an important starting place for this study – and so it makes sense to begin, as he does, with the interpretative problem he finds in the Great Storm of 1703. If, in the case of “publick calamities, every circumstance is a sermon, and every thing we see a preacher”; if, as he says, “the fallen Oaks…Preach to us,” and “the wrecks of our navies and fleets preach to us” – what do they say, and how can God-fearing listeners be sure that we haven’t misunderstood the lesson (186-187)? For Defoe (as for Baucom, so many years later), the

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18 See Daniel Defoe, The Storm, ed. Richard Hamblyn (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), which includes all three of these texts: “The Lay-Man’s Sermon upon the Late Storm,” 181-200; “An Essay Upon the Late Storm,” 201-213 and The Storm, 1-180. All parenthetical citations are to this edition. The attribution of all three texts mentioned here is confirmed in Furbank and Owens, A Critical Bibliography of Daniel Defoe, 49 (entry 53[P]), 54 (entry 59[P]), 55 (entry 60). Furbank and Owens identify “The Lay-Man’s Sermon Upon the Late Storm” (London, 1704) and The Storm; or, a Collection of the most Remarkable Casualties and Disasters which happen’d in the Late Dreadful Tempest, both by Sea and Land (London, 1704) as works “probably” [P] by Defoe, but do not mention any specific reasons to call either attribution into question. Furbank and Owens further identify “An Essay on the Late Storm” (London, 1704), which was published along with “An Elegy on the Author of the True-Born-English-Man” as a text “certainly” attributable to Defoe.
answer rests with form, or the work that his own writing can do to explicate this meteorological crisis: “what has a Sermon to do” in the face of these “speaking sights,” he continues, and “how shall it make appear whether God is displeased with our designs or the Persons employed” (194)? Here, Defoe is talking about how his own sermon will render and interpret particular features of the recent storm, but he is also making a case for the interpretative work of the weather report in general; he is talking, in other words, about the politics of the weather, particularly as they are shaped by the way we write about it.  

These questions – about how a sermon can make a storm legible – identify Defoe’s work as a hinge in the history of the weather’s modern reinvention, a quality that becomes more obvious in the contrast between The Storm and the other two responses to the Great Storm that Defoe published over the year of 1704. Prior to the eighteenth century, as historian Vladimir Janković has argued, “[m]oral and ideological instruction lay at the heart” of writing about unusual weather: “In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermons, uncommon meteors were represented as signs of divine will,” he observes, such that “[w]henever disaster struck, religious writers could choose to connect it with the delinquency of victims and so provide moral guidance.” Following a “doctrine of divine steering (gubernatio) that presented God as the ultimate moral coordinator of natural, human, and collective affairs,” Janković explains further, any weather worth watching was thus already a “sermon” available for interpretation – but these speaking sights also

19 Defoe is also talking, of course, about the weather as a form of divine communication, demonstrating an inclination to “read into meteorological phenomena eschatological and even apocalyptic significance” that was, as Robert Markley explains, common among “writers in the early modern era.” This approach wasn’t restricted to analysis of the weather: “in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century natural philosophy,” Markley notes further, “Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, and their contemporaries argued explicitly that mathematics and experimental science were only limited avenues to understanding what John Ray called “the wisdom of God, as manifested in the Works of Creation.”” When Defoe casts the storm somewhere between a divine punishment and a warning, both forms of communication that require interpretation, he is therefore drawing on a longstanding homiletic tradition, but also aligning his work with the ongoing efforts of the Royal Society to follow the cues by which “Nature plainly refers us beyond herself, to the Mighty Hand of Infinite Power” (11). Motivated further by Janković’s reminder that “English politics from 1689 to 1714 revolved around religious issues,” the reading to follow is meant to complement (rather than contradict) this view of Defoe’s project, and to demonstrate how Defoe leverages what he perceives to be a statistically significant record of divine intervention to expose the possible problems – or obfuscating operations – of an increasingly matter-of-fact approach to reporting on the weather. Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters’: Defoe and the Interpretation of Climatic Instability,” Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies 8.2 (2008): 104; Janković, Reading the Skies, 59. See also Starr, “Defoe and Disasters.”
tended to presume human behaviour had provoked especially punishing weather, even as “God’s continuous preservation of, and cooperation with, the Creation (conservatio) was designated a special providence.”20 This is the “old” point of view endorsed by Defoe’s sermon and satirical poem on the storm, both explicit in their efforts to interpret the meteorological drama, and both explicitly political as a result: in “The Lay-Man’s Sermon on the Late Storm” (pub. Feb. 1704), Defoe’s speaker takes up the storm as a vehicle for a wider condemnation of “stormy” political factionalism (198-99), and in “An Essay Upon the Late Storm” (pub. Aug. 1704), a satirical speaker imagines the storm as a special punishment for Defoe’s political enemies (208). As even these brief descriptions suggest, both Defoe’s sermon and his satire treat the storm as if it is an event available for interpretation – though each reading highlights a different (and specific) quality of the storm in order to make a case for the storm as punishment for two different (but specific) kinds of sins. “The Lay-Man’s Sermon,” for example, is a Dissenter’s critique of the intolerance of High Church Tories, Jacobites, and other positions of political extremes, and so identifies the storm as a reflection of the storms of factionalism it will punish: “Tis plain,” the speaker declares, “Heaven had suited his Punishment to the Offense, and has punished the stormy temper of this party of men with…storms on their navies, [and] storms on their houses” – and as it is equally “plain” that these “men of no moderation” can never bring the nation to peace, the pamphlet ends with a flourish to “excite the Nation to Spue out from among them these men of storms, that peace…may succeed” (198-199); following divine example, in other words, the punishment should match the crime.21 By contrast, in “An Essay Upon the Late Storm,” Defoe identifies the mystery of the wind itself as evidence that the weather does God’s work: “Storms and Tempests,” the speaker observes, “are beyond our rules,” making “fools” of those philosophers who attempt to explain “from whence, [or] how they blow,” and as long “they see no manner how, nor reason why; / All Sovereign Being is the amazing Theme, [and] Tis all resolved to Power Supreme” (209). In this view, the storm is unique among other calamities, and

20 Janković, Reading the Skies, 56-57. For more on how this and other early modern perspectives on the material and efficient causes of “meteoric” phenomena would evolve under pressure from the eighteenth-century enthusiasm for quantification and empirical measurement, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

21 As Stephen Gregg has observed, Defoe invokes clouds as an emblem of “political faction and zeal” elsewhere, too: in Jure Divino, for instance, and again in A Journal of the Plague Year, where clouds come to represent “threatening unknowing…the imaginations of people turned possessed and turned outward,” worryingly resistant to the clarifying force of reason. See Gregg, “Defoe as Cloud Spotter.”
the sublime mystery of the winds provides special evidence of God’s work – which means, in turn, that anyone that the storm punishes must have been targeted by God for special wrongdoing.22 In each case, “the Storms above reprove the Storms below”; whether it’s the nature of the calamity – the fact that it’s a storm – that punishes stormy factionalism, or the mechanism of the storm – the mysterious wind – that punishes those sceptical of God’s mysterious power, each text assumes the careful reader can look to the qualities of this natural disaster for the human behaviours that have caused it. Likewise, though each text acknowledges that some might contest the premise of this interpretation, insisting “there is nothing extraordinary” in the storm at all, both also take for granted that most readers will agree that “so signal an instance of a Supream Power” must mean something, and will struggle instead with “how to appropriate its signification”; in each case, in other words, the speaker’s real challenge is just to prove that his interpretation is right.23

Operating within the rules – and reasonable readers’ expectations – of figurative speech, Defoe’s sermon and satiric poem each turn the storm into a symbol; formally, the texts are similar, even if they don’t agree about what kind of bad behaviour has called the symbolic storm down upon England. In A Collection of the Most Remarkable Casualties and Disasters, Which Happened in the Late Dreadful Tempest, both by Sea and Land, or The Storm (pub. July 1704), however, Defoe takes an entirely different approach: here, the anecdotes and interpretations of the sermon and satire are replaced by empirical evidence, grounded in observation and articulated in columns of numbers – and the whole work is framed by persistent claims that these reports are intended not to make an argument, but merely to communicate the truth of what has happened. On its own, the fact that Defoe publishes all three of these texts – each stylistically so different from the

22 This is the defeat, at least, that Defoe imagines for his political antagonists, Thomas Horne, “Guilty” John Grubham Howe, John Asgill, and “Vile” John Blackbourne, all of whom he pictures trembling in fear at the storm they have earned for blaspheming for so long (208).
23 This could be why some readers – including Richard Hamblyn and Scott Juengel – have called Defoe’s series of responses to the storm “contradictory,” though both “The Lay-Man’s Sermon” and the satirical poem agree that “Storms above reprove the Storms below,” they differ on the “right” interpretation of this reproach. Formally, however, these two seem to be complementary, rather than contradictory, meditations on “what a Sermon [can] do to…make appear whether God is displeased with our designs or the persons employed” (194). Richard Hamblyn, introduction to The Storm, by Daniel Defoe (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), x-xxxix; Scott J. Juengel, “The Early Novel and Catastrophe,” Novel 42.3 (2009): 443-450.
others, two much more explicitly political than the third – at approximately the same time suggests he was aware of the broader implications of the formal differences between them. Especially where *The Storm* seems to report a meteorological disaster in which “no one was hurt,” however, oscillating between lists of numbers that reflect property damage and anecdotal evidence of miraculous deliverance, Defoe seems especially concerned about what this new way of talking about the weather – as a fact – can be used to convince people to *do*. When he concludes, finally, that the report he has presented endorses no action more strongly than inaction, he also seems to be testing, in a new way and for the first time, what broader political claims become possible if a writer can insist he states a fact as incontestable as rain.

To begin with, Defoe grounds *The Storm*’s authority in its long lists of numbers, which the editor of the Collection invites the reader to compare across time and space – and so in the same sentences that recommend this comparative approach (or fact-checking), Defoe demonstrates how these increasingly empiricist descriptions of the weather taught eighteenth-century readers to expect a true and detailed record of what bad weather looked and felt like, rather than an interpretative account of what the storm might mean. In fact, this claim to present an incontrovertible account holds even when the account of the weather is itself fantastic, or in support of a truth that serves one interest in particular: here, for instance, *The Storm* claims to be a collection of real letters received in response to a real advertisement for proof that will “assist in convincing posterity that this was the most violent Tempest the World ever saw” (55), and render “a memorial of the dreadful effects of this late terrible Tempest…[that will] ingage the inhabitants of the earth to learn righteousness” (150).24 The explicit purpose of this text is to provide a true record both of the storm’s destructive effects and of God’s power – and to this voluntaristic end, Defoe puts to work all of the early eighteenth-century conventions expected to

24 This account of the Great Storm identifies itself as a “Collection,” rather than a single-authored work. There is some debate about the weight of Defoe’s hand in revising the letters that appear throughout this miscellany, but for the purposes of this investigation, he is treated as an editor (which is how he presents himself). For more on the commitment to truth established by the advertisement, see Hamblyn, “Introduction,” xxiii-xxiv.
distinguish fact from fiction. Most importantly, the text depends on the process of accumulation to verify its claims: many letters repeat the same kinds of observation about the pounds of lead ripped off roofs or the distance the wind carried damaged property away from its point of origin, and sometimes repeat even the same observation about the same remarkable event (32; 44-47; 60-63; 65-83). As *The Storm* unfolds, then, the frequency with which letters following this pattern – pounds of lead, yards carried – appear begins to imply that the Collection’s claims are true not just because these records happen to include numbers and empirical evidence, but because the Collection itself includes a great number of letters that say the same thing about the weather in the same way. It is true, as Robert Markley has observed (via Frans De Bruyn), that “the statistics that Defoe provides can be seen as part of a larger movement in the eighteenth century to use tables, graphs and charts to buttress – or supplant – discursive descriptions of the natural world” – but in light of the range of political and economic investments further buttressed by these persistent reports of roofs wrecked by the wind, this formal emphasis on accumulation and numerical records also reveals Defoe’s interest in how the seemingly self-evident truths of the empirical report could come to obscure other, more self-interested arguments.

No less interpretative than the sermon or the satire, that is, the empirical records of the storm’s destruction that appear in *The Storm* make a number of arguments of their own,

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25 For instance, not only does the book begin with a long preface on the historian’s duty to tell the truth, but the editor consistently emphasizes the good character and “reputation” of the “Gentlemen” eyewitnesses who deliver the stories that it prints; to the same end, the editor affirms more than once that those reports delivered from less worthy witnesses have been weeded out and not printed, and interjects often to excuse the “homely” style of those letters he has printed from the country, borrowing a strategy from the Royal Society in his implication that the plainness of the language should confirm the lack of artifice in these “low” records (8-9). For more on “Defoe’s factual report [as] a genre…evolved from the activities of the Royal Society,” see Vickers, *Defoe and the New Sciences*, 65-69. For more on the voluntarist theology both informing Defoe’s work and dominating the work of many fellows of the Royal Society, in which “‘casualties and disasters’ paradoxically constitute the ultimate proof of God’s omnipotence,” see Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’’” 107.

26 Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 105.

27 As *The Storm*’s editor occasionally makes explicit, for instance, these records are good news to those who will supply the raw materials for the necessary rebuilding projects, as the storm forced the price of tiles “from 21s. per Thousand to 6 l. for plain Tiles; and 50s. per Thousand for Pantiles, to 10 l. and Bricklayers Labour to 5s. per day” (57). As Hamblyn notes, this observation might have been especially bitter for Defoe, whose debts had only recently forced him to close his own brick and pantile works at Tillbury, Essex. Hamblyn, “Introduction,” xxv. See also Starr, “Defoe and Disasters,” 38.
even as the editor insists that he reports only the facts. In one letter, for instance, the speaker catalogues “twenty-six sheets of lead, hanging all together…blown off from the middle Isle of our Church…and into the Church-yard ten yards distant,” and elsewhere, “six hundred [trees]…within the compass of five acres were wholly blown down…so that the Roots of most of the Trees, with the Turf and Earth about them, stood up at least Fifteen or Sixteen foot high” (70-71). These testimonies serve both the first and second parts of Defoe’s advertisement’s claim: by providing similar descriptions of similar subjects, the reader can begin to identify where in Europe the greatest number of trees were uprooted (and confirm, potentially, this as the “worst storm ever”), and by providing statistics in the terms of weights and measures of everyday life, these letters also support the text’s broader promise to make God’s power visible in its damage to the English landscape. Alongside these letters, however, there are others that argue the storm provides not just proof of God’s power, but also proof of his beneficence – and here, the proof on offer is not just the fact but also the number of miraculous deliverances from the otherwise total destruction of the storm. Despite contemporary historians’ claims that anywhere between 8000 and 15 000 people died during the storm, the overwhelming argument of the letters featured in *The Storm* is that “not many” were hurt (95). Indeed, in the long section of the book devoted to the “Effects of the Storm,” nearly every third letter affirms this sense that though the storm damaged a great deal of property, “none as we hear of were either killed or hurt” (47; 69; 89; 90; 93; 97; 98) – and in the few letters that do account for human losses, the terms used to describe these deaths are much less precise than the records of property damage. In one anecdote, for example, a single sailor is saved while “all the rest perished in the sea,” with no indication of the type of ship or the total size of the crew lost (169). More often than not, these accumulating stories of miraculous deliverances are quite banal, too: a man was supposed to be in his bed, but

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28 Dennis Wheeler, “The Great Storm of 1703: A New Look at the Seamen’s Records,” *Weather* 58 (2003): 419-427; H. H. Lamb, *Historic Storms of the North Sea, British Isles and Northwest Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 59-69. Drawing his evidence from the records of Defoe’s contemporaries (published, for the most part, within the decade following the storm), Janković reports that, “Estimates of the effects of the storm listed 8000-9000 people dead; 300 000 trees broken or uprooted, 800-900 houses knocked down, 400 windmills destroyed, 100 churches stripped of their covering lead and numerous steeples shattered, innumerable barns and stables demolished, 15 000 sheep drowned in the Severn at high tide…The total damage was assessed between £1-4 million.” Janković, *Reading the Skies*, 61.
wasn’t, and so he escaped the collapse of a chimney (102); a man had been in a room but then left, and so escaped the moment the roof fell in (83-84; 124; 130; 168). Most of these stories, in other words, are about moments when nothing happened – and yet because these letters appear between so many others insisting upon the affirmative power of empirical evidence, Defoe suggests, the form of *The Storm* alone affirms that these remarkable stories are both true and meaningful. This point is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that most of the writers who insist upon these stories of survival as extraordinary do *not* claim this is true because so many others have died: only one writer, in the whole of *The Storm*, refers to the fact that the storm “proved fatal to so many” in order to make his point (164). Instead, in nearly all of the other letters that make this claim, the story of human survival is extraordinary because there has been so much other property damage. It seems to be the numbers that overwhelm the other letters, in the end, that make these otherwise banal stories of “escape” meaningful – because they provide the context that the authors need to insist that the survival of the people involved, or the relative lack of damage, is anything more than a coincidence.

This emphasis on property damage – rather than loss of human life – sets Defoe at odds with his contemporaries in other ways, too. In the first place, the sources Defoe consulted to compile this Collection are not nearly as preoccupied with the weight or movements of tiles, lead, bricks, or steeples in which *The Storm*’s editor finds such compelling evidence of divine power. For instance, though the January-February 1704 edition of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* – what Hamblyn calls a sort of “Storm Special”– features intriguing fragments like “Part of a Letter from John Fuller of Sussex…concerning a strange effect of the late great Storm in that Country” (among other submissions on the storm from notable meteorological researchers William Derham and Anthony van Leeuwenhoek), these submissions are roundly focused on the “strange” effects of the storm observed from within the safety of a lab: unusual movements of the barometer, striking patterns of rain on glass, and detailed records of the wind speed throughout the storm.²⁹ By contrast, the many other sermons that appeared in the weeks

²⁹ *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 289 (1704): 1521-1544. For other notes on Defoe’s sources, see Hamblyn, “Introduction,” xxxi-xxxii.
and months following the storm do linger on more details of the damage done to both persons and property – but even where the political motivations for this approach seem to be aligned with Defoe’s own Dissenting sympathies, the specific evidence he highlights tends to hit the wrong note, not wholly resonant with these religious arguments. Surveying a wide range of the sermons that incorporated the storm into their ongoing debate about “atheism, deism, popery, and Puritanism,” for instance, Janković proposes that the precise records of property damage The Storm collects might have been meant to reflect the many ways in which the years before the storm had been difficult for Dissenters in particular. After all, he explains, “The Toleration Act of 1689 and the growth of Nonconformist congregations gave High Churchmen and Tories some grounds for fear that the wave of Dissent might irreparably damage the Anglican Establishment,” and so, “[w]orried about…[an] increase in the number of municipal corporations controlled by Dissenters, the Tories launched a legislative campaign (1702-104) against occasional conformity,” amplifying both concern and popular debate about the increasing polarization of party politics and the right regulation of religious minorities.\textsuperscript{30} When the Great Storm hit, writers on both sides of this conflict sought to claim the divine warning for their cause: for the Anglican ministry, the storm seemed to expose the corrupting influence of non-conformity, but for Dissenters, the pressure the storm had placed on crowded churches and anxious hearts offered an opportunity to promote unity and quell factionalism. In this context, Janković concludes, The Storm’s “collected information was intended for circumstantial evidence of divine justice which proved that God sided with the Dissent,” not least because it illustrated how “Presbyterian Scotland evaded the calamity, [while] Anglican England suffered.”\textsuperscript{31} This argument neatly demonstrates, as this chapter aims to do, that “[i]n the case of extraordinary event and bizarre feats of nature, the procedure for establishing a definitive ‘matter of fact’ was central to interpretative purposes and, by extension, to religious and political discourse at large,” and it is certainly true, as Janković argues, that “Defoe’s [own] search for ‘matter of factness’” was “neither ideologically neutral nor politically innocuous” – and yet this analysis still cannot account for the unsettling air rising from the persistently passive

\textsuperscript{30} Janković, Reading the Skies, 60.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 62-63.
salvation stories that punctuate *The Storm*. Over and over again, Defoe’s editor presents a precise record of the property damage and loss incurred even as he insists “none as we hear of were either killed or hurt” – establishing a pattern, by the Collection’s end, that suggests Defoe might also have included (indeed, accumulated) these records of banal miracles in order to illustrate the more insidious passivity this matter-of-fact approach could be used to recommend.

In his other two literary responses to the Great Storm, Defoe suggests that the role of the “Sermon” is not only to identify the behaviour the storm is meant to punish, but also to establish the appropriate response from the righteous – and once again, the journalistic version of *The Storm* is no exception. As in “The Lay-Man’s Sermon,” where Defoe calls for the reader to oust these “Men of Storms” from positions of political authority (199), or in the satiric poetic treatment of the storm, in which he calls for the reader to condemn and punish the non-believers in the same way that the weather seems to do (208-209), *The Storm*’s stories of property damage and miraculous deliverance invite the reader to adopt a particular standard of behaviour – albeit one much more passive, even docile, in the face of overwhelming meteorological violence than the calls to bold action (or “Spu[ing] out”) that appear in the sermon and the satiric poem. In no less than six examples across this relatively brief text, anxious women are saved by their fear of the weather outside, jumping up to check on the family while their husbands are crushed by chimneys crashing onto their beds (59; 90; 92; 96; 102; 166). Likewise, and perhaps to clarify that *The Storm* does not recommend these women’s fear itself as the most appropriate devotional stance, the collection ends with the “unhappy accident” of a ship’s captain and surgeon who, “filled with despair” at the sight of the gathering storm, “resolved to prevent the death they feared by one more certain, and…shot themselves” (180). In this case, Defoe suggests, passivity, or less action, would have saved both men, as each lives just long enough to see the storm abate and recognize what salvation would have come if only he had waited for it – and so again, the book identifies moments in which nothing happens, and people take no action, as the most miraculous, and seems to recommend fear balanced by passive faith as the attitude most likely to be blessed. If

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32 Janković, *Reading the Skies*, 63.
there is something unnerving, then, in this suggestion that the ship’s captain and surgeon might have been better off to do nothing and just hope for remarkable deliverance, this might just be the point: here, Defoe seems to be testing the implications of the argumentative approach he’s exercised throughout this Collection. As above, *The Storm* insists everywhere that “nobody was harmed” – and though this might be true in each example the book collects, the accumulation of that claim produces a report on a storm that did a great deal of property damage without any human losses; indeed, because even those human losses that are reported are summarized in narrative (“all the rest perished”) rather than in numbers, a reader could be forgiven for leaving the text with the sense that “no one was harmed” at all. What kinds of other passivity, inaction, or obedience could be made possible, this final example seems to ask, if this balance between providing numbers of great losses and narratives of relatively less significant losses was applied in the reporting of other events?

Particularly during this period of expanding imperial conflict, Defoe suggests, claims like these could have significant political consequences. In the context of Britain’s on-going entanglements in the War of Spanish Succession, for example, this kind of a weather report could assure Britons that they are both chosen and protected by some divine power: on the one hand, a report of a storm in which so much property was damaged makes both storms and other threats to life seem inevitable (as in an age of imperial war), while on the other, a report of a storm in which “no one was hurt” encourages Britons to imagine that they can and should face these threats without fear, secure in the knowledge that their divine endorsement has been confirmed by empirical evidence. Alternatively, as Defoe suggests elsewhere, *The Storm*’s report could be bent – just as easily – to serve an anti-imperial critique. Speculating about what might have caused the storm, *The

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33 This is not to suggest that Defoe endorses the anti-imperial critique that he explores here; rather, Defoe seems to be testing the argument that he’s presented so far. This is a technique he favours: introducing moments of ethical doubt to test the implications of the new forms – and the new world order – that his work ultimately endorses. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) includes a similar test. Crusoe is initially terrified by bad weather, filled with what Defoe elsewhere calls “storm repentance” for doubting both God’s authority and his father, and then he is immediately relieved when the storm clears. In the midst of this scene, the reader seems to be invited to critique Crusoe’s fair-weather faith – but by the time a fellow sailor appears to reiterate Crusoe’s mid-storm fears in the clear light of day and insist that he “ought never to go to Sea any more,” the book swings around to endorse Crusoe’s scepticism and contempt for the sailor’s outmoded superstition. In the end, the book rewards and endorses Crusoe’s growing belief that the weather has
Storm’s editor wonders at one point whether the intensity of the storm might have something to do with land management in the North American colonies:

As this Storm was first felt from the West, some have conjectured that the first Generation or rather Collection of Materials, was from the Continent of America, possibly from that part of Florida and Virginia where, if we respect natural Causes, was the Confluence of Vapours rais’d by the Sun from the vast and unknown Lakes and Inland Seas of Water, which as some relate are incredibly large as well as numerous, might afford sufficient matter for the Exhalation; and where time adding to the Preparation, God, who has generally confin’d his Providence to the Chain of natural Causes, might muster together those Troops of Combustion till they made a sufficient Army duly proportion’d to the Expedition design’d. (47-48)

In the context of The Storm’s wider argument for passivity and inaction, this conjecture raises questions: the editor’s emphasis on what is yet “unknown” about “that part of Florida and Virginia” suggests that something about Britain’s exploration and other activities in North America might have set the storm in motion, but whether Britain has done too much or too little to come to “know” these “vast…Lakes and Inland Seas of Water” now pouring down as rain remains unclear. The military metaphor only further muddies the matter. Following this “Chain of natural Causes,” God seems here to be responsible for loading the cannons and firing the shots as well as mustering the troops, but it is a human effort to cultivate – drain, enclose, or otherwise improve – the land and water of “that part of Florida and Virginia” that will provide (or restrict) the fodder for “Combustion.”

On the subject of improvement, furthermore, The Storm consistently pulls in two directions. In the third chapter of the collection, “Of the Storm in General,” letter after letter nothing to do with his behaviour, but in these moments where he seems to betray the ideals that ultimately make him rich, Defoe offers us a glimpse of what the world might lose – the narrative of Providence, a sense of protection – along with this sailor’s superstitious way of thinking. Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, ed. Tom Keymer (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2007), 14. For more on “storm repentance” in Defoe’s work, see Defoe, Roxana, or The Fortunate Mistress, 128, along with John Mullen’s comments on the phrase (“storm repentance”) in his introduction to the Oxford edition (xi-xx).

34 Either way, as Markley notes, Defoe’s emerging sense of the weather as a global system is surprisingly prescient: “At a time before rapid modes of communication,” he observes, “the idea of a mobile area of low pressure traversing…most of the globe probably struck many of [Defoe’s] readers as counterintuitive,” not least because most of Defoe’s contemporaries – including Ralph Bohun and William Derham, both referenced in The Storm – conceived of “hydrological cycles…as local rather than global.” Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 119-120. For more on how the rise of an imperial understanding of the world would further bolster thinking about the weather as a global system, see the reading of Johnson’s Rasselas at the end of Chapter 1 of this dissertation.
letter presents the reinforcements of urban infrastructure as both the instruments and objects of divine judgement: one reports that “Bricks, Tiles, and Stone from the Tops of Houses, flew with such force, and so thick in the Streets, that no one thought fit to venture out,” while in another, “Bricks and Tiles flew about like small Shot; and ‘twas a miserable Sight, in the Morning after the Storm, to see the Streets covered with Tyle-shards, and Heaps of Rubbish” (30-33). As Markley has observed, “Defoe’s image of heavy roof tiles turned into projectiles fired ‘point-blank’ [or here, like “small Shot”] links the destructiveness of the storm to the horrors of manmade violence,” and his persistent comments of the “catastrophic effects of the windstorm on the built environment of a major city” further “exacerbate the terrifying dilemma of families who cannot venture outside for fear of being struck by the detritus of collapsing chimneys”; like the sailors above, these families seem more likely to be saved by inaction than anything else, as the construction materials of London’s closely built homes – evidence, perhaps, of too much urban development – have now literally become the shots fired by the storm.35 Surveying the property damage detailed in the letters delivered from the countryside, many seem to interpret the “miserable sight” of rural improvements wasted as a similar sort of divine judgement: “Everywhere,” Markley notes further, “the storm destroys the improvements that are essential to agricultural productivity and the overall value of the land,” from “fields of grain, orchards, and pastures” to the “sea walls designed to protect these investments against the ravages of storms and floods.”36

On the other hand, The Storm’s editor often insists on the typological significance of the events at hand, claiming that “no Storm since the Universal Deluge was like this, either in its Violence or its Duration” (39). Given the significance of the biblical narrative of Noah and the Great Flood for the early modern Protestant imagination, as Markley has argued

35 Here, Markley suggests, Defoe means to establish a “metaphoric connectio[n] between warfare and violent disruptions in the natural world,” and to reinforce a wider eighteenth-century view of the “mutually implicative relations between natural and socio-political disorder.” As above, however, however, the military metaphor is an ambiguous tool for this purpose. Derham, too, likens the work of “Vapours in the Atmosphere” to “a sort of Explosion (like Gun-powder)” in the letter he contributes to this Collection, suggesting that this is a fairly commonplace figure in descriptions of meteorological catastrophe – and so that the “socio-political disorder” that the flying tiles register here could be related to any number of “disordering” forces in addition to actual military action (28). Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 114.

36 Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 115-116.
elsewhere, *The Storm*’s references of the Universal Deluge thus also seem to invoke “a religious and (as most saw it) historical precedent for a vengeful God’s destroying of a sinful world in order to allow humankind to repopulate a pristine natural world.”³⁷ To lend further support to this view, *The Storm* begins by looking back to the “opinions of the Ancients, That this Island [Britain] was more subject to Storms than other Parts of the World,” in order to celebrate “the Multitude and Industry of the Inhabitants [that] prevail’d to the managing, enclosing, and improving of the Country, the vast Tract of Land in this Island which continually lay open to the Flux of the Sea, and to the Inundations of Land-Waters…as so many standing Lakes” (19). In this light, the rebuilding efforts required by the storm of 1703 appear to be just one iteration in a typological chain of divinely endorsed British efforts to “manag[e], enclos[e], and improv[e]” the island’s climate – at once a frightening reminder of the total destruction only narrowly avoided with this recent storm, and a celebration of cultivation itself that seems to call Britons to action abroad. Likewise, and turning to “the sum of the matter” that appears at the end of this survey of ancient opinions of Britain, it is hard to miss the parallel with the landscape now “conjectured” as the source of “sufficient matter for the Exhalation” of the present storm:

> While this Nation [Britain] was thus full of standing Lakes, stagnated Waters, and moist Places, the multitude of Exhalations must furnish the Air with a quantity of Matter for Showers and Storms infinitely More than it can be now supply’d withal, those vast Tracts of Land being now fenc’d off, laid dry, and turn’d into wholesome and profitable Provinces. (21)

Like “that part of Florida and Virginia” now suspected of “generat[ing]…the materials” pouring down on Europe, Britain was once a “vast Tract of Land” and “standing Lakes” – which suggests that it might be only the absence of a more concerted effort to “fenc[e] off [and] la[y] dry” the “unknown” waters of North America that is, in fact, responsible for the “first generation of…materials” for the 1703 storm. From this perspective, the real problem implicit in those scenes of flying “small Shot” might not be that Britons have too fervently pursued these improvements to their local landscapes, but rather that in so doing, they have mismanaged a much greater global responsibility – by failing, here, to

³⁷ Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 116. See also Markley, “Newton, Corruption, and the Tradition of Universal History.”
explore, map, and come to “know” the waters that now come crashing into the ports of England, having followed the same route as so much global trade.

From page to page, then, the weather in *The Storm* seems to register both the danger of leaving the colonies unknown and the consequences of having already extended an improving impulse too far – and yet wherever these brewing storms remain open for interpretation in an age of increasing exploration and imperial expansion, Defoe suggests, the stakes of this ambivalence are high. As the editor’s comments on the “Chain of natural Causes” behind this storm remind us, furthermore, the new empirical form of the report is also working to turn these interpretative statements into facts – as in this case, where bad weather could be, according to this “Chain,” just one of many “natural” consequences of Britain’s overseas engagements, part of a global system of punishment and reward that readers at home should come to expect from this era of global exploration and trade. Looking back and looking forward, *The Storm* thus helps to explain how the weather report became available to those on both sides of the campaign to expand British claims in North America. In these references to the “vast and unknown” colonial environments that, “as some relate,” might influence British weather, Defoe’s descriptions of colonial weather capitalize on the long association between brutal weather and unknowable will of the divine – even as the local reports that make up most of the text draw their own stability from long columns of numbers and the reassuring accumulation of data that promises “no one was hurt” in England. As British readers came to know their own weather better, in other words, they also became more anxious about what remained “unknown” across the British Empire – and their descriptions of the new threats they saw in weather, the form of which were already changing under pressure from this new enthusiasm for empirical evidence, neatly capture both dimensions of this shift. Writing in the early years of the modern reinvention of both the concept of the weather and the practice of meteorology, Defoe captures here many of the matters that will continue to colour this dissertation’s investigation – including, and most importantly, this rising sense that even the most matter-of-fact writing about the weather can and does recommend behaviour (often passivity or restraint, often in the sphere of political action),
and that argumentative function of the “modern” weather report was obvious to its eighteenth-century readers.

**III. Chapter Summaries**

For the most part, however, existing research on the rise of empirical meteorology does not give much credence to speculation, like Defoe’s, that the bad behaviour bringing storms down upon England might include mismanagement of the colonies abroad. More precisely, our current cultural histories of weather and climate science do not account for the substantial symbolic role that the weather would come to play in writing about British obligations to these colonies – and yet, as Defoe’s work anticipates, the unstable form of the new weather report, coupled with the weather’s longstanding association with overwhelming force, did make it an especially useful figure through which to channel British anxiety about the unstable form and unknown influences of the growing empire. To address this critical gap, this dissertation aims to explain first how and why empirical descriptions of the weather became so important to the political debates about Britain’s imperial claims unfolding in the eighteenth-century public sphere, and then how this politicization of the weather in turn shaped the way that descriptions of the weather operated in eighteenth-century literature (especially when these literary storms were reported, too, as mere matters of fact). To provide a more detailed map of this project’s argument, the chapter summaries below will highlight both the specific contributions that each part of this argument aims to make to existing research on the individual texts under investigation, and the broader significance of each chapter’s conclusions for scholarship in eighteenth-century studies, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies in the history of science.

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38 See Golinski, *British Weather*, particularly Chapter 2 (“Public Weather and the Culture of Enlightenment,” 41-70) and Chapter 6 (“Climate and Civilization,” 170-202); and Janković, *Reading the Skies*, particularly Part 4 (“Memorials of Uncommon Accidents,” 97-102). Although these cultural historians do explain how “temperate” weather became an important aspect of English national identity during this period, their work is focused on the British texts and contexts that support this argument, and – outside of one chapter at the end of Golinski’s book – these studies tend not to dwell on the global exploration efforts carrying British agents of empire into the torrid and frigid zones that made the weather at home look so moderate by comparison.
i. Chapter One

My first chapter sets out the relationship between the two “changeable conditions” at the centre of this dissertation: the weather, which both changes from day-to-day and evolves as a concept over the course of the long eighteenth century, and the human condition, which eighteenth-century readers increasingly worried might be vulnerable to external influences as variable as the wind and the rain.\(^{39}\) Focusing on four examples of early eighteenth-century writing that prominently feature new modes of weather-watching, this chapter explains how the technological and epistemological shifts that helped to reinvent the weather as a “natural fact” also helped to support a new theory of “universal” human nature – one originating from a single source, and susceptible to external pressure in a way that seemed, for some readers, to threaten Britain’s imperial ambitions. To illustrate this point, this chapter begins by drawing on research by Jan Golinski and Vladimir Janković, both cultural historians of science who suggest that the invention of technologies like the barometer and thermometer made it possible to track parallels between incremental changes in the weather and individual changes in mood or health, and to articulate these possible correlations through a series of numbers that could be compared across time and space.\(^{40}\) Alongside literary critics such as Jayne Lewis and Terry Castle, I argue that these technological innovations were also linked to innovations in literary form,\(^{41}\) as weather functioned differently as a rhetorical figure as its “facts” became more stable in the world of the reader; more specifically, and inspired by recent work by Mary Favret and Robert Markley, I argue that this new power to compare the weather at home to the weather elsewhere exacerbated anxiety about the weather’s other “communicative” work, or its ability to carry things from place to place – and I propose,


\(^{41}\) Lewis, *Air’s Appearance*, 39-91; Castle, *The Female Thermometer*. In *Air’s Appearance*, however, Lewis conceives of “form” more broadly than I do here: she tracks the evolution of literary atmosphere following the invention of Boyle’s air pump, arguing that this new interest in what air might carry with it helped to reshape the concepts of both social “air” (as in Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock”) and the “mood” of a fictional scene. Like both Castle and Lewis, my approach to history here is also strongly influenced by Shapin and Schaffer’s *Leviathan and the Wind-Pump*, which also makes an instrument – in this case, an instrument specifically related to formerly invisible air – its protagonist, and attempts to trace this instrument’s cultural influence through both the new forms of description it inspired and the new epistemological conditions it made possible.
finally, that this anxiety became more acute in eighteenth-century literature as Britain acquired more imperial responsibility.42

To explain how writing about the weather became such a productive channel for eighteenth-century anxieties about Britain’s obligations to its growing empire, the close readings in the first half of my first chapter examine the increasingly unstable view of human nature reinforced by eighteenth-century writing about environmental influence, while the second half examines the literary operations that extend this anxiety about environmental influence to the whole British body politic. In texts like Swift’s “Description of a City Shower,” for instance, the weather operates as a levelling force: a sudden city shower strips away the divisions of type and kind that seemed to organize the world, puncturing human hubris and revealing a universal condition of vulnerability to the vagaries of the weather. Implicit in this discovery that we are all together under the weather, however, is also a view of human nature that would have been both new and controversial for Swift’s first readers: poems like this one imagine that the British character is malleable, as all of the social types in the poem are vulnerable to the weather’s influence – but this poem also presumes human nature is stable, as all of the social types in the poem are vulnerable to the weather in the same way. In the midst of an ongoing imperial campaign, I argue, this vision of a “universal” human nature acquires a greater significance. According to the Hippocratic theories of climatic determinism at work in many early eighteenth-century descriptions of the world beyond Britain, human nature differed widely between torrid, frigid, and temperate zones, but it was less vulnerable to day-to-day changes in the weather, unlikely to change as an individual moved across latitudes43 – and quite different from the universal condition of shared vulnerability that Swift considers in his “Description of a City Shower.” In Swift’s poetry, of course, unspoken anxiety about this shared condition of vulnerability is the butt of the joke, as the sudden storm confronts characters high and low with evidence of their

42 See Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters’”; Favret, War at a Distance.
43 For a more thorough treatment of the tenets and possible sources of the theories of climatic determinism typically attributed to Hippocrates, see Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, particularly Chapter 2, “Airs, Waters, Places,” 80-115. See also Golinski, “Climate and Civilization,” in British Weather, 170-202, which explores the challenge that British activity in early America posed to longstanding theories of climatic determinism, and acknowledges the many ways that the revised climatic determinism of this period foreshadows biological racism of the nineteenth century and forward.
fundamental similarity to their supposed social opposites – but for many of Swift’s contemporaries, both this challenge to social hierarchy and the possibility that all people (including all Britons) might be so susceptible to outside influence represented serious subjects of concern. Even in otherwise comic or didactic essays by writers such as Thomas Gordon or Samuel Johnson, for instance, references to the new instruments and methods available to observe this “changeable” condition are charged with worry about the weather’s ability to change us, or anxiety about what the weather could do to expose the human condition as more changeable, more vulnerable to external influence, than the increasingly stable facts of the natural world. According to Johnson, and especially prominent in works like Rasselas, this fear that the widely-touted British reason and ethics might be overwhelmed by the weather’s influence was especially acute during this period of expanding imperial responsibilities – not least because those obligations themselves seemed to require a new language to voice Britons’ growing concern that even the quintessential character of the imperial centre could be changed by the pressure and presence of these unpredictable outside influences. In addition to tracing the technological shifts in early modern meteorological science that helped to provoke these fears about what kind of risks the weather posed to the British reader, then, this chapter also aims to investigate how these new ways of writing about the weather helped to shape – and were shaped by – other new ways of writing about the kinds of risks Britons should anticipate from and in the colonies.

In the process of unfolding this argument, my first chapter also aims to clarify the key terms that organize the dissertation – defining, for instance, the “politics of the weather” and explaining how eighteenth-century readers imagined weather was different from climate – and to articulate the project’s method. To this end, and informed both by studies in the history of science and eighteenth-century postcolonial criticism, this chapter explores how the discourse of the new meteorological science in particular was used to justify and to shape British imperial enterprise. First and foremost, this chapter

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44 For more on the competing eighteenth-century theories of human nature and corresponding beliefs about the relative influence of environmental conditions, see Markley, “Monsoon Cultures,” 527-550; Spitzer, “Milieu and Ambience”; Webber, “Blowin’ in the Wind”; Aravamudan, Tropicopolitans; and Aravamudan, Enlightenment Orientalism, 12-15.
thus addresses itself to others interested in the cultural history of British weather and climate, and primarily aims to expand the current history of technological and epistemological change to acknowledge the political pressures that also shaped the form and function of literary references to the weather. By treating the potential influence of the colonies as an environmental threat, I argue, and by using the same figures to describe the experience of being overwhelmed by bad weather and being overwhelmed by imperial responsibilities, eighteenth-century writers found a way to position British imperial ambitions as defensive (rather than aggressive) from the start – and, as the rest of the dissertation will demonstrate, this association between colonial weather and potentially overwhelming (or “changeable”) influence would continue to shape the description of British imperial policy in literature and the periodical press for most of the century to follow.

ii. Chapter Two

Having illustrated some of the ways that eighteenth-century Britons found writing about the weather – and its association with overwhelming influence in particular – a productive way to register their anxiety about Britain’s imperial overreaching, my second chapter will present a case study of a moment in which writing about the weather became similarly productive for British writers supportive (rather than critical) of these imperial ambitions. In the middle of the 1740s, the Hudson’s Bay Company was facing criticism both from members of Parliament and from other British merchants who believed that the Company was neither managing its fur trade efficiently enough to rebuff French competition nor exploring its inland territory aggressively enough to find and claim the Northwest Passage for Britain. Both campaigns of complaint were fuelled by the frustration of one man: Arthur Dobbs, Surveyor-General for Ireland, friend of Swift, and an especially fervent critic of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s fifteen-year policy of close secrecy regarding its operations in North America. Bent on proving that the problems created by the Company’s monopoly over this information could only foreshadow the greater problems created by a monopoly over the territory itself, Dobbs exploited his connections with former Company employees to flood the public sphere with “tell-all” treatises – implying both that the French would be able to take over the Company’s
unprotected inland territory as easily as he had filled this communication vacuum, and that he (and other British merchants) might also govern Rupert’s Land more fairly if allowed to enter the field of fur trade and exploration. By 1749, Dobbs’s campaign had provoked a Parliamentary Inquiry into the scope of the Company’s Charter – and so the Company was forced to act, not just to prove that the British fur trade in Rupert’s Land was as successful as it possibly could be, but also to demonstrate its control over the representation of that territory in the British public sphere. In the spring of 1749, “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” broke the silence, as each member of the British Parliament received a three-page defense of the contested Charter, including a detailed description of the climatic conditions that made early Canada “the most inhospitable…of any of the known Parts of the Globe.”\footnote{Hudson’s Bay Company, “The Case of the Hudson’s-Bay Company” (London, 1749), 1-3.} This strategy worked. By lingering over “Extremes of Cold” severe enough to overwhelm British measuring instruments, the Company managed to shift the tone and target of the debate previously focused on the disadvantages of monopoly rights, and to demand, from this point forward, that any potential competitors would have to acknowledge the weather as a potential threat to the productivity of their own proposed enterprise in Canada. However, this strategy also turned the weather into a political problem for the Company’s critics, and one that was most profitable (for the Company itself) when its day-to-day conditions were left a bit obscure. Readers noticed – and responded. Both because the Company had been first to introduce the weather as an obstacle and because its economic interest in resisting change in Rupert’s Land was so transparent, many pamphlets raised questions about how the Company might profit from the problem that the weather seemed to represent\footnote{See, for instance, Campbell, \textit{A Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels}.} – and so even as the new thermometer and barometer reports continued to lend credibility to records of the weather produced in England, the Company’s complaints that the same instruments could not stand up to Canada’s extremes were greeted more often with doubt than with fear. Worse, nobody seemed sure whether it was really raining, really snowing, or even really cold in Canada at all.
Thanks in part to Dobbs, then, who had ensured that debate about the legitimacy of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s claim to its territory was already focused on the integrity with which the Company could report on that territory to Britons at home, and in part to “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” which named the weather as the foremost obstacle both to the Company’s fur trade and to its ability to share more detailed information with those curious Britons, this case makes the “politics of the weather” explicit. As readers were told – from both sides of the aisle – to doubt what they had heard about the extent of these changeable conditions, all representations of the weather circulating in this case were marked as a part of an argument in support of one clear economic interest or another. For the purposes of this dissertation, this case also helps to identify an important evolutionary moment in the relationship between imperial politics and the representation of the weather in eighteenth-century writing. Though writers like Swift and Johnson often marshalled their references to new modes of weather-watching to serve arguments against intellectual and imperial over-reaching, this case demonstrates how, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the same references were also being leveraged to defend the very imperial ambitions they were formerly used to critique. For scholars interested in the history of the modern fact (or “observed particular”), furthermore, this case opens new questions about the wider role of “interestedness” in eighteenth-century scientific writing. Informed by Mary Poovey’s and Steven Shapin’s research on the shifting terms of credibility in scientific reporting, this chapter finds evidence of the Enlightenment’s slow turn away from character-based evaluations of truth towards the forms associated with “disinterested” reporting in the waning success of Dobbs’s campaign; at the same time, however, and as the long endurance of sceptical reactions to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s pamphlet demonstrates, the structure of imperial enterprise exerted a strong (but understudied) influence on readers’ perceptions that any reports from the colonies could ever be trusted, even when those reports were articulated in the very forms associated with “disinterestedness” and credibility at home.47 As an analysis of one especially controversial Adventurer’s report – Samuel Hearne’s *A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay, to the Northern Ocean* (pub. 1795) – in the second half of this chapter will demonstrate, these revelations also offer some nuance to

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existing arguments about how scientific rhetoric was most often leveraged to obscure the human agency behind the work of eighteenth-century colonization and conquest. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, for instance, Mary Louise Pratt calls this process “narrating the anti-conquest,” and identifies both this “disinterested” scientific rhetoric and sentimental travel writing as strategies deployed to project “a Utopian image of a European bourgeois subject simultaneously innocent and imperial, asserting a harmless hegemonic vision that installs no apparatus of domination.”48 As this chapter will contend, the enduring scepticism sparked by the 1749 Parliamentary Inquiry regarding the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly both reaffirms this argument and resists its construction of the eighteenth-century reader. Although the Hudson’s Bay Company and its critics do write about the weather for precisely the reasons that Pratt identifies here (to obfuscate economic interests in protecting or exploding the monopoly over Rupert’s Land, respectively), the reports produced for these purposes are never interpreted as “innocent” or “harmless” – only obscure. In fact, both the Company’s frustration with its critics’ lack of attention to Canada’s meteorological conditions and the doubt with which its Adventurers’ reports were received suggest that many eighteenth-century readers were not just aware of the economic and political interests that influenced these weather reports, but also might have preferred a record of colonial weather somewhat less obscured by the human hand likely to profit from its report. Finally, then, by proposing that this case can help to expand these fields of inquiry on the relationship between the evolving forms of Enlightenment scientific rhetoric and British imperial identity, this chapter also argues that the tropes and themes used to describe the “frigid zone” of the growing empire represent a distinct dimension of that imperial enterprise, and proposes that further research on the literary representation of these cold, northern regions – and early Canada in particular – can help to illuminate the way British writers managed “difference” when their subjects lay at the same latitude, and often seemed to live under the same weather.49

49 For more on this distinction, see Lawson, “‘The Irishman’s Prize.’” So far, most research on the literary representation of early Canada has addressed itself to the field of Canadian studies, while most work on Britain’s transatlantic empire tends not to identify Canada as a unique subject of concern for eighteenth-century readers or writers. Alongside scholars like Lawson, however, this chapter aims to make a case for
iii. Chapter Three

Up to this point, this dissertation will have tracked a change in writing about the weather that is increasingly supportive of empire: in Chapter One, writers like Johnson hoped to leverage the weather’s association with overwhelming influence to discourage further imperial overreaching, but by Chapter Two, writers both for and against the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly were more interested in how the hyperbolic weather report helped to defend imperial activity already underway. Continuing this pattern, Chapter Three will propose that Frances Brooke, in *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), dedicates dozens of pages to detailed descriptions of Canada’s winter weather not just to protect Britain’s imperial investments, but also to justify a British right to rule early Canada with a firmer hand. Compared to the often cryptic writing about the weather produced during the pamphlet war about the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly, however, Brooke’s novel is much more explicit about the arguments implicit in its “frost pieces.”

From the book’s opening pages, Brooke frames her work as an effort to correct rumours about Canada’s terrible weather and to counter the claim that Canada is not worth the resources it will require to recuperate the colony from its years of French rule. First, to respond to the rumours that had taken hold in the twenty years since the Hudson’s Bay Company found it so profitable to present the weather as an insurmountable but immeasurable problem, Brooke’s characters insist that their reports, though anecdotal, are based on direct observation and experience – and in the process of making this turn away from numerical evidence and towards what the body remembers, Brooke’s novel seems to recommend this new willingness to trust the way the weather might change a person as a record of some value. As the cold seems to “congeal” hearts the British hoped to find open and available to persuasion (103), furthermore, Brooke’s characters find that the occasionally overwhelming conditions also call to mind all the other local forces at work on the values, economic priorities, and surprisingly stubborn

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Canada as a distinct and significant matter of interest to British readers, particularly in the decades surrounding the fall of Quebec (1759), and to contribute to research in early Canadian studies by re-reading these foundational texts of Canada’s colonization – including Hearne’s *Journey* and Brooke’s *History of Emily Montague* – as products of an eighteenth-century British life of mind.

political affections of the new colony’s subjects, and so expose the limits of metropolitan control over the increasingly diverse environments of empire. For instance, by comparing the “intenseness” of the material cold to the cultural and religious forces that seem to operate in the same way (147), Brooke’s characters discover that the weather is not the worst – or even the most overwhelming – influence at work in early Canada; rather, having established the book’s regular reports on Canada’s penetrating cold as a yardstick by which to measure the severity of other disruptive local conditions, Brooke finds pervasive “coldness of character” a much more significant threat to the progress of British values in North America. Further exploring the connection between this coldness of character and the stultifying influence of French Catholic governance in the character of her British heroine’s chief romantic competition, Brooke goes on to identify French Catholicism as an environmental condition that stifles would-be friendships and confuses otherwise straightforward attempts at affectionate communication – and in so doing, she aligns the British alternative with warmth, rather than coldness, and with an openness to change that her travelling protagonists claim both to model and export to their frigid French acquaintances.

With its emphasis on the values associated with the terms of her characters’ regular weather reports (from the “congealing” influence of the cold to an attractive openness to change), then, this chapter aims to solve two persistent problems in critical conversations about Brooke’s work. Although Brooke scholars have long identified Emily Montague’s “frost pieces” as features that made the book famous (148), this chapter will explain how these detailed descriptions of Canada’s winter weather also serve the book’s explicit political argument: Brooke’s campaign against former Governor James Murray’s tentative approach to assimilating the largely French Catholic colony to British and Anglican values. Both the book’s dedication to the new Governor, Guy Carleton, and its setting – in the year just before he would take over – establish Brooke’s support for a British administration that would make a stronger effort to change the conditions in Canada, ideally through the linguistic and religious conversion that Murray had been

hesitant to enforce. In this view, the scenes in which her characters worry they will be overwhelmed by the “congealing” effects of the cold seem to condemn Murray for leaving the colony so vulnerable to the stultifying influence of the French— and yet as her most “sensible” characters come to identify this vulnerability to environmental influence as an attractive quality, rather than a weakness, and as a condition that distinguishes them from their frigid romantic competitors, a greater effort to cultivate this changeability in those less free French Catholic counterparts begins to look like the best way to reveal the resources, rather than the waste, in the people and territory Britain has recently acquired. Having thus reversed the terms of previous eighteenth-century writers’ anxiety about environmental influence, Brooke finds in the reports of bad weather both a way to justify the British right to rule these recalcitrant French Catholics, and a way to frame the change they hope to bring as liberating, or as an improvement in sensibility that her protagonists, all men and women of feeling, model with delight.

The chapter also aims to illustrate how British writing about “changeability” itself evolved with the aims of empire. As the previous two chapters will have demonstrated, writing about the weather prior to and immediately following the fall of Quebec reflected a pervasive fear that the British character would be overwhelmed or otherwise changed by the influence of its increasing imperial responsibilities. By the time that Brooke’s Emily Montague appears, however, looking back on the Treaty of Paris that secured Quebec for Britain, its weather reports present a much more positive view of changeability itself— and, as this chapter will demonstrate, this more optimistic perspective on what it means to be open to change is meant both to affirm the new Governor’s efforts to displace the colonists’ stubborn French Catholic loyalties, and to celebrate the changeability of those new British subjects who do not resist this influence. This revelation also marks the chapter’s most significant contribution to research on the role of change in eighteenth-century travel writing. In contemporary critical work on this genre, the possibility that the British traveller might be changed is more often identified as a source of anxiety, as if any vulnerability to the “wrong sort of transculturation,” in Tara Ghoshal Wallace’s phrase, might pose a threat to the unidirectional influence of the
British assimilating project. As Brooke’s novel demonstrates, however, change itself—or the hope that the trip will change the traveller, and that the traveller will return to change his or her home in turn—was a powerful motivating force for many eighteenth-century tourists and explorers alike, and the theme appears often in eighteenth-century critical writing on the purposes of travel. As Britain’s imperial intentions shifted away from territorial acquisition and towards settlement and assimilation, then, the “changeable condition” of its subjects occasionally took on a more optimistic resonance—and so, as this chapter will demonstrate, the field of research on how and at what other points the changeable traveller is cast in a similarly positive light remains open for further investigation.

iv. Chapter Four

Taken together, this dissertation’s chapters are also meant to trace a pronounced pattern of change in the mood of British writing about the weather. Read as a pair, for instance, Chapters One and Two observe a shift away from the anxious descriptions of weather’s overwhelming influence that seemed to critique Britain’s imperial hubris and towards the suspicious defense and rebuttal of obscure reports on colonial extremes intended to protect commercial activities already underway; likewise, Chapters Two and Three together describe a further turn from fear to joy in these “protective” descriptions of colonial weather, most pronounced in the difference between the Hudson’s Bay

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53 For more postcolonial analyses on how travel writing produces both national and imperial identities, including comments on the theme’s treatment in eighteenth-century discourse about travel in general, see Aravamudan, Tropicopolitans; Turner, British Travel Writers in Europe; Smethurst and Kuehn, Travel Writing, Form and Empire; Chard and Langdon, Transports; and the useful studies listed in Neill, British Discovery Literature, 185n1.

54 Finally, though Chapter Three will explore this final change in less detail, this chapter also aims to open new questions about how this shift in the aims of empire might have shaped the rise of the man of feeling as a hero of the imperial novel. For Brooke, it is precisely these “sensible” heroes and heroines that model the openness to influence she wishes to cultivate in Britain’s new and more diverse subjects abroad—and yet even as they find love with one another (and seemingly endless delight in their ever-changing environments), they also seem to realize Johnson’s long-standing worry that those who give themselves over to the suggestions of the wind and rain also abdicate their reason and ethical responsibilities. The chapter to follow, on Smollett’s Humphry Clinker, will take up these themes and the ambivalent figure of the man of feeling in more detail, but all of these claims are related to the shift in thinking about changeability itself mapped out in The History of Emily Montague. For more, see Festa, Sentimental Figures of Empire.
Company’s reports on colonial extremes and the celebrated “frost pieces” of Brooke’s novel. Compressing this pattern of change and the causal relationships that explain it, my fourth and final chapter explores the political advantages British writers discovered as the techniques and terms refined through writing about colonial weather eventually travelled home to England. For Tobias Smollett, writing *Humphry Clinker* in the 1770s, the presence of “weather-beaten” British bodies indicated a political problem, a failure of the governance or oversight that should have kept these bodies safe from what seemed, by now, to be a predictable threat to their health. As a product of the slow shifts in thinking about both the weather and human agency set out in the previous three chapters of this dissertation, however, even the structure of *Humphry Clinker* reflects the major causal relationships behind this pattern of change: beginning with the technological innovations that helped to change the way Britons thought about the weather and their own “changeable condition,” and then proceeding to investigate how the reports generated by this new approach to weather-watching could serve both sides of the campaign to expand British imperial assets. Over the same period of time that eighteenth-century weather watchers learned to depend on their thermometers and barometers to make the weather’s minute and daily variations visible, Smollett finds that these instruments gave rise to a vision of the human body that experienced these variations in a similar way: as a hydraulic system or machine, like the barometer, with the balance of its health subject to the same external pressures as the rest of the physical world. As in Chapter One, then, where Johnson worries that the new modes of weather-watching would force a change in the way that eighteenth-century Britons saw themselves (as now more vulnerable, and perhaps less rational creatures), Smollett takes as his premise that these fears have come true – but as both day-to-day meteorological variation and its likely range of effects on British bodies and spirits have become predictable, even inevitable, Smollett’s characters have also begun to identify environmental risk not in the weather itself, but rather in the failure to mitigate its now-predictable effects. Smollett’s hypochondriac protagonist isn’t alone in this new sense of who might be responsible for managing environmental risk, either: in fact, the city he chooses to condemn for its poor design, Bath, is one that *Humphry Clinker*’s first readers would have recognized as a supposedly successful

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55 Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*. See note 1 above; all parenthetical citations are to this edition.
experiment in improving its citizens’ moral and physical health through concerted efforts in urban and social planning. For Smollett, however, the specific aspects of the city’s design that force its visitors out into the rain and snow are precisely the problem – and so if Bath’s open-air corridors and decorative staircases are all part of a project to encourage circulation, he suggests, the prescription for better environmental health must certainly be to curtail some of this movement, to impose more regulation and restraint across the city, all for its visitors’ own good. What’s more, Smollett insists further, this argument is as true in the outposts of empire as in Britain’s booming urban centres. Although the “weather-beaten” soldiers who return from North America have been scarred by more than their encounter with meteorological difference, their injuries draw the reader to the same conclusion as does the hypochondriac’s experience in Bath: governance that encourages circulation is dangerous, because it leaves the vulnerable bodies of British subjects exposed to storms that – as more than fifty years of daily weather-watching can now confirm – it would have been both possible and safer to avoid.

In the last of these argumentative moves, Smollett’s novel draws out an important consequence of the shift initially foreshadowed in Defoe’s *The Storm*. In *The Storm*, Defoe presented the possibility that the empirical weather report could encourage or even enforce passivity to illustrate the type of insidious argument that could become the norm if the formerly figurative (and explicitly political) sermon on the weather was increasingly framed as a report on matters of fact. In *Humphry Clinker*, published almost exactly seven decades later, Smollett can use the weather to identify these failures of governance precisely because it is now widely presumed to be inevitable, a daily phenomenon and a natural fact. More importantly, the response that Smollett recommends to resolve these failures of governance is, as Defoe predicted, passivity and restraint: the weather that marks the “weather-beaten” bodies of *Humphry Clinker* is meant to goad Smollett’s readers towards less action, less circulation, and greater obedience to the domestic patriarchs who can better anticipate and protect the vulnerable British body – and the body politic – from these risks. By now, this is a familiar pattern: this is the same approach to writing about colonial weather that became so important to the progress of the Hudson’s Bay Company case, and to the political argument of
Brooke’s novel.\textsuperscript{56} By 1771, however, Smollett’s characters respond as if they have the power to prevent this type of exposure simply by remaining still. Indeed, even in the scenes that emphasize the many brutal ways that British agents of empire have been beaten, penetrated, and otherwise changed by their contact with the colonies, Smollett maintains that this damage, too, could have been prevented by a different, more restrained approach to British imperial expansion, and by a British public more willing to accept just a “little civil regulation” (122). Just as Defoe anticipated, then, the more empirical approach to the weather that \textit{The Storm} helped to inaugurate would eventually make possible new arguments for passivity in the face of its overwhelming force – and for the rest of the century to follow, this method would help to naturalize the various interventions Britain deemed necessary to protect its imperial claims. Tapping into a pervasive anxiety that the weather’s changeable force could, in fact, change people, too, these British writers of the eighteenth century thus reframed British governance as the intervention that would make this overwhelming force just a little easier to bear – and ultimately found, as in Smollett’s \textit{Humphry Clinker}, that this argument was as effective for recommending restraint and regulation to domestic Britons as it was for governing the colonies.

To this end, Chapter Four marks the culmination of a number of shifts in thinking about the weather, the vulnerability of the human body, and the other “changeable conditions” of the British Empire this dissertation has set out to track: here, too, Smollett’s characters point to the technological changes that helped to establish the weather as a “natural fact” to articulate their anxieties about other forms of risk, safety, and what it will mean to be changed by outside influence; here, too, Smollett’s characters take for granted that even a steadfastly empirical report on where the rain falls and who is caught out in it will have political implications – and here, too, Smollett seems specifically interested in how this kind of a weather report could support a campaign to impose greater “civil regulation” for British subjects near and far. As in Chapter Three, however, which aimed to solve a critical problem about Brooke’s novel by examining its detailed descriptions of the

\textsuperscript{56} In the former, writing about severity of colonial weather was meant to discourage competitors and promote passivity to protect Company interests; in the latter, writing about the severity of colonial weather was meant to encourage French Catholic settlers not to resist British intervention.
Canadian winter, Chapter Four sets out to explain how Smollett’s writing about environmental medicine was relevant to Humphry Clinker’s wider critique of empire, and to resolve the seeming separation between these threads of inquiry in other studies of Smollett’s work. In this case, reading with special attention to the movements of Humphry Clinker’s weather-beaten bodies draws out Smollett’s argument for greater regulation of those governed and restraint among those governing – and so the chapter is meant to model one way this approach could generate similarly novel interpretations of other eighteenth-century imperial literature. Bearing in mind that British ideas about the weather are changing, and that this change is informed both by the rise of empirical science and by the growth of the British Empire, turning back to the weather reports embedded in familiar eighteenth-century texts promises to reveal not just a range of arguments for the validity of new modes of weather-watching, but any number of political positions on a constellation of related themes: risk and safety, passivity and action, and the vulnerability of both the human body and the British character to all kinds of outside influences – all “changeable conditions,” indeed.

IV. Rationale

Like “changeable conditions,” the phrase “politics of the weather” is meant to be multivalent – both a shorthand for all the reasons that eighteenth-century readers doubted these reports reflected mere matters of fact, and a method, or an eighteenth-century approach to reading about the weather that this dissertation recommends to its contemporary audience. For eighteenth-century readers, this sense that writing about the weather was political was obvious, uncontested, and often treated, on its own, as a matter of fact, even when the facts of the weather itself were hotly contested. For twenty-first century readers, the opposite is true: the suggestion that our now-standard methods of writing about the weather might be political is subject to significant debate, but we tend not to question the matters of fact that comprise the reports themselves. (Even if we doubt, for instance, that the meteorologists got it right when we discover any given day is colder than predicted, we do not typically presume the faulty report protects some
political interest.) With this difference in mind, this dissertation proposes that reading with attention to the politics of the weather that eighteenth-century readers found in plain sight might enhance our understanding of familiar works of eighteenth-century literature, and that might support a more nuanced analysis of the forms and forces that have contributed to the present climate crisis. To the same end, this phrase is also meant to reveal a new point of connection between postcolonial studies and research in the cultural history of science and technology, both rising fields of inquiry in eighteenth-century studies. This introduction has mentioned, for instance, how research on meteorology’s modern reinvention has neglected the relationship between the new meteorological science and British imperial identity. Given the prominence of postcolonial studies of the contributions that so many other forms of Enlightenment science have made to the growth of British Empire, this seems to be a remarkable omission – especially in light of the fact that these new modes of weather-watching emerged and became popular over the same period of time that British victories in the Seven Years War repositioned this former underdog as a dominant imperial actor on the world stage. At the same time, however, postcolonial studies on the role of scientific rhetoric in travel writing have only rarely considered the unique place that meteorological science occupied in these projects in the service of empire. This exception is also surprising, given the many ways that the weather report’s long-standing association with folk tales and superstition threatened to draw the travel tale back into the realm of the fantastic, or otherwise undermine the emerging authority of the rhetoric of empirical science. To postcolonial studies, then, this project aims to offer a history of the unique ways that the new meteorological science, so important to an emerging sense of characteristic British “temperance,” helped to shore up a perceived right to reach for and seek to control what should have seemed beyond the British grasp; to cultural studies of science, likewise, and to the history of meteorological science in particular, this project aims both to explain how British imperial activity shaped the form of even the most matter-of-fact reports – and to draw a bit of this

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57 This statement is not entirely true, of course: for twenty-first century weather-watchers, a pattern of increasingly severe meteorological events has exerted great pressure on the forms we have to describe the relationship between the world of human action and the world of natural facts, and yet the extent to which we are willing to adapt the forms we currently have to reflect what we now know about the anthropogenic origins of climate change remains a highly contested and explicitly political matter. For more on this debate, see the Coda of this dissertation.

58 For more on the important exceptions to the rule suggested here, see note 2 above.
eighteenth-century scepticism about the political interests involved in identifying these matters of fact into the present.

Returning, finally, to Johnson’s complaints about what happens “when two Englishmen meet” to talk “of the weather,” this dissertation affirms Johnson’s sense that “each…must already know” what is in the air when they begin this conversation⁵⁹ – but if these men met to discuss the weather somewhere other than England, I argue further, their banter was likely to be about much more than whether it rained or snowed. With this revelation in mind, this dissertation also suggests that when two twenty-first-century readers meet to make small talk about the weather, the form of the report they discuss still bears the imprint of these eighteenth-century Englishmen’s imperial interests, and it will make political arguments of its own.⁶⁰ In addition to uncovering new ways to read familiar texts, then, this research proposes a few old ways to confront one pressing problem of the present. At a moment when scholars across the humanities and physical sciences together are struggling – sometimes together, often alone – to trace the causes and consequences of the present climate crisis, this dissertation joins a conversation that tracks the technological and epistemological origins of anthropogenic climate change to the long eighteenth century, and argues that the dramatic expansion of the British Empire during this period has shaped both the form and content of the weather report from this point forward. By insisting, furthermore, that the human interests involved in reporting the weather were obvious to eighteenth-century readers, this dissertation aims to resist contemporary arguments about how the Enlightenment separation of “human acts” from “natural facts” has made it hard to see what we have been doing – and to recommend the scepticism with which eighteenth-century readers often received their weather reports, and especially those that seemed to recommend further regulation and restraint, as a critical reading method especially “adequate,” in Baucom’s phrase, “to the situation of our time.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.”
⁶⁰ In other words, both the form of our weather reports and the “facts” of the weather themselves continue to reflect and reinforce an imperial order. For more on how the practical (as well as epistemological) legacies of this Enlightenment debate continue to shape the present climate crisis, see IPCC, 2014, “Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers,” and the Coda of this dissertation.
⁶¹ Menely, “‘The Present Obfuscation,’” 479; Baucom, “History 4°,” 123.
In “Airs, Waters, Places,” Hippocrates prescribes two quite different methods of assessing environmental risk: though the study begins by describing the restorative or destructive effects of particular predominant wind directions and hard or soft water supplies, it ends with an ethnographic investigation of “custom and character” in different parts of the world, exchanging comments on health and sickness for broad classifications of type and kind. A foundational text for Enlightenment studies in both the preservation of human health and the nature of human difference, the two-part structure of “Airs, Waters, Places” cast a long shadow across eighteenth-century writing about the problem of environmental influence. Here, too, both preferred methods and assumptions about the purpose of investigating environmental influence fall into two broad camps: on the one side, a determinist tradition attempts to identify physical causes for cultural difference, while on the other, a medical debate unfolds about the effects of changes in the air and atmosphere on the vulnerable human body. For most of the long history of writing about the relationship between nature and culture, however, only one of these fields of inquiry was consistently political, or explicitly associated with the ends and forms of laws related to governing people and organizing society: “the empire of climate,” as Montesquieu has it, “is the first, the most powerful, of all empires.” Generally speaking, early modern writing about what now looks like the weather – or the short-term effects of atmospheric

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2 Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, De L’Esprit des Lois, Book 19, chap. 14, qtd. in Clarence J. Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 566. For other citations, this chapter refers to Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws (De L’Esprit des Lois), trans. Thomas Nugent, 2nd ed. (London, 1752), 1: 427. This observation is not meant to suggest that medical writing about the air’s influence did not inform more explicitly political writing about culture and climate. As soon as writers like John Arbuthnot could offer a scientific explanation for the ways nerves seemed to contract in the cold or expand due to heat, writers like Montesquieu took it up to justify deterministic arguments for the “spirit of the laws” best suited to each climate – and even in the late eighteenth century, detailed descriptions of unhealthy urban atmospheres were used to inspire various forms of political intervention to improve the built environment. For more on weather, climate, and other “early modern theories of atmospheric variability and their impact on notions of English national identity,” see also Snider, “Hard Frost, 1684.”
change on the human body – was much more frequently identified with the medical tradition and matters of health, while writing about climate, often with the presumption that day-to-day conditions at other latitudes remained stable, was more closely associated with political philosophy and matters of law and society.\textsuperscript{3} Perhaps for this reason, the field of scholarship about the relationship between environmental thought and empire has also emphasized the eighteenth-century evolution of climatic determinism. After all, as Clarence J. Glacken observes in his foundational \textit{Traces on the Rhodian Shore}, it is this history of thought that foreshadows the ugly racial determinism of the nineteenth century, and “climatic causality” appears almost everywhere in eighteenth-century efforts to explain and justify expanding British imperial authority.\textsuperscript{4} However, even as these theories of climatic determinism “flourished,” in Glacken’s phrase, more “comprehensively” than ever before, the long eighteenth century also marks the beginning of a quite different way of thinking about environmental influence: a new weather consciousness, or a greater sense of the fact that the weather changed from day to day, and a growing suspicion that these atmospheric vagaries might have some effect on the body’s physical health and mood. Under the weather, human subjectivity appeared both more vulnerable and less determined than in the tradition of writing about climate – and so, by examining a range of literary responses to this expanding weather consciousness, this chapter aims to explore the new ways of thinking about what it meant to be subject to the “most variable of all variations” that emerged along with it.\textsuperscript{5} In particular, this chapter argues that a closer look at the distinction between weather and climate as it was produced and refined throughout the eighteenth century will both reveal an alternative history of thought about the nature of the human condition emerging alongside the better known history of climatic determinism, and help to prove that, for many eighteenth-century readers, both of Hippocrates’s two fields of inquiry are equally political. In fact, as this chapter will explain, it is during the eighteenth century that weather emerges as an especially

\textsuperscript{3} For other perspectives on Hippocrates’s two-part structure and this broader division in eighteenth-century writing about environmental influence, see Olson, “The Human Sciences”; and Dove, “Historic Decentering of the Modern Discourse of Climate Change.”

\textsuperscript{4} Glacken, \textit{Traces on the Rhodian Shore}, 620. For further commentary on Hippocratic theories of climatic determinism, the humoral body, and eighteenth-century ideas about race, see Wheeler, \textit{The Complexion of Race}, especially her “Introduction: The Empire of Climate – Categories of Race in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” 1-48.

\textsuperscript{5} Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.”
important subject of political debate – in large part as a result of the increasingly prominent role these evolving theories about what it means to be subject to a powerful external influence would play in arguments both for and against the expansion of the British Empire.

Inspired, then, by the way Hippocrates’s “Airs, Waters, Places” presents its ethnographic and medical investigations as two discrete ways to come to understand the operation and significance of environmental influence, this chapter also treats climatic determinist thinking and this new weather consciousness as two fundamentally different ways of organizing information about the world. Aligned with Hippocrates’s ethnographic approach, climatic determinist thinking emphasizes difference and variation to establish order, while writing about the weather seems both to expose common experience and to acknowledge chaos as an ever-present threat. Because eighteenth-century readers would still have identified the second of these two modes of environmental representation as new and unsettling, however, this chapter will begin with a brief review of the more familiar climatic determinist tradition – intended both to establish the background against which the new weather consciousness would be defined and to identify its major points of departure from this otherwise pervasive mode of thought. As stated above, eighteenth-century writing about climate is driven by a fascination with difference; writers wedded to this strain of determinism are committed to explaining not just how people and cultures vary from place to place, but also why this variation seems to occur. According to Glacken, this, too, is a Hippocratic inheritance: Hippocrates “is not concerned with peoples that are similar but with those that differ, either through nature or custom from one another,” Glacken explains, and though Hippocrates’s interest “was basically a medical, not an ethnographic” one, his focus was the physical causes – “climatic variation, seasonal change, different types of landscapes” – that could explain the differences he observed. For the Enlightenment writers considered in this chapter, this attention to difference had become newly charged. At the same time that persistent religious inquiry about the nature of first causes kept alive the possibility that each part of the world might have been made to support precisely the life that now existed upon it, the

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flourishing field of travel writing that purported to present “primitive peoples” in the “state of nature” reinvigorated debate on the relative influence of physical and moral causes. Likewise, as Richard Olson argues, “the question of just exactly why there should be so much local variation in human customs and laws had become one of the central puzzles for legal scholars and moral philosophers” of this period, in large part because “[p]rinces and kings seeking to consolidate power wanted both to appropriate the authority to establish their own laws and to institute a sense of national identity by emphasizing the uniqueness and aptness of local legal systems.” During this age of imperial expansion, in other words, the climatic determinist vision of a world made up of essentially different types of people also made it possible to believe that this natural order justified the domination of some types over others – and so it is not hard to imagine why this way of thinking might exert such a strong influence over travellers, legal philosophers, and political pamphleteers invested in defining Britain’s imperial responsibilities. Climatic determinism and imperial political thought seemed to be natural complements.

Furthermore, Glacken suggests, as long as reliable information about climate lagged behind Britons’ interest in the implications of its influence, convenient misunderstandings could flourish – and they did. Even John Arbuthnot, in his otherwise medically-minded *An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies*, attempts to “reason from the Laws of Mechanicks, and the known Properties and Qualities of Air, what must be their natural effects” not just on the individual body, but upon the body politic of parts unknown; after all, he speculates, “it seems agreeable to Reason and Experience, that the Air operates sensibly in forming the Constitutions of Mankind, the Specialities of Features, Complexion, Temper, and consequently the manners of Mankind.

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7 Ibid., 501-502.
9 “Paradoxically,” that is, Glacken also observes that eighteenth-century enthusiasm for climatic determinism might have had as much to do with the information these travellers and philosophers did not have as with the explanations for cultural difference they hoped to find: “one of the reasons [climatic theories] flourished so luxuriantly,” he posits, “was that so little was known about climate, about the general circulation of the atmosphere, climatic classification, and climate contrasts in far off countries.” Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, 620.
which are found to vary much in different Countries and Climates.”

Taking for granted both these differences in “Features, Complexion, Temper, and…manners” and the fact that these have been impressed by the air (rather than, say, by government, which Arbuthnot suggests merely “stamp[s] the manners, but cannot change the genius or temperament”), Arbuthnot’s intervention here is really only to propose a new physiological justification for a very old argument – but it was the novelty of this explanation, not the familiarity of its conclusions, that would interest Montesquieu in 1748. Like Arbuthnot, Montesquieu aims to explain why cultural difference exists and how best to treat those subject to the world’s diverse environmental influences – and so in Book XIV, Chapter 2 of The Spirit of the Laws (De L’Esprit des Lois), he makes a similar leap from empirical evidence observed in a single instance to an explanation for cultural behaviour consistent both over time and throughout a much larger population.

Just as the papillae, or fine hairs, of a sheep’s tongue seem “diminished” when frozen and “to rise” upon thawing, Montesquieu explains, “in cold countries, the nervous glands are less spread,” and so the inhabitants of these countries “have very little sensibility for pleasure; in temperate countries, they have more; [and] in warm countries, their sensibility is exquisite.”

Despite strong claims to reason only from empirical evidence, each man has made the same mistake: in elaborating on what they have observed about the body’s response to the cold to attempt to explain the behaviour and relative sensibility of a whole culture, both Arbuthnot and Montesquieu have assumed that the climate of these cold, temperate, and warm countries remains constant over time – such that the inhabitants of a cold country are both always cold and therefore fundamentally different from the ever-hot inhabitants of the torrid zone, and neither ever experiences the changing stimuli that inspired Montesquieu’s initial study of the sheep’s tongue.

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10 John Arbuthnot, An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies (London, 1733), 146; see also Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, 564.
11 Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, 564.
13 Because Arbuthnot’s and Montesquieu’s works are especially relevant to the tradition of British writing the rest of this chapter will investigate, this brief survey of the themes uniting eighteenth-century approaches to climatic determinism focuses on their writing – but neither came to these ideas alone. As Voltaire put it, “The author of the ‘Spirit of Laws,’ without quoting authorities, carried this idea [of climatic influence] farther than [the abbé] du Bos, Chardin, and Bodin, [but] there are men everywhere who possess more zeal than understanding” (qtd. in Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, 551-552). For more,
Because these men set out to find a cause for what they already perceived to be longstanding differences in “Features, Complexion, Temper, and…manners,” that is, and because both reach for Hippocratic theories of climatic influence to explain these differences, Arbuthnot and Montesquieu have failed to see what has stayed the same in each of the examples they consider: the effects of air upon human bodies, at any time and place – and the fact that all sheep have tongues that respond to cold in the same way, no matter where (or when) they live.

Even in the absence of reliable information about the specific variations of climates outside of Europe, however, there were other eighteenth-century writers who identified this problem with the order Montesquieu and others attempted to impose upon the world – and these writers, too, consistently point to what seemed to be a similar human response to atmospheric change in order to level the differences that climatic determinism claimed to explain. Taken together, in fact, this interest in similarity (rather than difference) and a view towards variation over time (rather than between places) appear to be the strongest common threads uniting anti-Montesquieu criticism of the eighteenth century. Voltaire, for instance, observes that “it is as easy for a Crimean Tartar as for an inhabitant of Mecca to recognize a single God,” and now, “The Christian religion, born in Syria, having received its principal development in Alexandria, inhabits to-day the lands where Teutate, Irminsul, Frida, Odin were worshipped[,] in all these vicissitudes,” he concludes, “climate has counted for nothing: government has done everything.”

Like Arbuthnot, Voltaire distinguishes the effects of climate from the effects of government, implying that these two forces represent comparable, even competing, influences on the temper and manners of those who live under them – but unlike Arbuthnot, Voltaire insists that government is more powerful of the two forces, and that only the combined persuasive influence of government and religion helps to explain the persistence of common religious rites across many different times and places. In his 1748 essay “Of National Characters,” Hume makes a similar argument, but offers new names for each

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type of influence: he identifies what Arbuthnot calls “government” as one among many “moral causes,” or “all circumstances, which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us,” and recasts “climate” as a physical cause, or one of “those qualities of the air and climate, which are supposed to work insensibly on the temperate, by alternating the tone and habit of the body, and giving a particular complexion, which…will yet prevail among the generality of mankind, and have an influence on their manners.” Like Voltaire, Hume emphasizes common qualities to cast doubt on the overwhelming force of physical causes, observing both that there is a great variety of manners among people who share the same climate (“I believe no one,” he scoffs, “attributes the differences of manners, in Wapping and St. James’s, to a difference of air or climate”), and significant similarities among peoples who live under different climates but who happen to have come into contact with one another in different ways; whether “we run over the globe, or revolve the annals of history,” Hume observes, “we shall “discover everywhere signs of a sympathy or contagion of manners, none of the influence of air or climate.” The list of similar critiques of climatic theory goes on, ably summarized by Glacken: in 1758, Helvetius explores the unequal distribution of intellectual talent and martial prowess among the same population at different moments in their collective history, wondering why the fortunes of modern Greeks, Romans, and Asiatic peoples should be so different from their ancient counterparts; in 1791, Herder notes that though “it is true, we are ductile clay in the hand of Climate,” he too concludes that “her fingers mould so variously, and the laws, that counteract them, are so numerous, that perhaps the genius of mankind alone

17 Hume, “Of National Characters,” 1.21:10. Although Hume admits that different climates might provide different impetuses to certain kinds of action (as the inhabitants of hot climates might be less inspired to labour for shelter), he insists that travel, trade, and war do as much to explain the surprising similarity between cultures and governing traditions in different parts of the world – and so even if “climate may affect the grosser and more bodily organs of our frame,” he concludes that the “promiscuity” of both passions and personality types in both the northern and southern regions of the globes seems evidence enough to insist that climate does “not…work” – or does not work alone – “upon those finer organs, on which the operations of the mind and understanding depend” (1.21:34). For other perspectives on climatic theory and structures of government, see the works surveyed in Gidal, “Civic Melancholy,” 23-45; and Wood, “The Volcano Lover.”
is capable of combining the relation of all these powers in one whole.\textsuperscript{18} For the most part, these critiques of climatic determinism take an optimistic view of the “moral causes” they observe – often emphasizing, as Herder does, the range and force of environmental influence around the world only to illuminate the relatively greater range and force of the common human “genius” that has subdued it.\textsuperscript{19} Taken together, a pattern emerges: writers who study change over time, rather than differences between places, tend to expose points of continuity that unsettle the climatic determinist arguments made popular by Montesquieu (and others), and what differences they do discover suggest mostly that climate – so easily overwhelmed by government or religious institutions – might be a less “political” force than the Hippocratic tradition had imagined for so long.

Throughout the eighteenth century, this debate – about whether physical or moral causes are responsible for the world’s great diversity of “Features, Complexion, Temper, and…manners,” about what force or process could possibly explain both cultural change over time and cultural continuity across great distances – would continue to form the backdrop to an emerging sense of the distinction between weather and climate. Although proponents of climatic determinism (or physical causes) would continue to focus on differences between peoples and places, the case for the relatively greater influence of moral causes threw new light on the physiological responses to heat and cold that seemed more universal than unique, and so helped to establish changes in the day-to-day condition of the atmosphere as a force worth considering in this effort to categorize both human culture and nature. By expanding the category of physical causes to include these day-to-day variations in temperature and air pressure, furthermore, the natural philosophers and political theorists involved in this debate also uncovered a significant


\textsuperscript{19} In this view, in other words, human beings need not necessarily live subject to the weather in the same way as animals, as the great variety of the society under observation also speaks to a common power: the qualities of mind, Glacken explains, by which “man has discovered how to cope with the delicacy and fragility of his body, to withstand inclement weather, to triumph over poor soils, to discover fire, [and] to make clothing and shelter.” Here, Glacken is referring to Buffon, who is more invested in climatic determinist thinking than the other writers identified in this paragraph – but as Glacken notes, Buffon is also attentive to “the profound similarities which unite all members of the human race,” and identifies the “power of human agency in changing the environment” as being chief among these qualities. Glacken, \textit{Traces on the Rhodian Shore}, 590.
challenge to longstanding assumptions about human vulnerability to environmental influence, or our own “changeable” condition. In the climatic determinist tradition surveyed above, writers who reached for Hippocratic explanations for difference presumed that people were formed by the climate in which they were born – and though there was some disagreement about the degree of change to expect in those who travelled to a new climate, these writers also tended to presume that qualities like complexion and character, once formed by climate, would not be profoundly affected by small variations in local temperature or air pressure. As the thermometer and barometer made daily atmospheric change easier to see, however, and the increasingly popular practice of weather journaling made the relationship between these variations in the weather and individual variations in health, mood, or behaviour easier to track, some eighteenth-century writers began to consider the possibility that people might be more changeable than the climatic determinist tradition presumed. Caught in a rainstorm, as Swift gleefully demonstrates, our responses to the weather appear to be both automatic and common, shared between people rich and poor, urban and rural, past and present – and if we are being honest, as Swift prompts his readers to do, we should even be able to recognize the contraction and expansion of our own nerves in animal reactions to the weather. Having stripped away the differences that popular theories of climatic determinism tried to enforce, this new way of thinking about the weather’s influence now also seemed to require a new view of the human subject – one more malleable than the determinist’s vision of the complexion and features shaped by climate (to account for the many ways we seem to be vulnerable to the weather’s day-to-day changes), but also one that was more universal, as all people seemed to be vulnerable to these changes in the same way.

Emerging in an age of aggressive British imperial expansion, however, the notion that everyone – including Britons – might be similarly subject to such an unpredictable and inevitable external influence seemed both radical and potentially dangerous, and the range of strong responses it provoked leaves no doubt that eighteenth-century writers saw some political trouble brewing in this new way of thinking about both the weather and themselves. To explore and better define the nature of this concern about the new “politics of the weather,” the rest of this chapter aims to explain first why and how this
weather consciousness coalesced over the course of the eighteenth century, and then to examine a series of literary responses to how this new way of thinking about the weather seemed to level the differences, categories, and order that had previously seemed to organize the eighteenth-century social and political world. What did it mean, these writers wondered, to be subject to the weather? While for a satirist like Swift, this new weather consciousness seemed to puncture the human hubris implicit in establishing social hierarchy in a satisfying (even liberating) way, for a didactic essayist like Thomas Gordon, the possibility that matters as foundational as our reason, ethics, and moments of creative inspiration might be vulnerable to something as changeable as the weather presents an unsettling challenge to his sense of what makes us human in the first place. Others, like J. Phelps, found in the new weather consciousness the promise of empiricist fantasies come true – and yet the ever-cautious Samuel Johnson prompts his readers to consider the cost at which we might acquire that control. Published in the middle of the Seven Years War, Johnson’s *Rasselas* analyses the parallel between the intellectual over-reaching implicit in the new meteorology and Britain’s imperial ambition, and so further foreshadows the role that writing about the weather will come to play in political debate about the risks and rewards of empire for most of the century to follow. Looking ahead, then, this chapter also raises a question about the emerging weather consciousness that inspires the case studies in Chapters 2 and 3: in the midst of Britain’s campaign to establish and expand its territory all over the globe, and especially in North America, what warnings are embedded in all this writing about universal vulnerability to an unpredictable external influence – and how might this vulnerability be reimagined, as in Phelps’s poetry, as a justification for increasing imperial power?

I. From meteors to matters of fact: The rise of a new weather consciousness

Up to this point, this chapter has positioned eighteenth-century climatic determinism and this increasing interest in the weather’s daily variations in opposition, as if each tradition were primarily defined by its difference from the other. In fact, this new weather consciousness did not evolve in a uniform way – and its uneven development is reflected in a similar split in the world of eighteenth-century writing about the weather, a
disagreement about what constituted the primary subject of meteorological investigation that became more pronounced under the pressure of rising empiricism. By now, it is a critical commonplace among those who study the cultural history of British weather and climate to observe that the long eighteenth century witnessed a shift in faith away from descriptive, anecdotal, or other forms of qualitative evidence towards quantitative evidence of meteorological change; likewise, though many observe that this transformation happened in fits and starts, few dispute the suggestion that this shift was bolstered by technological innovations that made it possible to produce regular records in a format standardized enough to compare changes in the weather over time.\textsuperscript{20} This, for example, is the broad argument of Golinski’s \textit{British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment} (2007), a metonym for which can be found in his chapter on the barometer.\textsuperscript{21} Because the barometer “had been seized upon by experimental philosophers as one of the great achievements of their enterprise, symbolic of the break with classical philosophy and of the program to establish natural knowledge on a consistently empirical foundation,” Golinski argues, people “placed a degree of faith in it that resembled…plain superstition” – and for this reason, he proposes, “the barometer came to represent the limits of human knowledge as much as its triumphs, the less than universal reach of enlightened reason, and the troubling survival of beliefs and attitudes supposedly consigned to the past” (156).\textsuperscript{22} For the most part, the close readings to follow will affirm

\textsuperscript{20} For a range of perspectives on this shift, see, for instance, Golinski, “Barometers of Change”; Reed, \textit{Romantic Weather}, especially “Chapter One: Something Evermore About to Be,” 1-78; Sudan, “Chilling Allahabad”; Castle, \textit{The Female Thermometer}; and Lewis, \textit{Air’s Appearance}, especially “Chapter Two: “Other Air”: Boyle’s Spring, Milton’s Fall, and the Making of Literary Atmosphere,” 36-60.

\textsuperscript{21} Golinski, \textit{British Weather}, 108-136. Parenthetical citations of Golinski’s work in this chapter will refer to this text.

\textsuperscript{22} In part, as the chapter will go on to discuss, the ambivalent position of the barometer can be attributed to the fact that the mechanism by which it – often successfully – predicted atmospheric change remained somewhat mysterious for most of the eighteenth century. Popular because it could offer a shorter-range forecast than the astrological almanac and a more finely-tuned reading than the weatherglass (unfortunate servant “to two Masters, sometimes to the Weight of the Air, sometimes to Heat”), many of the barometer’s early instructional companions nonetheless explain that its movements should be interpreted alongside a host of other meteorological observations in order to be made useful. These often bewildering instructions for use illustrate an enduring confusion about what it is that the barometer actually measures, and perhaps also help to explain why critics of the barometer, like Samuel Johnson, might have found its popularity so confounding. On the one hand, this enthusiasm for the instrument’s ability to predict a rainy or calm day without \textit{explaining} what brought about the change seemed to share more with the rural practice of watching weather-signs than the ostensible aims of Enlightenment science – but on the other hand, as the history of weather forecasting would bear out, the barometer’s mysterious sensibility would, even in the eighteenth century, make it both increasingly possible and necessary to begin to conceive of weather systems as an
Golinski’s assessment of the barometer as “a most equivocal tool of enlightenment, or perhaps an indication of the ambivalences inherent in the movement itself” (120) – and yet there are other perspectives on this uneven progress of “enlightened reason” that suggest the “survival of beliefs and attitudes supposedly consigned to the past” that he observes here is in fact necessary to the “modern” view of the weather we have inherited from this moment.

In *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1820* (2000), for instance, Janković offers just such an alternative narrative, first refusing to mark a hard break between early modern inquiry and Enlightenment science, and so refusing to centre technological innovation as the engine of this change in thinking about the weather as an increasingly indisputable natural fact. Primarily interested in how the weather became a subject of scientific investigation, Janković identifies two quite different traditions of writing about changes in the air: one theoretical and “meteoric,” largely preoccupied with the material and efficient causes of meteors, and the other “prognostic,” grounded in the expertise of shepherds and primarily concerned with the signs that predict day-to-day changes in the weather.23 According to Janković, the former school of thought retained much more authority than our existing narrative of the epistemological break associated with new empirical measuring technologies typically allows; indeed, he explains, given that “[m]ost meteorologists during this period used Aristotelian meteora to make sense of the aleatory character of weather phenomena,” this “meteoric” tradition really was “the dominant view of the matter…maintained by a larger number of naturalists, their informants, and their audience…for the greater part of” the eighteenth century (9). Here, the “dominant view” takes as its subject of specialization not the daily changes of the weather – rain, sunshine, wind, or fog – but rather the rare or otherwise extraordinary interaction between forces of the air above and the conditions of the ground below, which ultimately did improve its users’ predictive power. For more, see Golinski, “Barometers of Change,” 69-93.

23 Janković, *Reading the Skies*. Parenthetical citations of Janković’s work will refer to this text. Rather than arguing that eighteenth century empirical science cast off the early modern ideas that shaped each of these spheres of atmospheric inquiry, Janković here highlights what persists from each school of thought as they are combined in what would become the “modern” meteorological method that persists today – and though he does not deny that expanding interest in quantification and the numerical record is an important part of the transformation of this field throughout the eighteenth century, he also illustrates how these formal pressures operated differently on the rural prognostic tradition and the theoretical meteorology based in England’s urban centres.
phenomenon known, after Aristotle’s *Meteorologica*, as “meteors”: shooting stars, “burning flames” (aurora borealis, or northern lights), hurricanes, lightning bolts, rainbows, and even earthquakes. Defined as a group only by their striking difference from the sublunary calm they shatter, “meteors” are by nature hard to predict, and even harder to study as a result. Perhaps because these meteors are so unavailable to close and frequent observation, furthermore, eighteenth-century meteorological study is largely theoretical, dedicated to defining what meteors are and explaining why they happen. In *Reading the Skies*, Janković thus aims to explain how this esoteric tradition ever came to include the banal atmospheric changes we now know as “the weather” – and chief among these forces, he argues, was early modern meteorologists’ move to incorporate (or appropriate) the prognostic approach to interpreting weather-signs long associated with the “low” world of agriculture.

Stemming from Virgil’s *Georgics* (37 BC), what Janković calls the “prognostic” school of writing addresses the daily condition of the weather – dry, wet, windy, calm, warm, or cold – but devotes most of its attention to the signs, most often in the behaviour of animals, that seem to predict change in one direction or another. Unlike the meteoric tradition, then, the study of weather-signs is exclusively predictive: it aims at anticipating change in the weather, but does not attempt to explain the causal connections between weather-signs and the atmospheric effects they foreshadow (22). However, even the prognostic tradition was not immune from eighteenth-century enthusiasm for rationalization and empirical evidence. Building on Anthony Low’s vision of the seventeenth-century Georgic Revolution, which generated a “new emphasis on the role of

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24 Janković, *Reading the Skies*, 16-17.
25 As Janković further explains, some parts of this tradition are more flexible than others. After the increase in electrical research in the 1750s, for instance, ideas about the composition and causes of meteors evolved a great deal, moving away from attempts to categorize reactions between primary elements and towards theories of exhalations grounded in what Janković calls “aerial chemistry,” or speculation about the chemical composition of the air (30-31). When it came to efficient causes, however, Janković explains that the “eighteenth-century persistence of portentous, providential, and political meteorology – even as it was continuously challenged – suggests that large sections of society continued to live in an emblematic environment and an anthropogenic culture of weather” (77). For more on “meteoric” weather, see also Reed, *Romantic Weather*, especially “Chapter One: Something Evermore About to Be,” 1-78
agricultural labour in the moral and material economy of English society,” Janković argues that the related eighteenth-century economic interest in agriculturally-oriented weather-watching also cast new light on the methods available to categorize and identify the statistical significance of various kinds of weather lore (132). In treatises like John Pointer’s *Rational Account of the Weather* (1738), for instance, or John Claridge’s *The Shepherd of Banbury’s Rules* (1748), knowledge of everyday weather was identified as more profitable – and so more important – than theories about rare and potentially unknowable meteors, and this stance seemed to help these writers “bestow more respectability on the discourse marginalized in the theory- and city-driven English enlightenment” (131-132). What’s more, Janković explains, this shift took place alongside the growth of a “natural theology” that insisted that the portentous events of the meteoric tradition are in fact part of a longer and on-going cycle of the weather – and taken together, he concludes, these movements were largely responsible for drawing “everyday” weather into the sphere of meteorology, and bringing meteorology itself back down to earth, out of the fields and into the urban laboratories where its daily variations could be modelled and contained (129-142).

There were consequences, however, that accompanied this new way of looking at the weather as a daily event, or something that just happened (and happened to us). In *Reading the Skies*, Janković focuses on the losses, or what other forms of knowledge were written over in the process of this change. At the same time that the subject of theoretical meteorology expanded to include day-to-day changes in weather like rain and

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27 See Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). For more about how cloud formations in particular – once an especially important forecasting tool of sailors and shepherds – entered the schematized and theoretical meteorological tradition over the course of the nineteenth century, see also Hamblyn, *The Invention of Clouds*.

28 Claridge, for example, argues that in this “Art it is always allow’d as a point of great Consequence, when several Masters therein agree as to the meaning of a Character, and it is from thence very justly presum’d that this character is rightly decypher’d” – and so, collectively “[e]mbracing this logic of cumulative probability, agro-meteorological writers from the second part of the eighteenth century acknowledged the advantage of consulting traditional prognostics and approved the use of the weather-wisdom of classical works” (qtd. in Janković, *Reading the Skies*, 138). Perhaps for the same reason, Janković suggests, writers like Pointer and Claridge also took a comparative approach to the classical maxims they studied, “forsak[ing] the principle of causation and focus[ing] on the ‘statistical’ correlation between prognostic techniques and observed phenomena” (138). For original texts, see Pointer, *A Rational Account of the Weather*; and Claridge, *The Shepherd of Banbury’s Rules*.

29 Reed observes a similar trajectory (“science moved indoors”). Reed, *Romantic Weather*, 4.
storms, for instance, the natural philosopher’s lingering sense that “real” knowledge rested only with explanations for why these things happened continued to displace the authority of local records that merely said that a storm had occurred – and as a result, Janković explains, qualitative accounts of both extraordinary meteors and collections of weather signs had nearly disappeared from the scientific record by the end of the century. In the eighteenth-century texts that include references to the instruments and methods associated with the evolving fields of empirical meteorology, however, this conflict between the urban, laboratory-based meteoric tradition and the rural, field-based prognostic tradition is characterized quite differently, often with a greater emphasis on what has come along with the new approach to thinking about the weather rather than what has been lost. More specifically, these texts tend to treat the prognostic tradition that helped to draw everyday weather into the sphere of meteorological investigation as if it brought with it a problem – or a number of assumptions, at least, that raise complicated questions about the nature of human subjectivity. To begin with, if the meteoric tradition, which treated meteors and comets as a form of divine communication, had sometimes implied that the weather might be governed by our (bad) behaviour, the prognostic tradition presumed the opposite: grounded in shepherds’ long experience observing the patterned responses of plants and animals before a storm, dry spell, or cold snap, the study of weather-signs is useful only to the extent that the interpreter accepts that all lives – including human lives – will be influenced by the atmospheric events that the signs predict. If this was true, the daily practice of watching the weather itself seemed to reinforce a range of new arguments about the weather-watcher’s own vulnerability to external stimuli. Just behind the suggestion that the knowledge produced by this practice might be necessary to maintain a healthful balance in the human body, for instance, seemed to rest a theory of automatic reaction not unlike the view of animals underpinning the common store of weather signs – and a claim that the health and integrity of the human body are in constant flux, subject to a rapid and frequent series of changes now imagined to take place over the course of a single week, or even a single day.

30 Janković insists, however, that this change had little to do with the way “provincials adapted to a new discipline and embraced the dictates of centralization,” and much more to do with that fact “the editors of the scientific press ceased to accept their contributions” (163-164; 10); in other words, Janković concludes, “[t]his was an end in visibility, rather than a triumph of rationality” (10).
Even as this view of weather as a daily event was becoming a hallmark of modern meteorology, this association with fast and frequent change turned the weather into a real threat to the reasoning and moral capacity that eighteenth-century readers often identified as the foundation (or definition) of the human condition. Golinski’s research on the increasing popularity of the weather diary chronicles this change in more detail. Arguing, parallel to Janković, that the concept of “‘the weather’ as we understand it – as a quotidian occurrence – was constituted through regular record-keeping governed by the clock and the calendar,” Golinski observes that eighteenth-century weather-watchers’ writing about themselves evolved along with their daily reports, as the regulated form through which the diary organized the weather also reinforced a view of the diarist’s body as in need of similar regulation. At the same time that the records produced by thermometers and barometers made it easier to observe minute changes in the temperature and air pressure, the practice of recording these measurements throughout the day also made it easier to track equally minute changes in the weather-watcher’s mood and physical condition over the same period of time – and yet this combination of observations, Golinski suggests, together seemed to threaten “the reasoning powers or working of the senses” (83). In Robert Hooke’s case, for instance, this “practice of noting melancholy feelings in conjunction with weather observations” was part of a regular practice of scrutinizing “his internal state as bearing upon his capacity for external observations”; in other words, Golinski explains, the diary Hooke kept from 1672 to 1693, was “a tool for monitoring his capacity for scientific work” (82-83). In this light, both the tool and the nature of the information it recorded seemed to exacerbate the anxiety that inspired these weather diarists to undertake this monitoring project in the first place – but it was often the speed of change occasioned by the weather that seems to

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31 In part, Golinski explains, the weather diary was disciplining because the willingness to read instruments “once, twice, or even three times a day…demanded meticulous exactitude and remarkably steady habits,” but also because those who kept these detailed journals commented relatively frequently on the “tediousness of making these observations,” as Clifton Wintringham said of his more than ten years’ record in 1727. Clifton Wintringham, A Treatise of Endemic Diseases (York, 1718) qtd. in Golinski, British Weather, 80.

32 Elsewhere, Golinski notes that this view of the weather journal echoed earlier practices of Protestant spirituality (in which a storm would often trigger some “despair about [the diarist’s] prospects of salvation”). Golinski, British Weather, 82.
have posed the greatest problem for critics of this new meteorological science. Although early modern and eighteenth-century theories of environmental influence had long conceived of the human body as variously porous or impressionable, the Hippocratic or Galenic view of the humoural body’s exchange with the surrounding environment typically conceived of change unfolding over a relatively long period of time – even generations, as Buffon’s later theory of the “degeneration” of hardy species in North America would suggest.  

Now, it was the rate and frequency of change that differentiated the weather from the more enduring influence of climate – but if it was true that the human body was subject to the influence of heat and cold in intervals of only a single day or even hours within a day, the weather diarist’s “capacity for scientific work” would need careful monitoring indeed. Here, as Golinski observes, Hooke’s “Method for Making a History of the Weather” (1667) offers another useful illustration. Intended to “produce some degree of uniformity in the reports the [Royal Society] wanted to collect” from amateur meteorologists, the document proposes categories for tabulating daily observations and recommends a format that would make it easier for readers to absorb the findings of a month of weather-watching at a glance – but “little was said about the need to standardize and calibrate instruments,” as calibrating the observer seemed to be more important (83). In fact, Hooke suggests, the weather diarist must be “some one that is always conversant in or neer the same place,” hardly a subject at all except for this immobility – and perhaps as a result of all this concern with the obfuscating effects of personal subjectivity, Golinski argues, subsequent weather “diarists [also] came to be recognized as reliable observers of the weather to the extent that they concealed their feelings and personal qualities” (84).  

This was also true of other forms of natural

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33 Although, as mentioned, Hippocratic and Galenic theories of the humoural body certainly persisted throughout this moment in the evolution of a new meteorological science, these theories were frequently marshalled towards polygenetic and determinist arguments in which the predominate (rather than immediate) temperature seemed to be the most important quality of a frigid, torrid, or temperate zone, or bent to monogenetic arguments like Buffon’s, later in the century, in which even hardy stock could degenerate (or vice versa) over many generations in a new climate. In *American Curiosity*, for instance, Susan Scott Parrish suggests that “modern authors of humoural theory, writing at a time of European expansion into foreign climates and the formation of national characters based upon climate, were deeply concerned with forecasting the body’s conditioning by its latitudinal location” (79). Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of National History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), especially “Chapter Two: English Bodies in America,” 77-102.

history – but in this case, weather seems to have presented a special threat to the authority of the observer both because it was imagined to exert an overwhelming influence on mood, health, and other changeable conditions of the human body, and because it worked so much more quickly than other theories of climatic determinism typically allowed.

Far from a loss, however, either of self (in the case of the weather-diarist) or some kind of authority (as in Janković’s history of rural knowledge), many eighteenth-century weather-watchers continued to treat their journals as an opportunity to shore up their view of themselves against this possible challenge to its coherence – or, in Golinski’s phrase, as an “exercise of self-formation” or a “vehicle for self-development” (84). In the same way, eighteenth-century literary responses to the new meteorology tended to emphasize what this new practice of watching the weather every day had brought with it from the fields, rather than what might have been lost in the process – and to continue to treat empirical descriptions of the weather as opportunities to comment on the unsettled status of the self that the weather now threatened to change. What’s more, not all eighteenth-century writers conceived of what had been unsettled in this shift in the same way, as evidenced by the wide range of literary responses to the new meteorological method. For Swift, for instance, watching urban weather in the same way shepherds had long watched their fields also made it easier to see the many ways that humans behave like animals – a revelation that would not just challenge the arrogance that presumed to impose a hierarchy of social types and kinds, but also level any species distinctions that might suggest there is any meaningful difference at all between, say, London’s politicians and puppies drowning in a gutter. For Johnson, alternatively, it was the collision of the prognostic intentions and the empirical approach of the new meteorology that offended: deeply sceptical of any attempt to know more than the unaided senses will allow, his references to this emerging science focus on moments when attempts to predict the weather seem to supersede the more accurate data that our senses alone can provide, and so condemn these new meteorological methods for leading their “votaries” so far from the capacity for reason that should distinguish the enlightened from the superstitious herd. In the rest of the chapter below, close readings of these texts (among others) will continue to explore the powerful undercurrent that cuts across eighteenth-century literary
responses to the new and more scientific study of the weather: namely, an anxious preoccupation with the increasingly malleable human character exposed by what meteorology has inherited from the prognostic tradition, and a persistent curiosity about what the possibility that all human bodies might be subject to the weather means – not just for our sense of ourselves as rational beings, but also for the terms of our relationships to others, and for the stability of the larger social order in which we believe we exist.

II. “Sure prognostics”: Georgic weather in Swift’s “Description of a City Shower”

According to Swift, of course, the outlook for humanity was already pretty grim, and so perhaps it is no surprise that he embraced, in his “Description of a City Shower,” the most unflattering view of the human condition – irrational, arrogant, and degraded – embedded in this emerging view of the weather. Capitalizing on this new sense of the weather as something that happens to us, and revelling in both the contradictions and telling points of continuity between the “sure prognostics” of the rural tradition and the supposed enlightenment of urban dwellers, Swift dramatizes the weather’s levelling effects on perceived differences of social kind in order to undermine the presumptions of the poem’s characters, and to suggest that the scattered and instinctual responses of the “Templar spruce,” the “careless quean,” and the cat whose pacing predicts the rain might all stem from the same kind of natural fact (2; 35; 19; 3).35 Given the stakes of the seeming differences between high and low people (or Whig and Tory) when the sky is clear, this is a significantly constricted view of humanity under inclement weather – and so perhaps it is for poems like this that Swift gains his reputation as a misanthrope, even apocalyptic in his view of human inability to meet our full potential as the animal rationis capax, or “animal capable of reason.”36 It is also possible, however, to read “A Description of a City Shower” as a call for a more humble, more compassionate view of the diversity of social types who must “commence acquaintance underneath a shed” (40),

35 Swift, “A Description of a City Shower.” Parenthetical citations will refer to this text.
and to imagine that the most troubling failure of reason Swift condemns rests not with the instinctual responses these “various kinds” exhibit under the weather, but rather with the foolish presumption that the distinctions between their “various fortunes” mattered in the first place (39). Either way, and even if Swift’s current view of humanity really is little better than “dead cats, and turnip tops…tumbling down in the flood,” it is in the weather that he finds this opportunity to lift a mirror to that *animal rationis capax* – or a new way to show us to ourselves, the sudden city shower as humbling an encounter as anything the old meteoric tradition could have imagined.

To this end, Swift’s technique works very much as he imagines the rain does: bearing down on the binaries that appear in the poem, revealing just how much these opposites have in common, and otherwise levelling the categories that seemed to bring order to the world before he fell upon it. Take, for instance, Swift’s catalogue of “sure prognostics” that portend the “City Shower,” and the tangled relationship between emerging Enlightenment science and enduring superstition that it seems to expose (2). First, the fact that Swift is talking about the weather at all – constituted by an event as banal as a city shower, and quite different from either climate or meteors – already identifies this poem as a comment on the new meteorological method taking shape in the way Janković has described. Here, however, old and new meteorological methods collide – and upon impact, Swift suggests, there is little to distinguish the prognostic tradition of the country from the emerging empirical method associated with the city. On the one hand, the “careful observer” who attends most closely to signs like the “pensive cat…pursu[ing] her tail no more” and the “double stink” rising from the sewer is operating in the prognostic tradition, undertaking the same “superstitious” assessment of weather-signs historically associated with shepherds and the experience of the fields. In *The Shepherd of Banbury’s Rules* (1748), John Claridge recommends similar observation of the various vapours – typically mists or fog, rather than sewer stench – rising at dusk or dawn as a “sure prognostic” for a fine or foul day to follow; likewise, John Pointer, in his *Rational Account of the Weather* (1738), recommends that his readers consider the movements of birds, cats, and sheep to anticipate a storm, grounding both his records and his authority
in classical precepts and long-held folk wisdom. By opening a poem about a “City Shower” with an invocation of rural superstition, then, Swift suggests that the weather-signs of the country each have their urban counterparts – and so begins to unsettle any assumptions his reader might have held about the origins or originality of the techniques that the more enlightened of the city’s “careful observers” might use to predict the weather in London.

On the other hand, Swift’s catalogue of “sure prognostics” also includes a number of examples likely to resonate with those urban “observers,” features common to weather-journals and the rising field of empirical meteorology set out in the survey of Golinski’s research above. Swift’s speaker’s comments, for instance, on the close timing between “shooting corns,” “Old aches throb[bing],” a “rag[ing]…hollow tooth” and subsequent showers reflect a monitoring approach to managing future pain (9-10) – and the “Dulman,” “Sauntering in coffeehouses…and complain[ing] of spleen” might well be an amateur meteorologist, armed with just enough knowledge of the relationship between his moods and the weather to “damn the climate” for his tedium (11-12). Given the popularity of the new meteorological method among the virtuosi likely to frequent these coffeehouses at the moment that the poem appeared (1704), it also does not seem a stretch to assume that some readers might have recognized this character, or even caught a glimpse of their own approach to “careful observa[tion]” of the weather (1), perhaps, in the brief comments on throbbing “aches” and a raging “hollow tooth” that open the poem (10); indeed, even the line in which these notes appear is split by a caesura, which lends the observations the perfunctory quality of a daily entry in a weather diary (10). Read together, however, the “sure prognostics” of the country (the cat’s behaviour, the rising vapours) and the city (Dulman’s behaviour, an aching body) look very much alike – and so Swift seems to suggest there is not much daylight between the superstitious practices of the rural prognostic tradition and the ostensibly more reasonable practices of the empirical meteorology practiced by weather-diarists and this sauntering Dulman.

37 For more on Pointer, see also Lewis, Air’s Appearance, especially “Chapter One: Rounds of Air,” 14-35; and Hamblin, The Invention of Clouds, 56-57.
38 For examples, see the many eighteenth-century weather diaries excerpted in Golinski’s British Weather, especially in “Chapter Three: Recording and Forecasting,” 77-107. Citations for archival sources are included in Golinski’s bibliography.
Swift, of course, is neither first nor last to make this point: the blind faith and mysticism embedded in Enlightenment science is a perennial problem for its students, and if it amused Swift and annoyed Johnson, this dialectic has also galvanized contemporary theory and research in the cultural studies of science from Horkheimer and Adorno to Latour. In this case, though, Swift begins by insisting that the “careful observers” of the city’s weather are engaged in essentially the same practice as their superstitious country counterparts in order to expose another, even more uncomfortable parallel: poor Dulman, Swift proposes, is also not so different from the “pensive cat” of the poem’s first lines. In fact, Dulman belongs to both camps of “careful observers” identified here. Although his preference for coffeehouses and affected complaining mark him as a likely amateur meteorologist, both the classical authorities and the folk wisdom of the rural prognostic tradition also acknowledge physical aches and pains as signs of a coming storm – and collections of these weather-signs typically show little compunction about compressing the evidence of the human body into sections otherwise devoted to similarly suggestive animal behaviour. In all of these ways, Swift’s technique levels – razing the difference between the daily practice that constitutes “careful” observation of “sure prognostics” in the city and the country, and collapsing any distinction Dulman imagines exists between his sensible reaction to the weather’s vacillations and the pensive response of a cat. Even as Swift pokes fun at the irrationality of supposedly enlightened scientific practice, highlighting its practical similarities to the old ways of doing things by superstitious faith, he thus also foreshadows the poem’s wider argument about what it means to be subject to the weather in the way that the new meteorology, by this point, would have started to insist is our natural condition. To feel, as Dulman and the weather-diaryist do, every change in the weather in the human body and its moods, Swift suggests, is to react just


40 See, for instance, Pointer, *A Rational Account of the Weather*: the first section of the book is on weather signs from animal bodies, and it ends with a reference to human bodies. Although this book was published after Swift’s poem, the classical authorities and folk traditions in which it is grounded would have been well known at the moment that “Description of a City Shower” appeared. For more on the role of classical references in Pointer’s and Claridge’s interventions to improve the status of rural knowledge, see Janković, *Reading the Skies*, 132-137.
like a cat – and so any meteorological practice that seems to draw the day-to-day observation of weather-signs into the city also poses a serious challenge to any claim that the human animal is uniquely ruled by reason, rather than by instinct.

The poem continues in this vein: as the “flood comes down,” we watch the weather blow apart the many other class distinctions that seemed to keep the social world in order, exposing both the characters’ fundamental similarities with one another, and the necessary – if perhaps unexpectedly close – connection between the cycles of the natural world and human behaviour (31). Forced to “commence acquaintance underneath a shed,” “Triumphant Tories and desponding Whigs” must “Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs” – and discover, in so doing, that they have a few more interests in common than their endless conflict in the public sphere might suggest (41-42). Even the behaviour of the “Templar spruce” and “daggled females” is similar “while every spout’s abroach”: each flees, each seeks shelter, all the same – right down to the way that each loiterer merely “pretends” to do more than wait out the storm, “seem[ing]” either to call a coach or “cheapen goods, but nothing buy” (33-36). Especially in this scene, the poem’s mock-georgic ambitions are clear: the activity that Swift observes – people rushing, “in crowds” and with “hasty strides,” towards any available shelter from the storm – would have been familiar to his first readers, echoing the images of animals seeking similar refuge that turned up so often in the georgic poetry undergoing an early eighteenth-century revival. 41 This, too, is a popular reading of the poem; many Swift scholars acknowledge his investment in poking fun at Dryden’s 1695 translation of Virgil’s Georgics – and, as Margaret Doody explains, both the joke and Swift’s more sober engagement with the original Georgics’s themes would have been obvious and resonant for an early eighteenth-century audience, too. 42 Of all the ways to engage with the

41 For more on the early eighteenth century Georgic revival, see Low, Georgic Revolution, as well as Cohen, Notes from the Ground, especially “Chapter One: Distinguishing the Georgic,” 17-48; Braverman, Plots and Counterplots, especially “Chapter 5: Whigs and Husbands – Politics and Cultivation,” 238-304; and Krishnamurthy, “The Constant Action of Our Lab’ring Hands.”
42 In fact, Doody proposes, “the period from Pope to Thomson” might be one that “reflects the greatest familiarity with Virgil’s four-book poem,” exhibiting both “a lively appreciation of the vivid beauty and attractive detail” of its rural vision, and a clear “conscious[ness] of the social and political implications of the Georgics,” as the work “figured prominently in contemporary discussions of man, nature and society” (146-147). For more, see Margaret Anne Doody, “Insects, Vermin, and Horses: Gulliver’s Travels and
georgic tradition, however, many of which Swift would test out in his later work, “A Description of a City Shower” takes up the weather-signs, and the role of animal behaviour in forecasting future storms in particular – and at this moment of tension in the history of writing about the weather, this was not a neutral choice. In the context of the shift set out above, or what Janković describes as a long effort to appropriate rural wisdom about day-to-day changes in the weather for an empirical and theoretical meteorology based in cities and laboratories, Swift’s mocking adaptation of georgic conventions sets him against the prognostic tradition that traces its origins and authority back to Virgil – and his special attention to the role of human and animal behaviour as weather-signs marks Swift as explicitly interested in what happens when the georgic view of nature is applied anew to an urban scene. It is significant that Swift seems to find the georgic view of the human condition so deflating, in other words, because he comes to that view of his characters through the weather – a revelation that suggests, in turn, that at the same time that the influence of the prognostic tradition has helped to expand the scope of empirical meteorology to include “everyday” weather (like the city shower), it has also naturalized a more degraded view of the human. Yet in line after line, Swift finds exactly this: whenever the behaviour of his city-dwellers is mapped on to the natural cycles of rural life, the mock-georgic result levels the sense of human exceptionality that the hierarchies of the urban order previously seemed to guarantee. Where Swift’s sky, “like a drunkard, gives it up again” to vomit on the crowd below (16), the reader acquires the unsettling sense that the drunkard himself is as natural an appearance as the rain; likewise, if Swift’s speaker can so aptly compare the “first drizzling shower” to “that sprinkling which some careless quean / Flirts on you from her mop, but not so clean” (17-19), it seems possible that this “careless quean” is neither low nor the worst of humankind, but rather its exemplar, the very picture of its natural state. Altogether, then, Swift’s view of this common response, the behaviour that lawyers, ladies, Whigs, and Tories share in common with creatures of the field, reflects an important shift in thinking about human subjectivity embedded in this expanding interest in “everyday” weather like the city shower. Inherited from a prognostic tradition that reaches back to the Georgics,

this way of “Describ[ing]” a “City Shower” presumes the weather will act upon all those who live under it, brooking no distinctions between class, kind, or animals with and without the ability to reason – and so this approach to describing the weather also implies, at its base, that such an embarrassed, overwhelmed, and diminished view of the human condition is somehow more true, or at least more natural, than the world of class and culture the rain has washed away.

Even as Swift’s view of the atavistic and irrational humanity embedded in this new way of thinking about the weather reaches its grimmest point, however, the mock-georgic mode of the poem also retains its didacticism – thus opening the possibility that the city-dwellers reading the poem might be saved from its apocalyptic conclusion if only we could learn from the mistakes of the miserable men and women huddled together in its third stanza. Typically, georgic writing aims to teach its readers to do something – to herd sheep, to run a sugar plantation, to make cider – and so where Swift’s own readers recognized the mock-georgic trappings of his poem, they also would have been inclined to look for a lesson about how to better prepare for or avoid the frustration the characters in the poem seem to experience. In this view, there is either something hopeful about the radical experience of common need that the “various kinds” experience under their awning, or something final – a last chance for mutual recognition before Swift pushes the poem’s challenge to human hubris to its limit, observing an apocalyptic parallel between the experience of these “various kinds” seeking shelter and the disgusting “trophies” collected by the “swelling” gutters (55-56). By the end of Swift’s poem, that is, the urban men and women swept together by the storm appear no more or less extraordinary than the “sweepings from butchers’ stall, dung, guts, and blood…Dead cats, and turnip tops” that also “come tumbling down [in] the flood” (61-63), just so much garbage in the pouring rain – and this, Swift argues, is merely the logical conclusion of the levelling view of humanity the poem has already discovered in the new way of thinking about the way the weather acts upon the world. Looking back on the scene in which the poem’s human characters gather together to avoid the rain, however, while bearing in mind the

43 In order, these examples refer to John Dyer’s The Fleece (1757), John Philips’s Cyder (1708), and James Grainger’s The Sugar Cane (1764); for more on the didactic function of georgic literature, see Braverman, Plots and Counterplots, 238-304.
final stanza’s view of the garbage swirling in the gutter, this extreme position also makes it easier to see the opportunity for change still available to the reader before the storm. Bringing all its Biblical associations to bear on the “filth” it sweeps away, the flood of the poem’s last lines appears to be a final punishment for some bad behaviour featured previously in the poem – and if this is true, then the levelling view of the “various kinds” rushing together for shelter is also a revelation that, if it had come earlier, might have changed these characters’ ways, or at least tempered the hubris that made their experience of shared need such a humbling surprise. The “beau impatient…quake[s] with fear” inside his coach, in other words, because he seems to recognize for the first time that he is powerless under the weather – but perhaps, Swift suggests, more revelations of this kind might improve the worst qualities of the urban world as it currently is.

By taking up a “City Shower” as the subject of his “Description,” Swift thus strides into debate not just about what superstitions this more empirical method of observing daily change in the weather might have carried forward from the prognostic tradition, but also about the new view of ourselves – as less distinct from one another, and less distinct from animals – that this new way of thinking about the weather seemed to require. Ultimately, of course, Swift embraces the check on human hubris that the weather represents, even recommending the levelled, more universally vulnerable view of the human condition that emerges towards the end of his poem – but for many other eighteenth-century writers, even this position was conceding too much. For Samuel Johnson, for instance, the possibility that “a being endowed with reason” might be buffeted about by vacillations as inevitable but unpredictable as the wind was even more offensive than the arrogance Swift identified in the lawyers, ladies, and political hustlers who imagine these class distinctions mattered. Although Swift might have found a way to leverage the diminished view of human power implicit in his description of the city shower as an opportunity for necessary cultural critique, the wider dispute about what it meant to imagine all people as similarly subject to the weather was far from over – and for Johnson, in particular, the more vulnerable view of the self affirmed in arguments like Swift’s was a worrying sign of weakening standards, both harbinger of and vehicle for the degradation of the intellectual rigour and commitment to rational inquiry that he
viewed as the basis of our distinction from all other animals, and a frustrating indication of the role the weather would continue to play in the eighteenth-century struggle to define that too-changeable human condition.

III. “Nothing more reproachful to a being endowed with reason”: Environmental influence in Johnson’s *Idler* essays and the periodical sphere

In Johnson’s view, the real problem with the new meteorology is in the beliefs and behaviours of its adherents: they have lost sight of what makes them human, he argues, and so they are willing to resign the power that distinguishes them from animals (reason) even as they grope after the power that distinguishes them from gods (prophecy). Both of these mistakes stem from what Johnson characterizes as a blind faith, or a “fatal confidence,” in the “fallacious promises” of the instruments and daily observation practice that is associated with emerging meteorological science— and to this end, Johnson seems to share Swift’s sense that the motivations and methods of the new science have a great deal in common with old and superstitious patterns of thought. This was an increasingly common complaint about new meteorological science, and at the moment of Johnson’s writing, he was certainly not the only one to raise questions about the role of guesswork in the explanations and short-term predictions posited by these daily weather-watchers. Nonetheless, Johnson seems to find the imperfect science of weather-watching a serious threat to the progress of reason and ethics in the social circles he makes the target of his *Idler* essays. In “The Expedients of Idlers” (August 1758), for instance, Johnson takes on all the kinds of experiments he imagines that would-be natural philosophers engage to keep themselves “busy,” with special contempt reserved for the “anatomical novices” who carry out living dissections or other tests on animals, which Johnson believes “harden the hearts, and extinguish the sensations that give man

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45 As scientific virtuoso and court lawyer Robert North explains in his (unpublished) early eighteenth-century “Essay of the Barometer,” even the simple observation that the barometer’s mercury is likely to fall before fair weather and rise before rain has been “found egregiously in many conjectures, to fail” – and in his research on the instrument’s wider cultural significance, Golinski, too, concludes that because “[n]o consensus was achieved as to how reliable a predictor of the weather a barometer could be, or the degree to which it was reasonable to trust it[,] the instrument was simultaneously hailed as a triumph of contemporary science and as an object of superstitious faith.” Golinski, “Barometers of Change,” 71-72.
confidence in man.”

Compared to these “hateful practices,” Johnson admits, the foolish inclination to “register the changes in the wind, and die fully convinced that the wind is changeable” is “innocent,” albeit still a waste of time – and yet the poem opens with the punishment incurred by these “votaries” of the new meteorological science in particular. Looking back over the last month of rainy weather, Johnson’s speaker chuckles, “the inspectors of barometers” must be quite “disturb[ed],” as “shower has succeeded shower, though they predicted sunshine and dry skies; and, by fatal confidence in these fallacious promises, many coats have lost their gloss, and many curls been moistened to flaccidity.” The damage done is trivial, Johnson suggests, but the shattered faith is real: “The oraculous glasses have deceived their votaries,” and though getting caught in the rain can happen to anyone, this “learned disappointment,” or the experience of being “wet in opposition to theory,” is unique to those “votaries” with faith strong enough that they will trust the glass rather than their own ability to look out the window. Here, words like “votaries” and “oracle” leave no doubt that Johnson’s concern is with the faith he observes in these “inspectors of barometers,” while phrases like “in opposition to theory” suggest he also believes this faith is unfounded; likewise, the contrast to this faith that Johnson presents, in which the didactic speaker is “content to credit [the] senses, and to believe that rain will fall when the air blackens,” turns on the votaries’ inability to see what is right in front of them, which further suggests that their faith is not only irrational, but blind. The visual metaphor is no coincidence. Johnson is as concerned with the arrogance implied by the effort these “inspectors of barometers” exert to reach beyond the limits of their unaided senses as he is with their failure to use the abilities they have to observe and reason from the evidence right in front of them – and the horizon of unaided human sight, as it operates here, would continue to become an important marker for the appropriate bounds of human knowledge elsewhere in Johnson’s work.

In “The Expedients of Idlers,” of course, misplaced faith in meteorological science leads only the believer into danger, and it is this self-absorption that Johnson says will distinguish the study of inanimate nature from the “cruel” practice of living dissection.

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46 Johnson, “Expedients of Idlers.” Unless stated otherwise, all Johnson citations in this paragraph are to this text.
By beginning the essay with the “disappointment” of “inspectors of barometers” in particular, however, Johnson does also imply that the new meteorological method might encourage a solipsism – or an inattention both to consequence and counterevidence – that supports the more destructive scientific investigations he condemns in his conclusion. In fact, “The Expedients of Idlers” is structured the same way as a previous essay dedicated specifically to the social destructiveness of meteorological obsession in itself, and in that complaint – about “Discourses on the Weather” (June 1758), or small talk – there is no question that the degraded view of humanity that appears in the last paragraph is a direct consequence of the seemingly benign interest in meteorological change that opens the essay. Here, too, Johnson admits that weather-watching may be the most innocent of the many dull or destructive practices on offer to the eighteenth-century Idler; as a subject of small talk, he allows, the weather is “nobler and more interesting” than the conversation of “an attendant at court...a proprietor of funds...[or] an inquirer after news,” and “the present state of the skies, and of the earth,” is certainly a matter of great consequence in itself, as “plenty and famine are suspended” on whether it rains too little or thaws too late, and “millions depend for the necessaries of life” on the weather remaining relatively predictable for the region in which they live.47 Once again, that is, Johnson is more concerned with his readers’ present attitude and behaviour towards the weather than he is worried about the state of the sky itself – and in this case, he is especially frustrated by what he sees as an increasing willingness to use Britain’s often gloomy weather to justify an equally foul mood or misbehaviour. When the conversation turns to the casual suggestion that “[o]ur dispositions...change with the colour of the sky,” Johnson observes, such that we ought to “charge our discontent upon an easterly wind or a cloudy day...if we sink into dullness and peevishness,” the Idler abandons responsibility for mental health and intellectual clarity – and from this point, Johnson warns, it is not so far a step to begin to “call upon the sun for peace and gaiety, or deprecate the clouds lest sorrow should overwhelm us.” From this perspective, Idlers indulging in small talk do not just give up their own reason to blindly follow the inexplicable reports of their mysterious barometers; rather, in “look[ing] round the horizon for an excuse” for a bad mood, they ask their interlocutor to accept that perhaps no one is governed by reason in

47 Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.”
the first place, and we are all instead merely subject to any external influence that blows our way – and for Johnson, there is no suggestion that could be more degrading to our humanity.

“Surely nothing is more reproachful to a being endowed with reason,” he declares, “than to resign its powers to the influence of the air, and live in dependence on the weather and the wind” – and what’s worse, he suggests, because this degraded view of human subjectivity turns on a theory of automatic response, this increasingly common arc of idle conversation thereby degrades us all. No longer confident that the “men who have given themselves up to fanciful credulity [will] confine their conceits in their own minds, [and…] regulate their lives by the barometer, with inconvenience only to themselves,” Johnson now invokes his own powers of prophecy: “to fill the world with accounts of intellects subject to ebb and flow, of one genius that awakened in the spring…and of another concentrated in the winter,” he warns, “is no less dangerous than to tell children of bugbears and goblins,” as “[f]ear will find every house haunted; and idleness will wait for ever for the moment of illumination.”48 As the structure of the essay suggests, this is both the outcome and argument embedded in the way the two Englishmen of the introduction have come to talk about the weather – and one of the more dangerous consequences, by corollary, of the practice of daily weather-watching that seems to have inspired their conversation. Just as he did in his complaint about the “Expedients of Idlers,” that is, Johnson concludes by casting this small talk about the weather not just as a crisis for our capacity to reason, but also as widespread ethical failure. After all, Johnson insists, “[t]his distinction of seasons is produced only by imagination operating on luxury,” as “[t]o temperance every day is bright, and every hour is propitious to diligence,” and “[h]e that shall resolutely excite his faculties…may set at defiance the morning mist, and the evening damp, the blasts of the easts, and the clouds of the south” – and if the reader agrees up to this point, Johnson suggests, we must therefore also agree that these Idlers have too easily given up on their ability to “struggle against the tyranny of climate,” or even to attempt to place mind over matter in the pursuit of virtue and

48 Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.” Unless stated otherwise, all Johnson citations in this section refer to this text.
reason “[un]enslave[d]…to the most variable of all variations, the changes of the weather.”

In the end, it’s this ethical recklessness that most disturbs Johnson about the new enthusiasm for watching and talking about the weather, or the way that these “inspectors of barometers” expose others to risk as a result of their folly – and he seems to find this anti-social behaviour as much a problem in these votaries’ willingness to “enslave [human] virtue and reason,” as above, as in the arrogant effort to explain or predict the effects of future variations. This is not to suggest, of course, that Johnson is less concerned than Swift with the problem of human pride: he does delight in all the “curls…moistened to flaccidity” and “coats [that] have lost their gloss” to their owners’ “fatal confidence” in their “oraculous glasses” – and the frequency with which Johnson imagines inspectors of the barometer, of all people, inconvenienced by their hobby suggests that there is something in the way these instruments claim to help their votaries predict the future that Johnson believes has earned this especially ironic punishment.\textsuperscript{49} However, the behaviour that inspires Johnson’s most hyperbolic flourishes – as in the paragraph that attempts to forge a causal connection between two Englishmen’s seemingly benign interest in the weather and an apocalyptic vision of children growing up with virtue and reason enslaved to the influence of the air – is all of the type that suggests amateur meteorologists believe humans are less free than Johnson believes that we are. Unlike Swift, that is, Johnson continues to resist the new vision of a human subjectivity implicit in the emerging mode of daily weather-watching – but he also worries that those who do accept this vision of themselves as governed by instinct, rather than reason, have given up an important responsibility to “credit the senses” they have to prevent harm. Even in the scenes where only curls are damaged by their owners’ hubris, then, Johnson seems to warn his reader about the other kinds of risk this abdication might

\textsuperscript{49} Golinski, too, has collected evidence of instrument-makers throughout the eighteenth century who admit that “the far greater part of those who purchase meteorological instruments, buy them, not so much to know the actual state of the elements, as to foresee the changes thereof” – and as North points out in his “Essay on the Barometer,” it is hard to blame them: after all, “of all human kind[,] who is he that lives, and is not extremely concerned to obtain (if possible) a certain presage of the weather[?]” Adam and North qtd. in Golinski, “Barometers of Change,” 80.
invite – all of which could have been prevented, he implies, by a more realistic (but no less ambitious) vision of our abilities and responsibilities.

Although these *Idler* essays bring the problem to a fine point, there is ample evidence to suggest Johnson’s questions about the ethical implications of this new way of thinking about human vulnerability had tapped into a common cultural concern about the new meteorology. In *The Humourist* (1720), for instance, Thomas Gordon explores the other side of the problem Johnson sees in “look[ing] round the horizon for an excuse” for dullness or lassitude – but he, too, wonders, what will become of uniquely human ambition and artistic enterprise if even our “best thoughts” are “owing to…a cool Walk in the Garden.”50 Although Gordon’s essay “On the Weather” is ostensibly inspired by the speaker’s realization that he is, in fact, a mechanical creature, moved to action by a bright ray of sun, his speaker also acknowledges the atavistic human subjectivity suggested by this theory of environmental influence. Of course “we are affronted,” he observes, by the suggestion that “our Passions, our Pleasures, and our Pains resemble… how the brute part of the Creation [is] affected by the Turns of the Weather” (92):

> The Deer, we say, runs to Covert, the Bird lowers, the Fish dance upon the Surface, or seek the Bottom; from (what we are pleas’d to call) an instinct in them; but yet we will see not…that we are equally becalm’d and agitated, as these different kinds of the animal species are, and from the same cause…[– because] it would be very grateing to a man, to hear that the last Two Thousand he gave to a Church or an Hospital, did not follow from an habitual goodness; but to his Walking up Constitution Hill at Seven in the morning without his breakfast. (91)

Nearly all of Gordon’s examples sound like this one: he wonders whether donations made by a fireside are any less meaningful because they were inspired by its warmth, or whether political treatises signed too quickly in the heat or too slowly in the cold should be any less binding, or, as in the example above, whether “our best Thoughts in Poetry” are less impressive if they, too, are merely “owing to a Heath or a Hill, or our speeches in the House to a cool walk in the Garden” (92). Despite this long list of uniquely human accomplishments, however, and the subtle work this list exerts to locate humanity itself in the complexity of sensations like generosity, compassion, and political antagonism, the

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speaker cannot quite shake off the much more limited view of human endeavour implicit in this new theory of environmental influence: however often “we commonly impute these influences to something within ourselves” he laments, “alas! ‘tis too true, it is all external; this mind rises or falls, quickens and stagnates, just as the operations of the powers without direct or relieve it” (92). Unlike Johnson, then, who is most preoccupied with all the bad behaviour Britons might use their frequently rainy weather to “excuse,” Gordon lingers over what might be lost to this vision of ourselves as subject to the weather – but in the end, he and Johnson agree that we must be more than merely instinct-driven animals. Through both the specificity and the incongruity of the examples he selects to prove that “alas! ‘tis too true, it is all external,” that is, Gordon nonetheless maintains that we are different from animals – who may well run for cover from a storm (as we do), but who neither form churches nor develop social relations that are, to the eighteenth-century mind, complex enough to inspire donations to maintain them.

Taken together, Johnson’s and Gordon’s periodical essays on the weather explore quite different fears, but they work to the same end: having observed a troubling pattern that they worry will become a trend, each writer posits a long view of what he perceives to be the logical conclusion of this new way of thinking about ourselves as subject to the weather, and both write with the hope of deterring future readers from taking up the same troubling position. As it turns out, these sceptics were right about the staying power of both the new meteorological method and its implications for popular ideas about human “changeability” – and the problems that they identified with these new ideas about our vulnerability to the “most variable of all

variations” wouldn’t become any less troubling as the century wore on. By the end of
the eighteenth century, the comic scenes that Johnson and Gordon take up as examples
would also inspire a number of graphic satirical prints, many of which still turn on the
same anxieties about the fundamentally anti-social or ethically ambiguous behaviours
Johnson and Gordon observed in the practices and assumptions of the empirical
meteorological method when it was new. In 1808, for instance, James Gillray publishes a
series of six engravings on the pleasures and pains of various types of weather –
including “Very Slippy Weather,” in which a man slips and falls to the ground while
clutching a thermometer that suggests it will be too warm to freeze any ice on the ground
(Fig. 1). Like Johnson’s disappointed “inspectors of barometers,” this man has devoted
careful attention to his instrument, but little attention to the actual conditions out of doors,
and so he has failed to see the ice on the ground in front of him. Perhaps more
significantly, this man’s mistake is also – as Johnson imagined it – an almost entirely
private catastrophe: his wig pops off his head and coins spill out of his pockets,
suggesting that he will pay for his preoccupation with empirical records in more ways
than one, but none of the other people in the image have noticed his fall, as they are all
equally preoccupied with the other (Gillray) prints in the shop window behind him. Of
the six prints in the series in which “Very Slippy Weather” appears, furthermore, this is
the only one to include either a meteorological measuring instrument or other people –
which suggests that Johnson’s anxiety about the unique anti-social implications of this
expanding faith in empirical meteorology might have endured, too. In this case, as in

51 Up to this point, for instance, this chapter has gestured only briefly to the role Hippocratic medicine
played in refining this way of thinking about the weather and the vulnerable human body over the course of
the eighteenth century. This dissertation will return to explore these themes in more detail in Chapter 4, but
there is also more to say here about the relationship between the emerging public sphere, rising theories of
environmental medicine, and what eighteenth-century Britons believed they might “take in” and “keep
out.” See Janković, “Intimate Climates,” 1-34; and Janković, Confronting the Climate.
52 The other prints in this series (of six) include Delicious Weather (BMC 11094), Dreadful-Hot
Weather (BMC 11095), Sad Slippy Weather (BMC 11096), Raw Weather (BMC 11097), Fine Bracing
Weather (BMC 11098), Windy Weather (BMC 11099). Although the series is held by the British Museum,
copies of these prints, along with Very Slippy Weather (BMC 11100), are available through the Lewis
Walpole Library’s digital collection. I am indebted to David Francis Taylor for introducing me to Gillray’s
work, and for his helpful conversation on this series. See Taylor, “Graphic Satire and the Rhetoric of the
Gaze.”
53 There is also more to say, of course, about the (frequently more positive) representation of absorption or
preoccupation in eighteenth-century writing and other forms of art, and about the distinction between the
amateur natural philosopher or experimental scientist’s preoccupations, often cast as anti-social, and the
expanding interest in sensibility through the second half of the eighteenth century. Gillray’s prints engage
Johnson’s essay, the amateur meteorologist hurts only himself – but his embarrassment invokes so little attention from the four other people in the scene that the reader might be forgiven for wondering whether the thermometer-clutching fall has become so common an appearance that frequency alone has “harden[ed] the hearts, and extinguish[ed] the sensations that give man confidence in man,” as Johnson once worries that overly ambitious experimentation itself might do.\textsuperscript{54} Alternatively, the fact that neither the man with his thermometer nor the members of the crowd behind him manage to look out or away from the window at what is in front of them suggests that the central figure’s preoccupation with the thermometer’s representation, rather than reality, is merely symptomatic of a more widespread cultural condition – and so if we see ourselves in the figures absorbed by Gillray’s prints, the print itself might be calling its observer to look up (and out) at what we’ve missed, including the troubling consequences of this increasingly common approach to weather-watching.

In 1794, Isaac Cruikshank’s “Foggy Weather” identified a similar problem with what this new way of thinking about the weather might mean for our relationships to other people (see Fig. 2). In this print, four people are out walking in the fog: one wanders blindly into a bog; another, miserable astride his horse, cracks his whip and trudges forward; and in the

\textsuperscript{54} Johnson, “Expedients of Idlers.”

centre of the image, a woman and a man bump into one another – the former with a shocked and angry expression that suggests this collision has been neither brief nor innocent, and the latter with a lascivious smile that (along with his obscured right arm) suggests the fog has provided a convenient excuse for some “accidental” groping. Capitalizing on the kinds of questions that Johnson and Gordon raise in their essays about whether the mind really does “quicke[n] and stagnat[e], just as the operations of the powers without direct…it,” Cruikshank here considers the opportunities that the obscurity of a foggy day might create for those already up to no good – and further challenges his reader to decide whether bad weather merely provides the physical conditions we need to indulge our worst impulses, or actively inspires us to new and more degraded action.

Throughout the century, then, the new interest in the nature and extent of the influence everyday weather might exert over individual behaviour continues to raise questions about how Britons should relate to one another as similar subjects of persistent but unpredictable atmospheric change – often, as in the examples included here, with special attention to what definitive conditions of humanity might be undermined by this new way of thinking about ourselves under the weather. Although the prints here present a humorous view of the problems associated both with the absorbing (and arguably anti-social) practice associated with empirical meteorology and with a theory of environmental influence that makes it impossible to hold others to account for bad behaviour provoked by bad weather, the fact that the same scenes crop up so many years – half a decade – after Johnson’s and Gordon’s essays both confirms that these early eighteenth-century writers had hit on something real and unresolved about the view of human subjectivity embedded in empirical meteorology when it was new, and suggests that these questions would remain largely unresolved for most of the period under investigation in the rest of this dissertation. In this context, it seems both fair and productive to continue to investigate how this tension – between the expanding faith in the new meteorological method, and the persistent ambivalence about what it meant for our sense of ourselves as subjects responsible for both our “best thoughts” and our foibles – shaped and was reshaped by in other eighteenth-century writing about the weather.
What opportunities did other eighteenth-century writers find in the new knowledge that weather both happened every day and happened to the human body in the same way as it might happen to any other animal – and how did this creeping sense that we are all subject to the weather’s influence inform the British imperial ambitions expanding as the century progressed?


So far, this chapter has proposed that this new approach to thinking about the weather departed from what preceded it in three important ways: in its subject, its purpose, and its practice. Turning to the literary treatment of this new meteorology, this chapter has further suggested that any text that addresses the weather at all – rather than the rare meteor – reflects and participates in the first two of these changes, and then aimed to explain how the practice of daily empirical observation and measurement changed the kinds of questions that eighteenth-century writers were likely to ask about the weather they observed. Sometimes, of course, the new meteorology’s influence on literature was obvious. Swift, for instance, both takes the weather as his subject and the mock-georgic as his form, which suggests some broader interest in urban weather-watchers’ appropriation of rural knowledge – and in his descriptions of “Dulman…sauntering,” he also takes note of possible correlations between mental clarity and the cloudy sky in the abrupt terms of the weather journal. Johnson, too, directly addresses new meteorological technology in his Idler essays – so often, in fact, that even a reader with no sense of the slow change taking place in the practice and cultural significance of eighteenth-century weather-watching could not miss Johnson’s anxiety about how these “oraculous glasses” seemed to be eroding Britons’ faith in their unaided senses, or fail to perceive the depth of the speaker’s frustration with the small talk about the weather that seemed to resign our powers of reason to an influence as variable as air. Even in these works, however, this investigation has revealed that the most impassioned literary responses to these new ways of watching, writing, and thinking about the weather did not focus on what the field had inherited from the prognostic tradition or the ambiguous records of the empirical
instruments that had suddenly appeared in so many homes and public spaces,\textsuperscript{55} but rather on the view of the human subject – and assumptions about our vulnerability to the weather – that seemed to underpin this increasingly popular meteorological practice. For Swift and Johnson, the vision of humanity exposed by the weather was unflattering, even degrading – but for a writer like J. Phelps, author of “The Human Barometer,” Swift’s view of the “various kinds, by various fortunes led / to commence acquaintance under a shed” was exciting, even radical, because this situation seemed to suggest a universal human vulnerability that might make it possible to come to know one another, from “Templar[s] spruce” to “daggled females”, with more honesty than ever before. Taking for granted that each body’s response to heat, cold, and inclement weather is automatic and universal, that is, Phelps wonders whether our bodies react to other forms of stimuli in a similarly mechanical way – and whether, by applying what we know about the effects of the air on the body to better understand the effects of the body on the mind and spirit (and vice versa), we might begin to develop a scheme to make all the secrets of others’ moral conditions legible to anyone who can read these physical signs. Fully embracing the theory of environmental influence Johnson most disliked, Phelps thus presumes human responses to external stimuli are irresistible and universal and happily abdicates the powers of reason to the promise that the body might speak a secret language – and yet even as he seems to endorse what Johnson imagined would be a world without discipline, his work also reveals one way that the view of the human subject implicit in the new mode of weather-watching might be appropriated for the purposes of surveillance and control, or otherwise transformed in order to reconstitute (rather than merely critique) the social relations of the status quo.

By paying close attention to the movements of the barometer, Phelps argues, we might better understand the movements that take place within our own bodies – not just as changes in the pressure or temperature of the air act upon our skin, but also as our physical experience of cold or wet weather creates the internal atmosphere we call a bad mood. His argument borrows as much from eighteenth-century ideas about hydraulics as from humoural theory: in the same way that “The pois’d Barometer will sink or rise / In

\textsuperscript{55} Golinski, “Barometers of Change,” 71.
mode proportion’d to the changing Skies” (77-80), Phelps proposes, the “solid and fluid parts” of which “our Frame [is] composed…flow” more freely on a day “from clouds and vapours clear” (83-84), so as “Vapours and Storms aerial Weight abate, / Our Blood runs low, and languid is our State” (87-92). If we accept that the barometer’s mercury and the blood in our veins operate according to the same hydraulic principles, the parallel Phelps observes here makes it possible to see what happens under our own skin through the glass of the barometer – a promising offer, though Phelps has yet to explain why “blood run[ning] low” under a low pressure system should produce this “sanguine” state. To this end, however, Phelps also borrows bits and pieces from Arbuthnot’s “Effects of the Air on Human Bodies,” blending common knowledge about physiological response with more abstract ideas about the movement of “fancy.” He reminds us, for instance, that “Cold when excessive…closes up the Pores,” and “Convulsive nerves unhinge the inward Frame, / Disturb the Judgement and the Mind inflame” (158-159) – and so he concludes that these physical changes create a dangerous vacuum, such that “Capricious Fancy seizes Reason’s Throne” (160-161). However fabulous his theories, Phelps’s mode here is empirical and descriptive, rather than theoretical: he presents these claims as matters of fact, a simple record of the chain of events that connects the movement of pores in the cold to fancy’s coup – and by leaving the precise causal connection between each event in this series implicit, Phelps finds an easy way to move from what his readers would know about the barometer to what they wanted to know about themselves. By embracing the view of matter over mind that Johnson warns will “enslave our virtue or our reason…to the weather and the wind,” furthermore, Phelps can also extend this theory of a universal and automatic response to explain the expression of human emotion – or to prove, in his phrase, that the “Actions of the Human mind / Are not to the internal part confin’d, / But variously affect the Body’s state” (119-121). To illustrate this claim, Phelps lists a number of conditions of the spirit that can be measured on the body, becoming increasingly specific about what “Signs” will appear and which internal movements they expose: “If furious Anger once the Mind possess,” he observes, “turgid Blood with rapid Torrent flies / Distorts the Countenances, inflames the Eyes” (135-138) – but when “the Soul is fill’d with Grief /…gloomy Features prove it wants Relief” (146-

146). Here, we find the real fantasy of empiricism as a technique of the Enlightenment: that it will illuminate even the mysteries of the human spirit, making the most hidden and interior emotions legible to anyone who learns how to read the body’s register. Ultimately, Phelps’s work illustrates just how closely these new ways of writing and thinking about the weather were informed by these other vital conversations of the eighteenth-century, including emerging ideas about interiority and the limits of empiricism – and, in his optimistic attempt to turn an automatic response to the weather into a code to be cracked, Phelps’s grasping at order thus also reveals the extent to which this new weather consciousness had unsettled, levelled, and otherwise introduced disorder to the systems of perceived differences that had previously seemed to organize the world. As a counterpoint to the fear (like Gordon’s, for instance) and more general anxiety about the anti-social implications of a theory of environmental influence that seems to absolve Britons of their responsibility for occasional misbehaviour, Phelps here suggests that his new ideas about automatic responses will improve his readers’ relationships with others rather than weaken them. In both the preface to and conclusion of the poem, Phelps advocates for temperance, and insists that the imaginative exercise he presents here is intended, first and foremost, to help readers learn to recognize marks of intemperance on the bodies around them: a “guilty Conscience,” he explains, will cause “Dejection, Grief, and Self-Abhorrent Shame” to “Infest the Mind, and quite unhinge her Frame,” as “Anguish, Confusion, Horror rage within…Alike Disorders in the Body breed, / And grievous Maladies from hence proceed” (243-254). Unfortunately for those who are innocent but cold (which also, as above, “unhinge[s] the frame”), Phelps never explains how one might distinguish between the marks of a guilty conscience and the effects of a chill – but in the context of the poem’s wider argument, this parallel seems to be intended to reinforce the fact that both of these responses are automatic, and therefore trustworthy. Here, too, Phelps reveals the unspoken fear behind the image of “The Human Barometer”: by proposing that our bodies behave like machines, Phelps

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57 For more on how this new way of thinking about universal responsiveness to the influences now exposed in the air shaped the literary forms developed at the same time to give expression to the influence of the interior mind on our perception of external experience, see Lewis, *Air’s Appearance*, especially “Chapter Two: “Other Air”: Boyle’s Spring, Milton’s Fall, and the Making of Literary Atmosphere,” 36-60, and “Chapter Four: Novel Atmospheres: Eighteenth-Century Weather Writing and the Atmospheres of Robinson Crusoe,” 92-110.
gives voice to a wish that they would – a wish that he could see through the deceptive matter and movements of others’ faces and bodies as easily as he can see through the glass of the barometer, and a wish that conditions as changeable as moods might be schematized and eventually predicted with the same accuracy that amateur meteorologists believed these new instruments would soon be able to predict the weather. Imagining the human body as a “feeling machine,” its complexities reduced to a mechanical response to external stimuli, makes life in society predictable and transparent in a way that Phelps seems to find liberating— and the fact that Phelps sees so much potential in this vision of the human as a series of automatic reactions speaks to just one way that the assumptions about human subjectivity embedded in the new meteorological practice had, for many eighteenth-century readers, tapped into a much deeper well of concern about the ambiguous relationship between external and internal character, and about the inadequacy of our unaided senses as tools for navigating such changeable conditions.

In this respect, Phelps might share more with Swift, Johnson, and Gordon than he differs. Although Phelps is most enthusiastic about the potentially positive implications of this new theory of environmental influence, his work responds to the same question that inspired the other works that appear in this chapter (what does it mean to be subject to the weather?), and “The Human Barometer” concludes with the same sort of ambivalence that colours Swift’s and Johnson’s writing about the new meteorology – as Phelps, too, has recognized that the new way of thinking about human subjectivity that comes with it will have consequences for wider social life without being able to predict exactly what these consequences will be. As the odd and optimistic complement to this series of complaints, furthermore, Phelps’s work reveals the common ground on which an eighteenth-century “politics of the weather” would begin to take shape: a shared interest in the possibility that all human bodies might be similarly subject to the weather’s rapidly cycling changes, and a sense that this notion had become both firm and flexible enough to

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58 For more on the subject of “feeling” machines, see Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, especially her “Introduction,” 3-20, and “Chapter Two: The Female Thermometer,” 21-43. For other perspectives on the relationship between machines and animals in the eighteenth century, see Schaffer, “Enlightened Automata,” which addresses both the role of automatic response theory in eighteenth-century biology (or natural philosophy) and arguments against it. See also Wetmore, *Men of Feeling*, especially “Chapter 3: Feeling/Machines,” 68-101.
serve a wide range of arguments and political ends. Up to this point, of course, the works treated here have emphasized what daily meteorological observation could do for human hubris, positing arguments for and against a definition of the human as different from instinct-driven animals and automatic machines because we have the capacity for reason – but in this age of increasing exploration, contact, and conquest, these new ways of thinking about the ways that Britons in particular might be universally subject to (or uniquely safe from) unpredictable external influences would have had other resonances, too.

V. “Airy notions...sometimes tyrannize”: Subjects of the weather in Johnson’s Rasselas

In The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, for instance, Johnson considers what it might mean for the British Empire to allow that the weather works on all bodies, in all places, in the same way – and finds, once more, that the weather’s most predictable and productive quality is the check it imposes on those whose reach exceeds their grasp. Even as he maintains his prior scepticism about the practices and instruments that claim to mitigate the weather’s influence through the power of prediction, Johnson now finds in this new and more vulnerable view of the British body under the weather a useful opportunity to expose the overreaching ambition he believes will leave the British body politic more vulnerable to greater risk over the long term – and a chance to remind his readers more enthusiastic about Britain’s on-going participation in the Seven Years War that the weather that so far has directed their fate is a changeable ally indeed. Early in his pursuit of happiness, the young prince, Rasselas, realizes that environmental conditions that seem to bless “the northern and western nations of Europe, the nations…now in possession of all power and all knowledge,” are neither local nor stable enough to guarantee their continued reign – and so he asks his mentor, the philosopher Imlac, to explain “By what means…are the Europeans thus powerful?” (353).59 “Why,” Rasselas wonders, “since [the Europeans] can so easily visit Asia and Africa for trade or conquest, cannot the Asiatics and Africans invade their coasts, plant colonies in their ports, and

give laws to their natural princes? The same wind that carries them back would bring us thither” (353). Here, Rasselas has uncovered a consequence of viewing weather as a global system, an echo of the ideas Defoe foreshadows in *The Storm*: if it is, in fact, the same wind that blows from one corner of the globe to another, there’s no reason to believe that that wind couldn’t carry invaders into England as easily as it carries conquerors away. Under such “variable” conditions, Rasselas realizes, any shift in the wind itself could change the whole imperial order – but it is equally true that a small shift in the way Abyssinians think about themselves as subject to the weather could make the same kind of change. For British readers, this scene might have seemed to affirm all their worst fears about the potential challenge to their power implicit in the suggestion that people the world over are the same under the weather – because, as Imlac points out, Britons have so much more to lose to any shift in thinking about the weather, and so little, beyond “the unsearchable will of the Supreme Being,” to otherwise explain the strength and size of their empire (353-354). In the figure of Rasselas himself, however, eager to capitalize on the variability of the wind, Johnson also posits a solution to the problem he presents. If only Britons shared the prince’s attitude, Johnson suggests, they might also imagine themselves as subjects of, rather than subject to, the wind and the weather – and so reinforce their power over both nature and the world, he implies further, by continuing to marshal the influence of the air to the benefit of their “irresistible…armies…fleets…and commerce” (353). Imlac affirms this argument, emphasizing Britons’ ability to place mind over matters like the weather as clear proof of their superior capacity for reason, and evidence that their right to govern is sanctioned, as above, by the “unsearchable will of the Supreme Being” (354). Although the philosopher is loathe to admit that Europeans are entirely happy, he allows that the Abyssinians “shall find many advantages on the side of the Europeans” when it comes to the “particular comforts of life” – including, for instance, the way “[t]heir policy removes all public inconveniencies, [such that] they have roads cut through their mountains and bridges laid upon their rivers,” and the fact that the Abyssinians “suffer inclemencies of weather which [the Europeans] can obviate” (355).
For Johnson, here and elsewhere, “knowledge will always predominate over ignorance,” a fact that should secure Britons’ dominance over both the influence of the (unknowing) air and those who believe that they are subject to it – and yet *Rasselas* is not a text that roundly celebrates all those who attempt to “obviate” the “inclemencies of weather” (355). In *Rasselas*, in fact, Johnson seems more willing than ever to admit that the weather might exert a powerful influence over those who live under it, if only to demonstrate the relatively greater risk that comes with any effort to transcend this condition – and to this end, those characters who do try to “obviate” the “inclemencies of the weather” often appear most at risk of being overwhelmed by what they seek to control. Just a few chapters later, for instance, Imlac will introduce the prince to an astronomer who believes he has “possessed for five years the regulation of the weather” (403) – and though the scene concludes with a meditation on the tragedy that is the “uncertain continuance” of human reason, the astronomer’s madness is exposed by the fact that he is arrogant enough to believe that he could rule the skies in the first place. Once again, the effort to predict the weather and the effort to govern the globe are connected – and so somewhere in the contrast between these scenes, one in which a prince wonders how he could better marshal the wind and another in which the very attempt to do so is clear evidence of the astronomer’s subjugation to airy fantasy, Johnson marks the difference between the appropriate exertion of God-given reason over mere matter and impossible hubris. Weather, for Johnson, has become an important test of his characters’ sense of their place in the natural order of things – not least because, as these scenes suggest, the conclusion that these men draw about their power under the weather will shape their attitudes and approaches to their encounters with the rest of the world, both in small meetings in drawing rooms and in the theatre of war.

For the careful reader, furthermore, these characters’ rights and abilities to rule are registered in what they imagine they are doing when they try to read the skies, as *Rasselas* draws together Johnson’s common complaints about the ambitious new approach to meteorological science and the other physical metaphors he most often uses to comment on the responsibilities and restrictions that come with our uniquely human capacity for reason. As in his *Idler* papers, Johnson here continues to condemn
superstition, casting it as an irresponsible attempt to blame external influences for our own bad behaviour. At the same time, however, that Johnson remains sceptical about any attempt to resign either our reason or responsibility for our behaviour to influence of our surroundings (which, he warns, can be changed with relative ease), he is equally concerned about intellectual over-reaching, or the inappropriate presumption that we can know more than we should. As Robert Mayhew points out, this, too, is a long-standing concern of Johnson’s (551), evidenced even in the first paragraph of his review of Soame Jenyns’s *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757): there, Johnson reminds readers that we only ever “see but in part,” and makes his primary critique that Jenyns “decides too easily upon questions out of reach of human determination, with too little consideration of mortal weakness” (522; emphasis in original). From superstition to reasoned empiricism, then, Johnson identifies a similar flaw: each mode of thought claims some privileged access to the secrets of the divine order – and as the physiological metaphor that he introduces here is meant to suggest, there are some species of knowledge that are meant to remain beyond human reach, just as some places exist beyond the horizon of our sight. In this case, the explicit visual metaphor draws out a problem implicit in his earlier critiques of the meteorological method. In “The Expedients of Idlers,” too, damp curls became an embarrassing marker of those who trusted the barometers’ readings rather than their eyes’ report of a blackening sky – but if the limits of our unaided visual ability are meant to mark the appropriate limits of human knowledge, as above, these “votaries” of empirical science are being punished for more than merely neglecting the warnings of their own senses. In fact, Johnson reminds us, these amateur meteorologists have been seeking an “oracular” power through their barometers, and it’s this ambition – as much as their instrument-focused myopia – that seems to earn them their humbling turn out in the rain. According to Johnson, any change

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60 For instance, when Rasselas asks Imlac whether he should undertake a pilgrimage to Palestine, Imlac calls this belief that “the Supreme Being may be more easily propitiated in one place than another the dream of idle superstition” – and though he allows that “some places may operate upon our own minds,” such that our sincere beliefs can occasionally lead us to good deeds, Imlac warns his listener that the man who travels because he “thinks [his vices] will be more freely pardoned” in a certain place “dishonours at once his reason and religion” (354).

in the weather that we cannot observe with our unaided senses belongs in the sphere of knowledge appropriately beyond our reach – and so because so much of the new meteorological science still seems to be driven by the promise that it might, with the help of barometers and regular observation, be possible to predict the weather, both the tools and practices associated with this kind of meteorological science also become, in this work, suggestive symbols for inappropriate ambition and over-reaching, intellectual and otherwise.

Johnson, in other words, rejects the suggestion that extending the powers of human senses might be reason perfected, and devotes his writing about the weather instead to illustrating how this is a fundamentally irrational project – not just a way of looking at the human body that regretfully undermines its capacity for reason, but in fact the pursuit of an “impossible dominion” that will cost the seeker all the territory we each already have by right. This is what happens to the astronomer that Rasselas encounters: as his “daily observations of the weather led [him] to consider whether, if [he] had the power of the seasons, [he] could confer greater plenty upon the inhabitants of the earth,” he begins to spend “days and nights in imaginary dominion, pouring upon this country and that the showers of fertility,” until finally, he believes that his will has turned into power, and, “by comparing the time of my command to that of the inundation, I found that the clouds had listened to my lips” (404). As he becomes more secure in his knowledge of the weather’s daily behaviour, the astronomer’s grasp on reality becomes more tenuous – until, at the very moment that he believes he has acquired the awesome power to govern “the action of the elements,” and so the “welfare of a world,” his observers witness in him a total loss of control, a mind “tyrannize[d]” by “airy notions,” a man who can no longer “regulate his attention wholly by his will,” or “command” even his own “ideas [to] come and go” (405). Johnson’s description of the astronomer’s fancy as an “airy notion” is suggestive here: it implies that the very force that the astronomer believes that he controls (the action of the elements, and the position of the sun and the earth that cools or warms the air) has come to control him, subjecting him to the very “tyrann[y]” he imagines he could exert by “disordering the seasons” (405). What began with intellectual over-reaching ends with intellectual collapse – and especially among the solitary and idle,
as Imlac explains of the astronomer, or “those who delight too much in silent speculation,” there is an unfortunate inclination to “amus[e the] desires with impossible enjoyments, and confe[r] upon…pride impossible dominion,” until the “reign of fancy” is grows too “imperious, and in time despotic” to resist, and “fictions begin to operate as realities” (406). In this case, then, Johnson merely presents the logical conclusion of the suggestion always implicit in his contempt for the new meteorology. Having long insisted there is something in the daily weather-watchers’ obsession with minute variation that degrades the reason – either because it encourages us to see ourselves as subject to the weather, as he laments in “Discourses on the Weather,” or because this preoccupation causes us to behave in foolish ways, as the “votaries” of the barometer seem to do – Johnson now imagines that an obsession with daily change in the weather might actually drive the astronomer mad, literally robbing him of the reason that Johnson claims “Idlers” all over abdicate to their specious theories of environmental influence.

Johnson’s description of the “airy notions” that “tyrannize” the astronomer is suggestive for another reason, too, as both the nature of the astronomer’s madness and Imlac’s tendency to describe his loss of power in the language of government together reflect Johnson’s more explicitly political interest in the shift in thinking about the weather underway at this point. To begin with, the astronomer’s madness is marked by his inability to recognize the weather as a force to which the language of human intention does not apply: it’s the astronomer’s sincere description of the ways that he has “diligent[y] considered of the position of the earth and the sun,” in other words, or his effort to “cheerfully bequeath the inheritance of the sun” that reveals the failure of his reason to the group. What’s more, all the members of Rasselas’ party recognize this madness in a way the astronomer cannot, modelling for the reader what should be common knowledge, by now, about the weather; when Imlac chastises Rasselas’s sister, the princess, and Pekuah, her favourite, for “smiling” at this “malady of the mind,” for instance, this exchange confirms for the reader not just that it is mad to imagine that a human will could control the action of the elements, but also that the weather in particular is so far apart from the rules that govern human society that anyone can recognize madness in this claim to control the weather, and should treat those who do so only as
unfortunate evidence of the “uncertain continuance of human reason” (405). A far cry from the Idler essays’ earlier complaints about the superstitious belief in environmental influence that dogs this “age of inquiry and knowledge,” this scene thus reflects the increasingly stable – that is, both widely held and empirically oriented – view of the weather as a “natural fact” that Johnson seems to recommend, and affirms the difference between knowing that we cannot control the weather and recognizing that it need not control us that Johnson identifies as a hallmark of reason in maturity.

For all the ways this scene insists it is a sure sign of madness to apply the language of human intention and government – “dominion,” “tyranny,” despotism – to the random activities of the weather, however, Johnson also introduces an undeniable parallel between the astronomer’s belief that he controls the “welfare of the world” through the “action of the elements” and the increasingly energetic imperial activities in which Britain had become involved over the course of the Seven Years War (404). Although the astronomer sets out to “confer greater plenty upon the inhabitants of the earth,” Johnson suggests, he soon finds himself overwhelmed by the ever-widening range of needs unique to each part of the world; ultimately, he declares, “I have found it impossible to make a disposition by which the world may be advantaged,” because “what one region gains, another loses by any imaginable alteration” (405). The intentions stated here are likely better than those of the parties embroiled in the Seven Years War, but the rest of the astronomer’s narrative resonates with Johnson’s most frequent complaints about Britain’s activities on the North American front of this war. 62 By the time that Quebec fell in

62 Johnson’s ambivalence about British imperial expansion is well established, and as his Idler papers on “The Vultures’s View of Man” (No. 22) and “European Oppression in America” (No. 81) illustrate, he is particularly critical of the rising economic and environmental costs associated with the conflict in North America that was reaching a climax in the late 1750s. In each of these papers, Johnson takes on the voices of characters he associates with a more harmonious relationship with the natural world – a committee of vultures, an indigenous chief – in order to position British military activities as variously in violation of its laws, an effort “to purchase by danger and blood the empty dignity of dominions over mountains [Britons] will never climb,” and “regions they will never people” (297). As where he describes poor Rasselas, unable to “fix the limits of his dominion” (418), Johnson is still worried that the empire is trying to incorporate more territory than it can handle – and so he registers that territory here as disturbingly “empty” or “unpeopled,” as if to remind readers both of the human costs of the wars required to acquire these territories, and the overextension of the remaining population across an increasingly large and geographically diverse empire. Samuel Johnson, “The Vultures’s View of Man,” Idler 22 [82] (London, 1759) in Samuel Johnson: The Major Works, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000),
September 1759, Johnson was already calling Britain’s enthusiastic pursuit of North American territory a “dispute [over] regions which they cannot people,” and an effort “to purchase by danger and blood the empty dignity of dominions over mountains they will never climb, and rivers which they will never pass”\(^63\) – which suggests, altogether, that even the relatively positive turn in Britain’s fortunes in the field of war had not improved Johnson’s view of the ambitions that brought so many soldiers to this “cold, uncomfortable, uninviting region” in the first place.\(^64\) Given both this trend in Johnson’s writing and the ease with which the members of Rasselas’s party dismiss the astronomer’s belief that he is responsible for the “welfare of the world,” Rasselas’s first readers would thus have been hard-pressed to miss the parallel between the astronomer’s “malady of the mind” and Britain’s own effort to take on and keep in balance what increasingly appeared to be the needs of the whole globe. To undertake such a project, Johnson suggests, is to abandon the reason we already have in pursuit of an “impossible dominion” – or, as Imlac observes of the astronomer, to wilfully undermine and degrade that which makes us human in pursuit of a more-than-human power.

In Rasselas, then, the weather is both inherently apolitical, an inappropriate subject of terms like “command” or “administration,” and explicitly politicized, as all that the astronomer cannot control also seems to stand in for what Britons do not know and cannot predict about the “impossible dominion” for which they remain engaged in war. Taken together, these arguments suggest that Johnson has found something productive in the diminished view of the human as subject to the weather, at least insofar as this fear of being overwhelmed by external influences might be channelled towards a critique of the effort to expand Britain’s overseas obligations – and yet ambition itself, Johnson admits, remains as difficult to rein in as a storm. In “The Conclusion, in Which Nothing is Concluded,” the young prince confesses he continues to “desir[e] a little kingdom, in which he might administer justice in his own person, and see all the parts of government

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64 Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain,” 301.
with his own eyes” (418) – a fantasy that suggests he might have learned a lesson from the astronomer’s failures, and so reinforces Johnson’s investment in the faculty of sight as an appropriate limit for political oversight. Unfortunately, the prince runs into a problem, as even the sentence summing up his hopes cannot seem to quite contain them. After pausing only for the length of a semi-colon to consider the ideal size of his kingdom, Rasselas realizes that he “could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects” (418); Rasselas knows, in other words, that he should “fix the limits of his dominion” such that he can “see all the parts of government with his own eyes,” but like the astronomer, he cannot stop looking for more, striving after both the gods’-eye perspective and the power he would need to manage the “welfare of the world.” To this end, Rasselas’s experience also confirms the argument that Johnson introduced in his criticism of the barometers’ “votaries”: though these devotees of empirical science look too closely at their instruments and Rasselas attempts to look too far beyond the horizon, both attempt to extend the powers of their sight, so both lose control over the power they might otherwise have had – and all, Johnson suggests, might remain safer, drier, or otherwise happier figures if they had looked first for the storms already visible in the blackening sky, and stopped there. If there is a “politics of the weather” that is consistent across Johnson’s work, then, or an argument that explains his persistent interest in the subject he finds so tedious in the conversation of others, it is this: a view of the weather that operates not just as a check on the limits of human pride, but also as a force that helps to define the limits of the human subject itself. For Johnson, the weather is not so changeable a condition, as it acts upon us, that our powers of reason are reduced or replaced by the instincts of animals, and yet it is also not so predictable a condition that we can presume to acquire some divine power just by watching it every day; in the daily variations of the weather, in other words, Johnson finds just enough influence to define the appropriate limits of human power – and to insist, by corollary, that any reader who can thus “fix the limits of his dominions” is in fact a subject of, rather than subject to, the “most variable of all variations.”

VI. Conclusion
By “politics of the weather,” then, this chapter has come to conceive of the weather very much as Johnson does in *Rasselas*: the phrase refers to a way of writing about the weather as if it is at once inherently apolitical, a daily event that happens to us, and already political, its sphere of association bent to support a specific argument about Britain’s imperial activity (as in *Rasselas*, where the weather registers the risks of both intellectual and imperial overreaching). In the texts considered here, references to the weather therefore do not necessarily produce a reality effect, but rather acknowledge and contribute to this much wider debate about the threat of environmental influence and the changeable condition of Britons themselves – and, especially as the Seven Years War wore on, these references to the weather are also equally likely to comment on how any significant movement towards this more universal view of the human condition under the weather might compromise or complicate British imperial activity abroad. This would continue to be true for the rest of the eighteenth century. As the chapters to follow will demonstrate, literary treatments of the weather continue to channel these associations with overwhelming influence and the readers’ own vulnerability to change, and British writers continue to take up all sides of the debate about what it means to be subject to the “most variable of all variations,” especially in an age of imperial expansion.

The specific threat to Britain’s political activity that the weather seemed to represent, however, would evolve along with the aims of the British Empire. In Chapter 2, for instance, the action takes place about a decade before *Rasselas* was published: Quebec had not yet fallen to the British, and the Treaty of Paris – the most significant political context for the events and texts of Chapter 3 – was still almost 15 years away, and so British enterprise in North America looked somewhat different from overreaching war that Johnson calls to mind with his mad astronomer’s ambition. In 1749, that is, all parties to the meteorological controversy surrounding the Hudson’s Bay Company’s claim to Rupert’s Land were still much more invested in protecting British imperial activity already underway than, say, Johnson is in the examples considered so far – but otherwise, writing about the weather had evolved in all of the ways mapped out in this chapter. As in the texts considered here, weather appears in the next chapter’s materials as a natural fact, something that happens to the human body (rather than because of
human behaviour) – and the cold in early Canada is presumed to be so severe that it would certainly overwhelm any competitor who attempted to encroach on the Hudson’s Bay Company’s claims. All that said, however, the weather’s new reputation as a “natural fact” still offered no guarantee that reports on colonial conditions would not be received with significant scepticism – particularly with so much at stake in the meteorological complaint. As Chapter 2 will discuss in more detail, then, this doubt, too, is part of the “politics of the weather” for eighteenth-century Britons: at once itself, a daily event that readers were increasingly likely to recognize as inevitable and apolitical, and not itself, the weather draws a wide range of “real world” concerns other than the state of the atmosphere into the literature in which it appears, and so continues to provide contemporary scholars of eighteenth-century literature and culture with a valuable window onto the shifting terms of Britain’s imperial identity throughout this period of change.
Chapter 2

“Boisterous and changeable”:
The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Dobbs Affair, and the weather

To settle this Country with Colonies from England, is conceived to be impracticable…Snow lies here Three Parts of the Year, and the Frost is never out of the Ground; and, in the Midst of Summer, there are frequent sharp Frosts in the Nights.

– “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” (1749)

In 1749, each member of the British Parliament received a pamphlet asserting “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” a three-page argument for an exclusive right to trade across Rupert’s Land – and a telling example of the political uses of writing about the bad weather in Canada. Although the “Case” begins as a review of the Company’s 1670 Charter, its claims are grounded in complaints about the brutal conditions of work around Hudson Bay. Reframing the Charter as a “Reward” from the Crown, the pamphlet argues that the Company’s Adventurers have “merited” this “encouragement” by extending their “Trade…through a Sea filled with Ice,” and concludes with the account in the epigraph above – a detailed list of the climatological features that make this territory “perhaps the most inhospitable…of any in the known Parts of the Globe.”¹ For the Hudson’s Bay Company, Canada’s weather was an obstacle to trade worth keeping in the public view. In the spring of 1749, the Company was contesting a fifteen-year Charter challenge and public attack on its limited exploration efforts – and this pamphlet, with its special attention to the “frequent sharp Frosts” that made further settlement “impracticable,” helped to identify meteorological “Hazard and Difficulty” as a necessary subject of debate.²

¹ Hudson’s Bay Company, “Case,” 1-3.
² Where the term “settlement” appears in documents related to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s operations, it typically refers to permanent trading posts; “exploration” refers to expeditions north and west of the Company’s current settlements. Taken together, these terms also describe the poles around which the fight to open the Company’s monopoly was organized: while Arthur Dobbs was campaigning for greater exploration to secure the rumoured Northwest Passage for British trade, the Hudson’s Bay Company insisted that its limited settlement around the western edge of Hudson Bay offered a better defense against more mobile French traders.
The Hudson’s Bay Company’s rhetorical strategy here is remarkable for a number of reasons: the pamphlet capitalizes on and helps to secure Canada’s eighteenth-century reputation as a miserable place to live and work, but it also exposes the political interests involved in producing the “facts” of far-away weather. The pamphlet represents the Company’s only published response to the “Dobbs affair” of the 1740s, a Parliamentary Inquiry and pamphlet war about the Hudson’s Bay Company’s trading practices in the territory that would eventually become Canada.\(^3\) Instigated by Arthur Dobbs, Surveyor-General for Ireland and the Hudson’s Bay Company’s most persistent eighteenth-century critic, the Dobbs affair began as a dispute about the Company’s failure to discover a Northwest Passage, but quickly became a fight to open its monopoly – until Joshua Sharpe, the Company’s solicitor, intervened to change the subject. By circulating “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” Sharpe refocused this Charter challenge on the brutal weather that seemed to prevent exploration north or inland of the Company’s current settlements, and demanded that any credible critics of the Company’s practice pay similar attention to these meteorological complaints. His strategy worked, and in the treatises that followed Sharpe’s pamphlet, the severity of Canada’s weather emerged as a subject of singular importance for both prospective explorers and merchants interested in expanding their trade. Unfortunately, as the Company’s critics became more interested in the particulars of Canada’s weather, the still-unstable terms, technologies, and forms of the weather report presented a new problem: nobody could agree on what the weather in Canada was actually like.

Sharpe, for instance, made his case by calling up evidence from Captain Christopher Middleton’s “The Effects of Cold” (1742), engaging both narrative description and empirical records to prove that Canada’s weather was too cold – and too changeable – to permit reliable measurement.\(^4\) Unmoved by Middleton’s “Discouraging” hyperbole, however, Dobbs and his allies insisted that the Company was overstating the severity of


the cold in order to protect its monopoly. Mounting a campaign to discredit Middleton, Dobbs claimed that the former Company captain had been bribed to produce a report that would deter competition, and emphasized the failures of Middleton’s instruments to suggest that the weather simply must be warmer inland. For the Company, as Dobbs pointed out, Middleton’s report on the “prodigious” cold presented an explanation for the Company’s limited exploration that was as difficult to disprove as the Northwest Passage was to discover – and so for those committed to Dobbs’s Charter challenge, Sharpe’s very investment in Middleton’s unreliable records was reason enough to doubt the rest of the Company’s claims. Climatic history, of course, has favoured the Company’s argument. Too far inland to be warmed by Atlantic currents, Hudson Bay often is colder than either the Arctic Ocean or the North Pole, and now that the closely guarded Company logbooks have become an important source of eighteenth-century weather data, Sharpe’s frustration with critics like Dobbs seems quite justified. For writers on both sides of the Dobbs affair, however, the practical risks facing the Adventurers at work under these “inhospitable…Extreme[s]” were quickly eclipsed by debate about what might constitute a reliable weather report – and the weather in Canada became a politically productive subject of debate precisely because the cold was so far “off the charts.”

Condensing and exposing the relationship between mercantile capitalist interests and the facts of far-away weather, this dispute offers an instructive challenge to emerging ideas about the obfuscating force of eighteenth-century epistemological and technological change. Alongside the global expansion of mercantile capitalism, the long eighteenth century also witnessed growing faith in empiricism, quantification, and the scientific

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5 Campbell, *A Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels*. Parenthetical citations are to vol. 2 of this edition.
7 Hudson’s Bay Company, “Case,” 1.
method, widespread use of new instruments with which to collect and investigate the
details of the natural world – and, as Pratt has demonstrated, an increasingly prominent
role for the naturalist-collector in obscuring the violence of imperial conquest. For
interested readers on either side of the Company’s case, Pratt’s observation would come
as no surprise: both the Company and its critics complained that reports on the weather
from Rupert’s Land seemed deliberately obscure and explicitly partisan, though each
insisted that the other was responsible for misrepresenting – and politicizing – the “facts.”
Taken together, these mutual accusations suggest that the politics of the weather were
fairly transparent to the eighteenth-century reader, even if the specific condition of
colonial weather itself remained obscure. More recently, however, and particularly in the
decade since Crutzen suggested that the Anthropocene, or our “present, in many ways
human-dominated, geological epoch,” might have its roots in the second half of the
eighteenth century, researchers across the physical sciences and humanities have become
interested in the specifically modern habits of mind that have made the human hand in
climate change so difficult to see. Drawing on Latour’s sense that our modern
disciplines “are founded on the conceptual separation of human acts from natural facts,”
for instance, Tobias Menely argues that “we have been taught, since the Enlightenment,
not to look” for ourselves in the weather. These arguments suggest that the
epistemological shifts associated with modernity have established a way of thinking that
makes it especially difficult to acknowledge or identify a human influence on the global
climate – and that we collectively became most convinced by that “world of thought” at
the same moment that we began, according to Crutzen, to most directly interfere with the
climate itself. As Fabien Locher and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz have pointed out, however,
there are risks to characterizing the habits of mind that have contributed to the
contemporary climate crisis first and foremost as “obfuscating” contradictions. Even if
Menely himself acknowledges the “environmental awareness of past societies,” a broader

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11 Menely, “‘The Present Obfuscation,’” 478-479. For Chakrabarty, similarly, the growing consensus on anthropogenic climate change has made it possible to imagine that humans now “wield a geologic force,” but this perspective requires a vision of ‘the human’ that exceeds our current models of historical consciousness and self-knowledge. See Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History.”
history of anthropogenic climate change that insists that we have, for whatever reason, simply been unable to see what we have been doing risks “depoliticiz[ing] the long-term history of environmental deterioration” – and a critical emphasis on epistemological change can itself obscure the other eighteenth-century conflicts that helped to foster doubt about far-away weather. The debate regarding the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly casts light on just this type of conflict. The pamphlets exchanged during the Dobbs affair expose the economic and political conditions that helped to mystify the relationship between natural fact and human activity, and illustrate how the interests of the storytellers have determined the stories told about the weather – both banal and brutal. For the Company and its critics, maintaining some scepticism about the specific conditions of the weather in Canada turned out to be profitable – and so the case is a useful reminder that these “obfuscating” epistemological movements were also embedded in systems of power, and in particular in the emerging practices of mercantile capitalism that would also come to define the era of the Anthropocene.

To this end, the case also marks the beginning of a slow shift away from the anxious approach to writing about overwhelming weather modeled in the previous chapter. Although Samuel Johnson might have been impressed by the doubt with which the Hudson’s Bay Company critics received these reports of extreme conditions in Rupert’s Land, Sharpe’s strategy is a far cry from the conservative check on imperial ambition that Johnson’s Rasselas imagined writing about faraway weather might be. In “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” the weather remains a serious obstacle to exploration and trade – but in Sharpe’s hands, weather reports that amplify, rather than assuage, those fears about being overwhelmed by the weather ultimately help to protect, rather than undermine, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly rights to this unfamiliar territory. As a case study in how writing about the weather would both begin to shape and to be shaped by wider debate about Britain’s imperial responsibilities in North America, then, the Dobbs affair has implications for both the emerging history of climate and weather, as above, and for our approaches to reading later eighteenth-century exploration and

discovery literature about the same region. To illustrate the latter, the second half of this chapter will examine the echoes of the Company’s response to this 1749 Charter challenge in Samuel Hearne’s *A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay, to the Northern Ocean*, a record of an expedition in search of a copper mine and expanded trade routes undertaken between 1769 and 1772. In the years between Hearne’s journey north of Hudson Bay and the publication of his journal (in 1795), the Hudson’s Bay Company – under the leadership of Governor Samuel Wegg – would dramatically transform its relationship to natural history and empirical science, increasingly positioning itself as a purveyor of truth and champion of transparency. For Hearne, in the midst of revising his report on three largely unsuccessful expeditions for publication, the unreliable records of meteorological extremes he had captured in Canada posed a challenge to this project (and to his own effort to shake off the reputation for exaggeration and lassitude he had acquired towards the end of his tenure with the Hudson’s Bay Company) – but then the weather changed. Over the course of his narrative, rather, Hearne changes his approach to writing about the weather: embracing a more matter-of-fact description of its overwhelming force, reframing his own project as a successful natural history rather than a record of failed discovery, and entrenching his eyewitness experience – of measuring instruments breaking in the cold, for instance – as a necessary corrective to the armchair observations about Canada’s habitability circulating since the Dobbs affair.

In the end, as this chapter will demonstrate, the weather operates for Hearne very much as it did for Sharpe – as an obstacle, certainly, to expansive exploration, but also as an opportunity to reframe the conditions of what seemed to be a losing battle, and a chance to redefine his contributions to the Hudson’s Bay Company as deftly as Sharpe had redefined the Company’s monopoly itself as an essential condition of its explorers’ contributions to natural history. Although the records of the weather the Company’s explorers returned would not become any less obscure in the time between the end of the Dobbs affair and the publication of Hearne’s journal, the politics of the weather would remain transparent to all parties to each case – and so, by developing an approach to reading eighteenth-century exploration literature that is similarly attentive to the interests
protected by seemingly straightforward reports of this “boisterous and changeable” weather, we might also come to recognize the colonial weather report as, in fact, a world-making form for many eighteenth-century British readers. As Mary Favret reminds us, in other words, “the island’s climate – physical, political, moral, emotional – cannot be isolated from and must be understood alongside weather elsewhere.”14 With a more comprehensive understanding of how these hyperbolic descriptions of Canada’s weather helped to shift the tone and target of this fight for the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly both at the height of the Dobbs affair and throughout the century to follow, we might therefore begin to make connections between the influence weather has accrued as both a cultural symbol and a practical threat – and come to more clearly recognize the role mercantile interests have played in maintaining some doubt about the weather on all sides of the campaign to expand North American trade.

I. The Dobbs affair, 1733-1749

By approaching the evolution of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s operations in North America with greater attention to the politics of weather, we also complicate a history usually imagined as a two-party race. To date, most influential histories of Canada’s fur trade emphasize the long conflict between two trading networks: one based in Rupert’s Land, which encompassed all of the territory draining into Hudson Bay, and another based in Montreal, which laid claim to the region around the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes.15 This rivalry intensified along with the escalating martial conflict of the Seven Years War, but the risk of French incursion failed to force the Company to take any real action to expand or protect its inland settlements – until, in the years following the fall of Quebec (1759), a more aggressive and successful network of Scottish, Loyalist, and English pedlars appeared in Montreal to supplant the old system of French trading partnerships. In the fifty years of bloody conflict to follow, an expanding system of adventurous rivals would spur the Hudson’s Bay Company’s new approach to managing

14 Mary Favret, “War in the Air,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 65.4 (2004): 551. For other critical perspectives on scientific writing and colonial climates, see also Sudan, “Mud, Mortar, and Other Technologies of Empire,” and Markley, “Monsoon Cultures.”

both its territory and its public reputation – but this transformation was underway well before the 1779 incorporation of the North West Company. Beginning with the effort to rebuff Arthur Dobbs’s Charter challenge of the 1740s, the Hudson’s Bay Company had launched a new campaign to defend its practice and its exclusive right of trade in Rupert’s Land – and as the Dobbs affair demonstrates, this campaign hinged on descriptions of the weather in Canada, which offered the Company an especially effective answer to complaints that its Adventurers were too lazy, too cowardly, or too inefficient to maintain control of Rupert’s Land. Bad weather emerges from this campaign as the most prominent and important feature of Rupert’s Land – and, if the Company had its way, forbidding details about the snow, frost and cold would be the only things worth knowing about this territory.

This dispute about the weather also foregrounds the work of Hudson’s Bay Company explorers and critics whose influence on the Company’s reputation – and Canada’s enduring meteorological mythologies – has been largely omitted from the story of the region’s fur trade. In particular, retracing the evolution of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s public communications throughout the 1740s with a closer attention to the politics of the weather casts new light on Arthur Dobbs’s part in opening the Company’s records to wider scrutiny and debate. Charismatic and persuasive, Dobbs’s refusal to accept an absence of evidence as evidence itself made him a timely and effective critic of the Company’s closely guarded Charter. Capitalizing on the dearth of reliable information about the rumoured Northwest Passage, Dobbs recast the Company’s failure to publish its own records of successful Arctic exploration as evidence of a self-serving monopoly, and so turned what little the Company was willing to share about Rupert’s Land into proof of what little the Company was able to do to defend its trade. Under Dobbs’s watch, the Company’s long-standing reticence regarding its captains’ logs, letters, and Charter became exemplary of its failure to serve the “good of the Publick”– and though Dobbs was never able to mount a viable legal challenge to the Company’s monopoly, this persistent attack on the Company’s seeming lethargy would, by mid-century, successfully

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16 Clarke, Dobbs, 45-47; Bryce, The Remarkable History, 62.
force open the London Committee’s hold on what they did know about the geography, climate, and standards of trade across the contested territory.\textsuperscript{17}

The values and opinions that define this fight, however – Dobbs’s ambition; the Company’s pragmatism; Dobbs’s doubt; the Company’s conservatism – were visible from 1733 forward, when Dobbs submitted his first proposals regarding a search for the Northwest Passage to Sir Charles Wager, First Lord of the Admiralty and Sir Bibye Lake, the Company’s Governor. This early exchange was cordial, and in 1735, the Company sent two ships – the Churchill and the Musquash – north from Prince of Wales’s Fort to observe the strength and direction of the tides at Roe’s Welcome. These instructions might have suggested the Company’s tentative commitment to further exploration, but Dobbs was quickly frustrated – first with the two-year delay before the sloops departed, and again when the mission, a miserable failure, was abandoned in 1739.\textsuperscript{18} In the meantime, he introduced himself to Christopher Middleton, a Company captain who shared his suspicion that “the People on board [these northward sloops] were not duly qualified for such an Undertaking.”\textsuperscript{19} This affinity would be a profitable one for Dobbs, always curious about the secret details of Company practice. Although Middleton initially declined Dobbs’s invitation to leave the Company, the Captain was moved by his new friend’s commitment to discovery – and so he offered to provide Dobbs “with all the Journals and memoirs I was possessed of, which were most likely to direct him to the place where [the Northwest] Passage might…be found.”\textsuperscript{20}

Unsurprisingly, the London Committee did not approve of Middleton’s burgeoning friendship with the inquisitive Dobbs.\textsuperscript{21} For more than twenty-five years, the Committee had carefully protected all logs and letters brought home on Company ships, required all

\textsuperscript{17} Castle Ward Papers, Book 7, qtd. in Clarke, \textit{Dobbs}, 62.
\textsuperscript{18} Glyndwr Williams, \textit{The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century} (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1962), 41-47; Clarke, \textit{Dobbs}, 44-45; Rich, \textit{Company}, 1: 558-560. According to Rich, the first year of this delay was bureaucratic, a consequence of the London Committee’s ambivalence about the scope of the mission; the second year’s delay was an accident, as the \textit{Churchill} was diverted to replace another sloop, the \textit{Hudson’s Bay}, that was lost in the ice on its way to York Factory.
\textsuperscript{20} Christopher Middleton, \textit{A Vindication of the Conduct of Captain Christopher Middleton} (London, 1743), 5.
its members to keep copies of the Charter itself under close surveillance, and refused to update printed maps of the territories around Hudson Bay. As historian of the Company Glyndwr Williams observes, this policy was effective: for the first half of the eighteenth century, the Company had managed to escape the periodical and Parliamentary criticism levelled against the East India Company, the Royal African Company, and the Levant Company.22 These overseas trading companies were subject to censure for a variety of sins, including cronyism, war-mongering, and attempting to subvert parliamentary authority – but by the time that Matthew Decker denounced the “absurd, inconsistent, and destructive” forces that encourage only “idleness, villainy, and extravagant demands for wages or goods,” his Essay on the Causes of the Decline of Foreign Trade (1744) seemed to give voice to a widespread dissatisfaction with monopoly claims in particular.23

Unfortunately for the Hudson’s Bay Company, Decker’s essay appeared at the same time that Dobbs had started to ask more difficult questions about the limits and obligations of its 1670 Charter. A tide was turning on Company privacy, and Dobbs aimed to use its momentum to press open North American trade, too.

Unconvinced by the results of the Company’s 1737 search for a Northwest Passage, Dobbs persuaded Wager to send a new expedition to Hudson Bay in May 1741. When this expedition failed, however, Dobbs turned on the former Company employee he had suborned to captain one of his ships: the unfortunate Christopher Middleton.24 Their very public falling out unfolded across a series of 1742-1743 pamphlets, thrusting the Hudson’s Bay Company into precisely the sort of spotlight that the London Committee had worked for decades to avoid.25 Although Middleton insisted that he had undertaken the voyage with “no Notion that any information which Mr. Dobbs might receive from

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22 Williams, “Critics,” 151-155. Referring to two Parliamentary debates on the East India Company’s and Levant Company’s monopoly rights – in 1730 and 1744, respectively – Williams identifies trade competition as a recurring complaint in the merchants’ petitions delivered to the House of Commons; particularly in the case of the Levant Company, he explains, petitioners insisted that monopoly rights left English trade vulnerable to aggressive competition from the French.


24 For a detailed account of Middleton’s 1741 expedition, see Williams, Northwest Passage, 51-69.

me, could possibly interfere with the Trade of the Company,” it now seemed clear not only that Dobbs would make public the memoirs, journals, and maps that Middleton had shared in 1735, but also that he had already arranged these materials to support an aggressive Charter challenge. Upon receiving Middleton’s report that “there is no hope of a Passage to encourage any further search,” Dobbs immediately demanded a more detailed assessment of the conditions and geography near the Bay, explaining that he intended to use this information to “open the trade…by making settlements higher up upon the rivers in better climates.”

To attempt to persuade Middleton to join him, Dobbs also confessed that he had been cultivating support among a network of London merchants since 1735 – an effort that cast new light on the intentions implicit in his earliest negotiations with Sir Bibye Lake.

Although Dobbs had originally claimed only to be interested in discovery for the purpose of improving the Company’s trade, his 1742-1743 exchange with Middleton revealed that he had arrived in London already curious about the limits of the Company’s Charter. Upon reading a copy of the Charter in 1735, Dobbs explained, he was further convinced that the Company had “the sole benefit to be made” by any future discovery – and it was for this reason that he now believed the Company had offered Middleton a £5000 bribe to conceal the results of his exploratory efforts along the Wager River. Ever attentive to gaps in the Company’s records, Dobbs found evidence of Middleton’s enduring obligation to the Company in the long list of activities that Middleton could not – or would not – complete in pursuit of the Northwest Passage: “[H]ow came he in good Weather,” Dobbs wanted to know, “and with easterly Winds…to pass from Cape Dobbs to Cape Fullerton in the Night…never once trying the Height or Direction of the Tide, or sending in his Boats to look for any Inlet?”

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27 Middleton, Vindication, 7-11; the 1741-1742 correspondence between Middleton and Dobbs is reproduced here. See also Clarke, Dobbs, 53-54.

28 Castle Ward Papers, Book 6, qtd. in Clarke, Dobbs, p.45; Rich, Company, 1: 557; Middleton, Vindication, 44-47. Dobbs’s accusations of 1742-1743 are reproduced in the notes that introduce each section of Middleton’s rebuttal.

29 Middleton, Vindication, 56.
Hudson’s Bay Company and [Middleton] are…equally afraid of being detected in having neglected and prevented the discovery of it.” Reframing Middleton’s report on the “fatigue of travelling those frozen climates” as a simple effort to discourage competitors, Dobbs’s complaints proceeded as if the Captain’s remarks presented a greater obstacle to future exploration than what Middleton called the “impassable…ice” itself.\(^30\)

In 1743, the Admiralty convened a Court of Enquiry to investigate Dobbs’s accusations, eventually clearing Middleton of any charges of bribery or corruption.\(^31\) Unfortunately for Middleton, Dobbs’s campaign to discredit his story proved more successful in the court of public opinion. By 1745, both this fight and Dobbs’s connections with London merchants had captured the attention of influential Parliamentarians, and when he submitted a new petition to expand trade privileges in North America, the House of Commons responded.\(^32\) In March, a Committee of the Whole House advertised a public reward of £20 000 for anyone who could find the Northwest Passage – an “expedient” that, as E. E. Rich points out, “allowed the government to show support without incurring any expense…unless and until the project [succeeded].”\(^33\) For Dobbs, however, this “expedient” substantially encouraged his attack on the Company: as long as the route across the Arctic remained a mystery, Dobbs could insist that the Company’s failure to find it constituted a larger failure to fulfill the terms of its Charter. More importantly, he argued, the Company’s inaction had left British trade vulnerable to incursion from more adventurous French forces.\(^34\) Through the years of frustrated efforts to mount a legal challenge to the Company’s monopoly, this would ultimately prove Dobbs’s most effective argument. Amplifying anxiety about French military and trade competition, Dobbs positioned himself as champion of inquiries “beneficial to the Publick,” and he left the Company one choice: to discover the Northwest Passage and report widely on its location, or to report widely on the Arctic conditions and geography that proved that the Passage did not exist. Anything else, he claimed, would serve the Company at the

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\(^{30}\) Middleton, *Vindication*, 129, 8.
\(^{31}\) For Middleton’s perspective on the Court of Inquiry, see Christopher Middleton, *Forgery Detected...* (London, 1745), 3-23. For more on the allegations against Middleton, see Nigol, “Discipline, Discretion, and Control,” 40-41; Williams, *Northwest Passage*, 70-74.
\(^{32}\) Clarke, *Dobbs*, 45.
expense of “the good of the Publick,” and could not be considered reliable evidence.35
Pitting the Company’s monopoly against the public interest, Dobbs aligned himself and
scepticism with the side of the “good” – and he won.

II. “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company”

This was only a partial victory, of course: Dobbs was never able to rally enough support
from his commercial allies to present a compelling petition against the Company’s
Charter, and the second voyage of discovery that he commissioned wasn’t any more
productive than the first. In the end, Dobbs would successfully challenge only the
Company’s monopoly over information about Rupert’s Land – but by 1749, his persistent
print and legal campaign had brought the era of Company confidentiality to its close.36
The previous year, he published two “tell-all” treatises that aimed to expose the
Company’s Charter and reveal the details of its standard of trade, and because the
Company had been so unwilling to publish any of its own records for so long, Dobbs’s
treatises became two of the first and only accounts of the Company’s activities available
for public discussion.37 By 1752, for instance, Joseph Robson – another former employee,
and self-appointed “Enemy” of the Company – was using Dobbs’s Short View of the
Countries and Trade...in Hudson’s Bay to articulate the criticism that would become one
of the most difficult for the Company to shake.38 Writing in collaboration with Dobbs,
Robson accused the Company of “sle[eping] at the edge of a frozen sea” (6), or
remaining content to trade along the shores of Hudson Bay while leaving its inland
territory unattended. Drawing out Dobbs’s earlier attention to the intensifying conflict
with the French, Robson also framed the Company’s policy as a strategic threat to British
success in North America: by “sit[ting] down contented at the edge of [this] frozen sea,”

35 Castle Ward Papers, Book 7, qtd. in Clarke, Dobbs, 62. For more on Dobbs’s and Middleton’s debate
regarding the “good of the Publick,” see Middleton, Vindication, 65-83.
37 Williams, “Critics,” 154. For more on the influence of Dobbs’s treatises on descriptions of the
Company's territories published later in the eighteenth century, see also Moodie, “Science and Reality,”
307.
38 Glyndwr Williams, “Arthur Dobbs and Joseph Robson: New Light on the Relationship between Two
Early Critics of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” Canadian Historical Review 40.2 (1959): 134-135; and
citations are to this edition of Robson’s treatise.
he explained, the Company had “suffer[ed] the French to come behind them, and carry off the best of their trade” (79). Only opening trade in the neglected interior of the Company’s chartered land, Robson concluded, could deter the risk of French invasion.

As Robson’s attack demonstrates, Dobbs’s enthusiastic print campaign against the Hudson’s Bay Company was more than just bad publicity. Increasingly in control of the public narrative regarding the Company’s North American operations, Dobbs and his allies turned the Company’s reticence into a sign of a broader unwillingness to act to protect its own interests. Just as Dobbs had been able to take over the public record on the geography and climate of Rupert’s Land, these critics suggested, the French would soon take over the trade routes that the Company had left unattended. Although Company historians have since persuasively argued that the Company’s inaction around the Bay was a prudent defense against local military threats, Dobbs’s complaints were timely: for eighteenth-century readers, Dobbs’s rhetoric echoed Decker’s popular position on monopoly rights, and his emphatic commitment to “the good of the Publick” worked well to turn the Company’s policy of close secrecy into a failure to meet its own public obligations. To counter these charges, the Company would need a new approach to its public communication – a new claim to its Chartered territory that would be as difficult to disprove as the Northwest Passage was to discover, and a new way to explain why maintaining a series of permanent trading posts around the Bay was a better defense against French incursion than more aggressive exploration. To take the wind out of accusations like Robson’s, the Company would also need to deflect the criticism implicit in Dobbs’s and Middleton’s initial exchange: that the Company had compromised the security of its forts by recruiting “People…not duly qualified for such an Undertaking,” and that the Adventurers, like the Company, had been “asleep” or “sitting down” on the job. Most importantly, the Company needed to redefine its Charter: not, as Dobbs would have it, as a promise to Prince Rupert and “Our Kingdom,” but rather as a “Present” of equal value to the “great Cost and Charges” that its Adventures undertook to

39 Robson, Six Years Residence, 79.
pursue trade in this brutal and relatively uncharted northern corner.\textsuperscript{42} To achieve all these ends, the Company would need to disclose much more about the territory that it hoped to retain.

The Dobbs affair came to a head in March 1749, when a Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry was established to consider the rights of the Company’s Charter.\textsuperscript{43} Debate proceeded quickly, and by mid-May, the Committee had firmly decided in favour of the Hudson’s Bay Company – if only because, as \textit{The London Magazine} remarked, “it appeared to be impossible to preserve [the Company’s] trade without forts and settlements on the coast of Hudson’s Bay, and as such forts and settlements must be supported either by exclusive companies, or at the publick expense, the affair was dropt.”\textsuperscript{44} This outcome is less interesting, however, than the Company’s strategy both during and after the Inquiry. Worried that its agents might reveal too much under questioning, the Company opted not to send any witnesses to appear before the Parliamentary Committee in 1749, and instead enlisted the services of solicitor Joshua Sharpe to help prepare the Company’s case for submission to the House of Commons as a whole.\textsuperscript{45} As a window on the Committee’s proceedings, Sharpe’s briefing notes are revealing – and in the observations and objections that he has drafted on the back of this document, we can find the germ of what would become the Company’s most persuasive answer to critics like Dobbs. To begin with, Sharpe has summarized the twenty-two petitions against the Company, illuminating a series of common concerns, and then prepared comments on all of the previous acts of Parliament that might defend the Company’s claim.\textsuperscript{46} These preparatory notes suggest that the petitioners’ complaints

\begin{itemize}
\item[Hudson’s Bay Company, \textit{The Royal Charter for incorporating the Hudson’s Bay Company} (London, 1670).
\item[42]Williams, “Critics,” 158-160. Williams argues that this Inquiry was convened to respond to a “well-organized” series of petitions from London, Liverpool, and Bristol merchants, each bearing a clause critical of joint-stock companies (“whose interest hath been, and ever will be, found incompatible with that of a free and open trade”).
\item[44]For more on the Company's efforts to avoid “any possible breach of security by its own servants before inquisitive MPs,” see Williams, “Critics,” 160-161, and Moodie, “Science and Reality,” 303.
\item[45]Hudson’s Bay Company, \textit{Brief for the Hudsons Bay Company against several petitions for laying open the trade to Hudsons Bay and upon a report of the Committee of Enquiry relating thereto: to be heard at the Bar of the House of Commons on Thursday the 4th of May 1749} (London: 1749), Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. The briefing note is signed by Joshua Sharpe, solicitor, and the Fisher
\end{itemize}
circled around the same three subjects: the scope of the 1670 Charter, and whether that Charter in fact required the Company to pursue further discovery; the consequences of expanding North American trade for British merchants, many of whom appeared before the Committee as witnesses; and the encroaching French threat, eagerly invoked on all sides of the debate. Similarly, Sharpe’s initial survey of the legal evidence available to support the Company’s case seems to anticipate further debate on just these three subjects: in the collection of legal documents appended to the briefing note, Sharpe includes only the Company’s Charter, extracts from the Treaty of Utrecht pertaining to Hudson Bay, and details of the Royal Prerogative ordering foreign and home trade.

While listening to the Committee’s proceedings, however, Sharpe seems to have worked out a new strategy to change the course of debate. Scribbled in shorthand on the verso side of the brief’s final page, Sharpe’s responses to the testimony imagined an alternative possible explanation for the Company’s struggle. He recorded “obj[ections],” for instance, to suggestions that the Company is “not capable of Exploration,” observed that the “1st & 3rd witnesses – knew nothing of South W[est],” and recommended that the Company should “say, never had such design” if asked about its intention to “peopl[e]” the territory – though he had “no obj[ection]” to further remarks about how the Company’s discoveries should “benefit trade.” Next, Sharpe embarked on a series of unusual comparisons. He noted what it might be like “to live in Russia,” and underlined a speculative complaint about the especially long “winter”; a few lines later, he suggested that the Company might “Compare this with…other Colonies,” noting obstacles “owing to Climate.” These comments don’t appear to be a direct response to anything the petitioners have said: very few witnesses mentioned the climate or conditions in Canada at all, and when it did come up, opinions were inconsistent. Robson, predictably, suggested that “the Country might be settled if people…go up the River till they find a better Climate,” but both Capt. Thomas Mitchell and Capt. Caruthers disagreed, insisting that the “Ground is so cold that it spoils the seed” and makes further exploration

manuscript collection’s notes also list Sharpe among the document’s “added authors,” after the Hudson’s Bay Company.

47 Brief, 32 verso.
48 Robson qtd. in Brief, 15.
impracticable.”\textsuperscript{49} Seizing upon this inconsistency, Sharpe revised the Company’s case to highlight the unique difficulties posed by the Canadian winter – and by doing so, he also opened a new debate regarding the details of the weather in Canada, “Russia,” and “other Colonies.”

Going forward, Sharpe did not entirely abandon the strategy outlined in his notes for the opening statement, but “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” – or the Company’s sole public response to the Parliamentary Inquiry – did set a different tone for what would follow.\textsuperscript{50} Also drafted by Sharpe, the structure of this three-page pamphlet echoes the statement he originally planned to share during the Inquiry. First, the pamphlet outlines the circumstances under which the Company was granted its exclusive right of trade, and then celebrates the Company’s current accomplishments – namely, cultivating positive trade relationships with indigenous communities around Hudson Bay, and rebuffing the French fur traders who wished to disrupt those relationships. Because the pamphlet was drafted for wider circulation than any witness testimony provided during the Parliamentary Inquiry, however, its stakes were somewhat higher: in just three pages, Sharpe attempted to counter the opinions of a periodical press gallery increasingly set against monopoly trade, a body of writing against the Hudson’s Bay Company that had reached eight volumes (since 1741), and an Inquiry crowded with unfriendly witnesses.\textsuperscript{51} Under these circumstances, it is especially significant that “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” should give so many lines to describing the weather in Rupert’s Land: the argument opens and closes by detailing the “Extremes of Cold” and “frequent sharp Frosts” in this territory, and the pamphlet includes very few other geographical observations to supplement this treatment of the weather.\textsuperscript{52} Besieged on all sides by complaints about its tidewater trading policy, the Company seems to have published this

\textsuperscript{49} Mitchell qtd. in Brief, 19; Caruthers qtd. in Brief, 16. These comments might also reflect a dispute regarding the London Committee’s efforts to reduce the cost of provisions by encouraging Company traders to take an interest in gardening, and requiring regular submission of plant samples along with factors’ logs; see Rich, Company, 1: 540.

\textsuperscript{50} The Company may not have intended to distribute Sharpe’s pamphlet alone. Also in March 1749, the Company directed engraver Richard William Seale to print 200 copies of “A Map of North America with Hudson’s Bay and Straights,” but his work was never circulated. For an analysis of Seale’s “fascinating but preposterous” map, see Williams, “A Remarkable Map”; and Ruggles, A Country So Interesting, 33.

\textsuperscript{51} Moodie, “Science and Reality,” 303.

\textsuperscript{52} Hudson’s Bay Company, “Case,” 1-3.
pamphlet to force its competitors to consider the weather as a serious obstacle to inland exploration and development, and to define the particular problems with the weather that future critics would need to disprove to make a convincing argument for freer trade.

III. “The Effects of Cold” and the limits of biogeographical comparison

Drawing the problem of weather out of the background and into the centre of the debate about the Company’s policy, Sharpe’s pamphlet focused new attention on earlier reports about the difficulties that the weather posed for inland trade and exploration, and effectively undermined any critical opinions that did not sufficiently address these practical realities. Having reinvigorated interest in Canada’s “Extreme[s] of Cold,” however, Sharpe still needed to position the Adventurers as the only reliable observers of these conditions, or to persuade the Company’s critics that these “Extreme[s]” simply could not be measured by the instruments available. Recalling, perhaps, Dobbs’s attachment to the mystery of the Northwest Passage, Sharpe opted for the latter, emphasizing the unpredictability and unknowable extent of Canada’s “Extremes” to justify the Company’s limited exploration efforts. More striking, Sharpe found his champion for this argument in none other than Captain Middleton – already the target of Dobbs’s public ire in part because he had, in 1742, published an article on “The Effects of Cold: Together with Observations on the Longitude, Latitude, and Declination of the Magnetic Needle.” Reframed to serve Sharpe’s partisan interest in the weather, Middleton’s article looked less like an objective description of the conditions of work in Rupert’s Land, and more like an illustration of the circumstances that proved that the Company’s current policy against inland exploration is sound – and it was the failure of Middleton’s instruments, Sharpe suggested, that placed his testimony beyond doubt from critics like Dobbs.

When it appeared in *Philosophical Transactions*, “The Effects of Cold” was positioned as a supplement to Middleton’s earlier article on the variations of the compass. To elaborate on the measurements of longitude and latitude that he presented in 1727, “The Effects of

Cold” attributes the significant variation in his compass to the temperature near Hudson Strait, and then attempts to explain why Canada is so cold. Throughout the 1742 report, however, Middleton insists that a single numerical record cannot sufficiently capture just how cold it is at Prince of Wales’s Fort. His prose descriptions of the cold, for instance, often bring together a number of different kinds of measurements: just “Four or Five Hours after the Fire is out,” he explains, “the Inside of the Walls of our House and Bedplaces will be Two or Three Inches thick with Ice, which is every Morning cut away with a Hatchet” (160); likewise, he spends half a page listing the layers of clothing required to venture outdoors, and then admits that, “notwithstanding” these protections, “almost every day, some of the Men that stir abroad…have their Arms, Hands, and Face blistered and frozen in a terrible manner, the Skin coming off soon after they enter a warm House” (160-161). Alternately entertaining and gruesome, Middleton’s descriptions suggest that the cold consistently overwhelms both his best precautions and his observational equipment: elsewhere, he explains that he has “several times this Winter tried to make Observations of some celestial Bodies…with reflecting and refracting Telescopes; but the Metals and Glasses, by the Time I could fix them to the Object, were covered a quarter of an Inch thick with Ice” (159).

Piling up descriptions of the inches of ice, layers of clothing, and speed of freezing that capture all of the ways the cold exceeds his instruments’ measuring capacities, Middleton’s emphasis on excess makes his report especially useful to the Hudson’s Bay Company. Turning once again to narrative, for instance, to render what his instruments cannot, Middleton asks his readers to imagine “Mists” that “appear visible to the naked Eye in Icicles innumerable…pointed as sharp as Needles” (163). These airborne icicles form the basis of Middleton’s early theory of what we now call “wind chill,” or, in Middleton’s terms, the sensation that “the Cold has not near so sensibly affected us… as when the Thermometer has shewed much less freezing, having a brisk Gale of Northerly Wind at the same time” (163). Confounded by this discovery that a given temperature might feel quite different depending on the speed and direction of the wind, Middleton

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54 Christopher Middleton, “A New and Exact Table, Collected from Several Observations, Taken in Four Voyages to Hudson’s Bay in North America from London: Shewing the Variation of the Magnetical Needle,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1683-1775) 34 (1726-1727): 76.
offers narrative explanation to fill the gaps in his thermometer’s record: perhaps “This Difference may…be occasioned by those sharp-pointed Icicles,” which “strik[e] more forcibly in a windy Day, than in calm Weather…and caus[e] an acute Sensation of Pain or Cold” (163). For the moment, Middleton leaves his conclusion implicit, but the point is clear: to accurately capture the experience of Canada’s cold, the thermometer’s readings must be interpreted in a context that includes the wind direction for each day, and both measurements could be enhanced by narrative commentary that recalls the physical pain of exposure. As a preamble to his concluding observation “that all other Watches were spoiled by the extreme Cold” (169-170), then, Middleton’s analysis of the damaging effects of the weather on both bodies and tools makes an important contribution to the Company’s case. By demonstrating that compasses, telescopes, thermometers, and watches consistently fail in the Canadian cold, Middleton contends that these instruments cannot be trusted to produce accurate readings of the time, place, or temperature at the moment of their use.55 Similarly, by dramatizing the experience of wind chill and comparing his discursive description to the (faulty) readings of his thermometer, Middleton suggests that even the records that these instruments do produce are simply unable to capture the embodied experience of the cold at Prince of Wales’s Fort.

Middleton’s challenge to standard climatic measurements is significant, furthermore, because he presents this argument alongside more conventional comparisons between Canada and regions at similar latitudes – a type of biogeographical reasoning that, at the same time and in other circles, was used to explain why some plants or animals could be moved between countries at similar parallels, or to argue that particular social, cultural, and physical characteristics could be attributed to differences in the world’s natural

55 Before it became the centrepiece of the Company’s argument to protect its monopoly, Middleton’s interest in weather that confounds both instruments and expectations was not especially unusual. As Favret points out, until 1791, “the Transactions of the Royal Society gave extensive coverage to reports of unprecedented frosts, meteor sightings, and unusually destructive storms.” Favret, “War in the Air,” 540. For more on the development and cultural history of eighteenth-century meteorological instruments and records, see Giltrow, “‘Curious Gentlemen,’” 53-74; Castle, The Female Thermometer, 21-43; Golinski, British Weather, 77-108; Janković, Reading the Skies, 143-164; and Poovey, Modern Fact, 110-120. For more on how observers of colonial scientific phenomena engaged these recording technologies to secure European epistemological superiority, see Sudan, “Mud,” 147-169.
environments. While eighteenth-century meteorology remained a contested art, it was easy to position Canada in the minds of British readers by comparing its climate to the more familiar climates of Northern Europe – and it was too easy, Middleton suggests, to use these ostensible similarities to argue that the territory around Hudson Bay might be as fruitful and easily cultivated as, say, the Siberian “experiment” had recently demonstrated. As a counterpoint, Middleton does occasionally reproduce common biogeographic comparisons, but he uses these parallels to correct popular misapprehensions about Canada’s climate. He suspects, for instance, that “many” will be a “little surprise[ed]” to discover that “such extreme Cold should be felt in these parts of America, more than in Places of the same Latitude on the Coast of Norway” (162). This transoceanic comparison recalls his attempt to explain why a given temperature feels colder on some days, where Middleton suggests that the “brisk Gale” causes “those sharp-pointed Icicles [to] strik[e] more forcibly” (163). For Middleton, neither climatological comparison nor daily observation of the thermometer can predict the severity of Canada’s weather – and so he claims that these “brisk Gale[s] of Northerly Wind” make Prince of Wales’s Fort feel colder than “Places of the same Latitude on the Coast of Norway,” and colder than it would “in calm Weather.” Anticipating the kind of comparison that writers like Robson would later use to illustrate Canada’s settlement potential, Middleton argues that these comparisons fail to consider both the transformative effects of the predominant wind direction in regions of the same latitude, and the more local effects of this northern wind on days of otherwise similar...

56 Middleton explains, for instance, that the “Aurora Borealis is much more often seen here than in England, [but…] Their tremulous Motion from all Parts, the Beauty and Lustre, are much the same as in the Northern Parts of Scotland and Denmark” (162). Also, as Moodie explains, Dobbs’s, Robson’s, and Middleton’s shared interest in the possibility that “similar climates occurred at similar latitudes” was typical of eighteenth-century writing about the agricultural potential of Rupert’s Land; for more, see Moodie, “Science and Reality,” 298-299. For a visual representation of the latitudinal relationship between Northwestern Europe and the forts around Hudson Bay, see Moodie, “Science and Reality,” 299, fig. 1. 57 Looking back on this experiment in his Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson’s-Bay (1752), for instance, Robson is appalled to think that “a set of self-interested men [have] industriously propagated…that the countries adjoining the Bay are incapable of any beneficial improvements, and that the severity of the climate renders them unfit for human creatures to inhabit” (4-5). After all, he reminds his readers, “The same was once said of Siberia,” which “lies parallel with the more northerly part of Hudson’s Bay” (5). What’s more, Robson asserts, because it is “the centre of a much larger continent [than Rupert’s Land], [Siberia] is also several degrees colder than the countries westward of the Bay” (5). Middleton’s position in this debate aligns him with the Hudson’s Bay Company; for more on the London Committee’s “derisory” attitude towards Dobbs’s (and others’) speculative geography, see Williams, “A Remarkable Map,” 36.
temperatures. History would eventually prove Middleton wrong about Canada’s average temperature (relative to Siberia), but even if Middleton has overestimated the chilling effects of wind that travels over land rather than water, his investment in this climatological argument demonstrates that he has correctly assessed its rhetorical force—and the fact that the biogeographical descriptions of these Northern regions on both sides of this debate share so many important features, all easily contorted to fit two very different views of Rupert’s Land’s potential, already suggests something of how eighteenth-century readers might have been inclined to engage with the self-conscious constructedness of these facts about the weather.

Without ever stating a clear position for or against the Company’s tidewater trading policy, Middleton’s article thus became a touchstone for the Company’s argument—and so influential a perspective on the weather in Canada that its echo appears in “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company.” Where the pamphlet celebrates the Company’s Adventurers for navigating “a Sea filled with Ice, of such Bodies…not to be met with in any other Parts, though nearer to the Pole,” for example, those conditions become the evidence necessary to prove “So true is the Observation, that the excessive Cold or Heat that is met with in many Places, is owing to other Circumstances, than merely the Latitude of the Situation.” Given the intentional absence of other commentary on the Company’s territory, this reference to the “Observation” at the centre of Middleton’s report stakes a number of claims for the Company’s case. Offering “the Latitude of the Situation” as a possible explanation for “the excessive Heat or Cold” reveals the Company’s familiarity with this popular comparative technique in writing about colonial

58 For most of the eighteenth century, however, Middleton’s (more miserable, less fruitful) vision of the territory stuck: in November 1754, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* picked up Robson’s argument, but only to suggest that “the countries bordering on Hudson Bay might serve as an English Siberia, where we might hold our convicts,” because “Convicts should always be sent to a country barren, and in a manner uninhabited, because there they cannot corrupt by their bad example.” Robson, *Six Years Residence*, 4-5; *The Gentleman’s Magazine* qtd. in Newman, *Company of Adventurers*, 122.

59 Read alongside a report like William Wales’s “A Journal of a Voyage…to Churchill River” (1769), Middleton’s effort to remain non-partisan is more obvious. Commissioned by the Royal Society to observe the 1769 transit of Venus from Prince of Wales’s Fort, Wales comments much more freely than Middleton does on what his climatological notes might mean for the Fort’s agricultural potential, and on the Company’s possible influence on scientific observation near its forts. William Wales, “A Journal of a Voyage, Made by Order of the Royal Society, to Churchill River,” *Philosophical Transactions (1638-1775)* 60 (1770): 100-136.

60 Hudson’s Bay Company, “Case,” 1.
climates, and the pamphlet’s curt dismissal of this possibility as reductionist – “merely the Latitude” – recalls Middleton’s similar problem with biogeographical comparisons. Like Middleton, the pamphlet asserts that this comparative approach is faulty because it is incomplete: it fails to consider the “other Circumstances” that might account for the greater number of icebergs in Hudson Bay than in “Parts, nearer to the Pole.” Invoking Middleton’s “Observation” thereby helps the Company to adjust the terms of debate about Canada’s weather, to undermine its critics’ grand comparisons of climates along shared latitudes, and to insist upon a more focused discussion of the daily effects of the cold. Given that the Company was under fire as much for its reticence about North American activities as for the activities themselves, Middleton’s argument proved doubly useful. By invoking the word of a former employee who claimed that Canada’s weather was so changeable that even meteorological instruments were not a reliable source of information, the Company implicitly established its Adventurers’ experiential authority and direct observation as superior records of the conditions under discussion – and suggested that their records were the only perspectives on Canada that could possibly be true.

IV. The case of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s critics, and further “prodigious Accounts of the Effects of the Cold”

To this end, the long debate over the Company’s monopoly also had a significant impact on the status and emerging form of the colonial weather report. At the same moment that eighteenth-century English writers were debating the merits of the barometer and beginning to reimagine their weather as a daily phenomenon they could measure and predict with some accuracy, the Hudson’s Bay Company insisted that neither meteorological records nor discursive descriptions could be trusted to capture the weather near the Bay.61 Because this strategy emphasized the lack of reliable data on the conditions in Canada, however, the Company’s critics seized the severe weather as a “fact” open to dispute. As writers both for and against the Company’s monopoly disputed the others’ version of the truth, their competition exposed colonial weather itself as a construction: on the one hand, the Company refuted standard biogeographical logic in

order to establish the authority of its own explorers’ records, and on the other, the Company’s critics after Dobbs and Robson took up the inconsistency of these (rare) records to insist that the weather simply could not be as bad as Middleton claimed.

In an updated and expanded version of John Harris’s *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, for instance, John Campbell advanced two arguments against the Company’s operations in North America, both of which emphasized the Company’s approach to Canada’s climate. Campbell’s first criticism is tactical, insisting that the Company was “under great inconveniences” at Prince of Wales’s Fort because it had established the settlement in the wrong place. Drawing on Dobbs’s “Experience and Observation,” Campbell explains that because this Fort “is upon an elevated Situation, …surrounded with Snow and Ice for eight Months in the Year, [and] exposed to all the Winds and Storms that happen,” the Company must expend additional resources to support it (290). If only “a Settlement was made higher up the River Southward…without the Reach of the Chilling Winds,” Campbell concludes, “they could have Grass and Hay sufficient, and might also have Gardens and proper Greens” (290-291). Because Campbell borrows these remarks directly from one of Dobbs’s 1744 pamphlets, the first half of Campbell’s argument proceeds as if these meteorological observations were true. Campbell does not yet dispute the Company’s claim to be “surrounded with Snow and Ice for eight Months in the Year,” and merely suggests that the Company could avoid these climatic difficulties by abandoning their tidewater trading policy and moving “some Leagues” inland.

Immediately following his long quotation from Dobbs, however, Campbell offers a more sophisticated analysis of the Company’s complaint: not only is the grass greener further from the Bay, he argues, but the Company has been misrepresenting the severity of the climate all along. “Considering how long we have had Factorie[s] in these Parts,” he asks, why have “all the Accounts hitherto given represent[ed] the Coasts of Hudson’s Bay, as

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62 In this 1748 edition of Harris’s *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, all of the information about and quotations from Dobbs seems to have been added by John Campbell; the 1704 edition of the *Collection* makes no reference to Dobbs or to the Hudson’s Bay Company. See note 5 above.

63 Rich, *Company*, 1: 441-442. Although Campbell is especially interested in the Fort’s weather, he was not the first to express concern about its location. Following an abortive attempt to settle at Churchill in 1689, the London Committee debated the site’s “very grave defects” at length – and, Rich explains, it was only the promise of a nearby copper mine that persuaded the Company not to abandon the Fort.
the most forlorn and dreadful Part of the Universe, hitherto discovered” (291)? Why have
the Company Adventurers insisted that these “Regions [are] freezing and frightful, almost
beyond all Description,” such that “it would appear dreadful and cruel to send even
Malefactors to inhabit”? Campbell finds his answer in the recent debate about the
Northwest Passage, and the state-sanctioned expeditions – like Dobbs’s 1741 effort – that
had interloped upon the Company’s territory. For those who wish to contest the
Company’s monopoly, Campbell explains, “there is nothing of so great Importance as
proving that the Discouragements which have been hitherto represented as insuperable,
have been over-rated, and that…it is not only possible but probable, that they may be
overcome” (291). From this point forward, Campbell begins to argue that the
Company’s descriptions of the weather are arbitrary, and he makes a villain of Middleton
for contributing to this campaign of misinformation: “These prodigious Accounts of the
Effects of the Cold, are calculated only to serve the Company,” Campbell declares, “in
order to prevent People from going there to settle, and encroach[ing] upon the
Company’s Monopoly of Trade” (292; emphasis added). Campbell conflates the
Company’s effort to preserve its monopoly with a broader anti-colonial sentiment, but his
specific criticism of Middleton – that his report was “calculated…to serve the Company”
– reveals an important dimension of this debate about Canada’s weather: the suspicion
with which English readers were encouraged to view these colonial weather reports. To
undermine Middleton’s account, Campbell calls it “prodigious” – and, in an age of
treatises against the Company’s monopoly that consistently run to more than two hundred
pages, it is unlikely that Campbell means that Middleton’s sixteen-page report is too

64 Campbell’s real argument is with the Company’s rhetoric – but insofar as Dobbs agrees that the
Company has “avoid[ed]…making Discoveries to the Northward of Churchill…for fear they should
discover a Passage to the Western Ocean of America, and tempt, by the Means, the rest of the English
Merchants to lay open their Trade” (291), his work is also a useful complement to Campbell’s. To this end,
Campbell emphasizes Dobbs’s authority as an “impartial Perso[n] who do[es]n’t want to disguise the
Truth…of these Climates and Countries,” and reframes Dobbs’s account of the uncomfortable conditions at
the Company’s coastal factories to emphasize the political utility of these descriptions for the Company
itself. Without providing any further meteorological evidence, Campbell thus celebrates Dobbs’s work
specifically because his description makes “It appea[r] that the Cold is tolerable even at these
disadvantageous Settlements in the Bay” (291) – and although Dobbs himself doesn’t make this point,
Campbell also finds in his account proof that “upon passing only five or six Leagues up the Rivers into the
Country, the Climate is so altered, as to be equal to those of the same Latitudes in Europe” (292). By
persistently representing the Company’s complaints about the weather as examples of its political
posturing, in other words, Campbell makes a strong case for the relevance of these comparisons to climates
“of the same Latitudes in Europe” – the same biogeographical comparisons that the Company has
attempted to refute by making such detailed complaints about the weather in the first place.
long. Rather, Campbell dismisses Middleton’s report because it is too fantastic – or because it is “prodigious” in the eighteenth century’s most fanciful sense of the word.

This vulnerability to interrogation marks a vital difference between what British readers of the eighteenth century believed about weather in England and what they believed about the weather in Canada. English weather might have seemed to be the “most variable of all variations,” but debate about its cultural significance did not centre on what the weather was actually like, and very few disputed the retrospective accounts or details of the storms that appeared in the periodical sphere. Indeed, Johnson finds its obviousness one of the most frustrating features of conversation about the weather in England; to talk about the weather, Johnson sighs, is “to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm.” Golinski agrees, noting further that eighteenth-century debate about the meaning of English weather was typically organized by public agreement about one particular feature: it was temperate, or consistently variable – a useful metaphor for change of all kinds. In this view, even the range of readings presented in Chapter One share one quality more important than the points on which they differ: though writers like Swift or graphic satirists like Gillray made offerings on all sides of the broader conversation about Enlightenment science and social change, these literary arguments, too, consistently reproduce this “changeable” vision of the national climate. In fact, Golinski observes, this collective investment in the predictable unpredictability of English weather became so powerful that it resolves even serious meteorological challenges to this claim – and helped to establish a certain formal consistency in its literary treatment. Looking back at Johnson’s frustration with small talk about “wet weather and dry” and the “bright or cloudy” day, for example, Arden Reed suggests that when “the topic is unpredictability, the sentence is tightly structured into pairings…so to become quite predictable” – and, as more recent research in the history of meteorological analysis has demonstrated, the formal patterns that Reed observes in poetry were also part of a broader movement towards standardizing the

65 Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.”
67 “Ultimately,” Golinski argues, “the 1703 storm was remembered not for the damage it caused, or even the casualties, but for the fact that it was such a singular and extreme departure from the normal equanimity of the climate.” Golinski, *British Weather*, 52.
eighteenth-century weather report. 68 Although English observers of environmental disasters had long been frustrated that “the devastation of the storm exceeds the power of language to describe,” Markley argues, it was only in the eighteenth century that these observers began to provide “statistics…tables, graphs, and charts to buttress – or supplant – discursive descriptions of the natural world.” 69 Recall, for instance, the subject of this dissertation’s introduction, which also explored this formal shift in the weather report in some detail: there, too, in the face of weather so bad that “no Pen can describe it,” compilations like Defoe’s The Storm (1704) and special-issue broadsheets like The Amazing Tempest (1703) begin to communicate the destructive effects of especially severe storms by listing bills for property damage and numbers of the dead. 70

Read alongside this shift towards representing unpredictable weather through predictable lists of comparable qualities, some of the hostility surrounding Middleton’s report makes more sense. Emphasizing his broken instruments and unreliable measurements, Middleton asks his readers to believe in weather so severe that it disables the mechanical buttress against unreliable prose description – and formally, his charts of incorrect and wandering measurements represent a “prodigious” intervention in the eighteenth-century effort to standardize the weather report. These charts, though inconsistent, demonstrate that Middleton did understand what kind of empirical information was likely to persuade a British audience, and the terms on which the Company’s critics were likely to compare Canada’s climate to those at similar latitudes. However, where Middleton describes “Telescopes…covered a quarter of an Inch thick with Ice” and his navigational equipment “froze[n] almost as soon as brought into open Air,” he is also reminding his

68 Reed, Romantic Weather, 40. For Reed, the Enlightenment was characterized by “the search for uniformity amidst variety” and an emphasis on constancy” (39) – but more recent work by scientific historians has contested this view. In The Sciences in Enlightened Europe, Clark, Golinski, and Schaffer argue that “enlightened groups us[ed] disciplinary practices…for a variety of distinct purposes,” and “[a]rtifacts, whether barometers or automata, are seen to have been applied and interpreted in very diverse ways” (30). These revelations counter Reed’s suggestion that “the new experimental science…necessarily excluded weather as a variable that could not be controlled” (4) – and, as illustrated by a recent resurgence in writing about the air and atmosphere in eighteenth-century literature (by Favret, Lewis, and Markley, among others), likeminded cultural histories of science have since significantly improved our understanding of the specific economic and technological trends that helped to make weather more – rather than less – interesting to eighteenth-century readers.

69 Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 105.

70 Defoe, The Storm qtd. in Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 105; Golinski, British Weather, 45.
readers that colonial weather simply cannot be translated into the numbers that have come to populate the English weather report (159). Similarly, where Middleton disagrees with Robson’s attempt to describe Canada’s clime by comparing it to more familiar territory at similar latitudes, it is not because he believes that the measurements produced by new meteorological instruments offer an airtight challenge to that biogeographical argument; rather, Middleton uses narrative description to supplement the numerical measurements that he believes are equally unreliable indicators of the “facts.” By demonstrating that “It is not without great Difficulties that any Observations can be taken” at Prince of Wales’s Fort, that is, Middleton engages the rhetorical techniques typically associated with British epistemological authority in order to prove that Canada’s “Extremes” cannot be measured – or, as Sharpe would later have it, to prove that any measurements that seem to contest Middleton’s observations cannot be used to dispute the Company’s monopoly. In the eyes of the Company’s critics, however, even a weather report that combines anecdotal and empirical evidence could not be considered authoritative. Those critics, like Campbell, recognized that the weather report had become too important to the Company’s effort to protect its monopoly, and that the Company had a vested interest in representing the weather in an especially “Discourag[ing]” way (291). In this light, Campbell’s rebuttal is no less controversial than Middleton’s report – because in order even to ask who profits from these “Discouragements,” Campbell must also open the possibility that Middleton might have misrepresented what the weather is actually like during those long winters around Hudson Bay, or call into question what little information is available about the weather in early Canada. Like Middleton’s, Campbell’s argument is also more about the “Discourag[ing]” form of the weather report than the content it purports to provide – but in so politicized a debate, any statement about what constitutes an authoritative weather report must say something about the unstable “facts” of the weather, too.

In the end, the Dobbs affair would have two especially significant consequences for British writing about the weather elsewhere. Acting together, Dobbs, Campbell, Sharpe and Middleton made the weather in Canada obscure and the politics of its description explicit – and, as Campbell warns his readers, these two movements in weather reporting
had become mutually constitutive, each amplifying the other. To deflect Dobbs’s claim that failure to produce proof of the Northwest Passage constituted an illegal breach of the Company’s Charter, for instance, Sharpe could successfully shift the focus of debate to what was similarly unknown about the climatic conditions that prevented exploration – but for those who entered the debate later (like Campbell), all of these claims to have discovered what resists measurement left the “facts” of colonial weather a mystery, and one that would only become more difficult to penetrate as the interests these observations served became more obvious. To resolve the controversy, of course, a writer like Johnson might suggest that we merely “credit [our] senses, to believe that rain will fall when the air blackens”\(^\text{71}\) – a materialist approach that dismisses the authority of barometers along with biogeographical comparisons, and a pragmatic reminder of what should be obvious about the weather: either it’s raining, Johnson points out, or it’s not. But, \textit{pace} Johnson, this sense that the weather is obvious is part of what Sharpe and Middleton have unsettled for Campbell: at once, the Dobbs affair has both realized old fears and inspired new ones, as Campbell seems here to doubt – just as Johnson worried he might – that readers in England can ever really trust reports of sensory experience of the weather, in large part because he doubts any observer of the blackening sky ever really maintains a disinterested relationship to the rain. Campbell is not overestimating the enduring influence of that briefing note in which Sharpe works out his new plan to protect the Company’s monopoly. Although the testimony offered during the Parliamentary Inquiry had almost entirely neglected the weather, nearly all of the writing on the Company’s monopoly that appears after Sharpe’s pamphlet does take up the weather as a primary subject of concern for those interested in expanding English exploration and trade in Rupert’s Land.\(^\text{72}\) Because these descriptions of Canada’s weather were so often implicated in a wider dispute about what constituted an authoritative report, furthermore, this fight also helped to produce colonial weather as a phenomenon distinct from English weather – and to draw the subject of weather itself, on both sides of the Atlantic, out of

\(^{71}\) Johnson, “Expedients of Idlers.”

the background and into the centre of debate about Britain’s ambitions and obligations overseas. Altogether, these steps, each a small revolution in the eighteenth-century politics of the weather, therefore also mark the slow opening of an era in which the weather report itself would function as an increasingly important and flexible instrument of empire – even capable, as the next section will demonstrate, of maintaining the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly over the natural history of Rupert’s Land as the Company otherwise dramatically transformed its relationship to transparency and Enlightenment science.

V. A new approach for the Hudson’s Bay Company: Samuel Wegg, Samuel Hearne, and a report that could “sufficiently convince”

According to Williams, the policy of close secrecy that had inspired the Dobbs affair persisted right up “[u]ntil the last decade of the eighteenth century” – and then changed, he argues, as a direct result of Samuel Wegg’s election to the Company’s London Committee in 1760. Under Wegg’s leadership, Williams explains, the formerly reticent Company re-presented itself as a champion of transparency, in full support of its Adventurers’ contributions to natural history in general and the empirical records of Enlightenment science in particular – and on the ground as well as in the public eye, this shift in the values of the Company’s operations would re-shape both the instructions its explorers received to direct their work and the form of the reports meant to share these activities with a now much wider audience. For Samuel Hearne, for instance, composing his *A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay to the Northern Ocean in the years 1769, 1770, 1771, and 1772*, and revising it for publication twenty years later, these changes would have a profound effect on both the kind of

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73 Williams devotes the second half of his article on “The Hudson’s Bay Company and its Critics” to celebrating Samuel Wegg’s influence on the Company’s policies and reputation, but a number of other recent histories of the Hudson’s Bay Company have also linked his name to the increasing role of eighteenth-century experimental science and natural history in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s work. See also Newman, *Company of Adventurers*, 212-213; and Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, especially the section titled “‘Desirous to Encourage Science’: The Transit of Venus of 1769 and the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Collaboration with the Royal Society, 1768-1774,” 75-94.

information he recorded about his environment and the tone of its final presentation – and so could help to explain some of the formal inconsistency that has preoccupied scholars of Hearne’s work for so long.75 In the late 1760s, for example, the Company’s improving relationship with the Royal Society certainly encouraged Hearne’s use of navigational instruments and his interest in statistical surveying – but this is not the attitude towards the instruments of Enlightenment science for which Hearne’s journal is best known. First and foremost, Hearne’s A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort is an account of his instruments’ failure, filled with tales of his broken equipment, long but unsuccessful expeditions, and stories about the weather, “boisterous and changeable,” that caused so much of this damage. Over and over again, Hearne is confounded by the weather in Canada: it limits his forward progress and undermines his efforts to align himself with the Company’s new commitment to empirical science, and though his growing frustration with his inability to collect accurate information with his instruments does reveal – as a sort of negative imprint – the degree to which he shares the Company’s revised sense of what constitutes a useful record of discovery, the weather in Canada consistently foils any real claim Hearne might have to being the kind of Adventurer worthy of the London Committee’s good favour. As his narrative of his journey presses on, however, Hearne’s approach to describing his trouble with the weather changes, too. Without pretending that the weather improves (and largely abandoning his attempts at empirical observation), Hearne eventually begins to reframe his failed journeys of discovery as nonetheless

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75 Most scholars of Hearne’s work identify some tension between form and content in his journals, but many treat that tension as an unintentional feature of the text. This chapter follows MacLaren, who counters these suggestions by illuminating the many ways that Hearne’s published text is informed by the literary conventions and moral philosophical preoccupations popular at the moment of its publication (“Notes” 24; “Accounts” 33-36), and, by tracing Hearne’s revisions to his field notes through the publication process, opens the possibility that almost all of Hearne’s embellishments are “added” or invented (“Accounts” 36-37). For other approaches, see Bewell, “Romanticism and Colonial Natural History”; Greenfield, “The Idea of Discovery”; Greenfield, “The Rhetoric of British and American Narratives of Exploration”; Harrison, “Samuel Hearne, Matonabee, and the ‘Esquimaux Girl’”; Horne, “The Phenomenology of Samuel Hearne’s Journey”; and Hutchings, “Writing Commerce and Cultural Progress.”
successful contributions to natural history – such that by the end of his third journey, he insists that his failure to return a reliable report on anything about the regions north of Hudson Bay is in fact the greatest evidence of this contribution, and proof that his work is more transparent and authoritative (albeit less empirically precise) than the armchair natural histories produced by the Company’s critics at home. By tracking this change in Hearne’s approach to writing about his confrontations with extreme colonial weather, we thus uncover two important points of continuity in this period of otherwise great change in the Company’s public personae and reputation. Both before and after the Dobbs affair, whatever writing about Rupert’s Land the Company was willing to share with the public consistently emphasized not just the weather, but its overwhelming force – and even as the Company became more committed to exploring and measuring the conditions around its forts, descriptions of the weather that specifically emphasized its ability to overwhelm the instruments that would return a reliable record on its extremes continued to protect the Company’s claim to know Rupert’s Land better than any possible competitor, and so to protect the Company’s monopoly itself. For Hearne as for Sharpe, the weather in Canada best serves the Company’s political purposes when it seems destructive but otherwise obscure – and so for more than five decades, writing about the weather in Canada commissioned by the Hudson’s Bay Company would continue to say more about the instruments it destroyed or explorers it confounded than about almost anything else.

From the perspective of a Company historian, of course, the fact that this obscurity continued to surround the weather in Canada long into the eighteenth century might be less remarkable than the fact that it persisted for so long under Wegg’s watch – which means, according to Williams, that it survived an otherwise near-total transformation of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s relationship to both the aims and methods of Enlightenment science and transparent communication with the public. A Fellow of the Royal Society since 1723, member of its Council since 1767, and Vice President and Treasurer from 1772, Wegg was “on easy terms with many of the geographers, naturalists, and explorers of his day,” and throughout his time as the Company’s Governor (from 1780 to his retirement in 1799), he offered many of these friends of London’s scientific community access to the Company’s previously cloistered maps and
journals.\footnote{Williams, “Critics,” 167-168.} Indeed, even before he could open the Company’s archives as Governor, Wegg was working to improve the long-strained relationship between the Company and the eighteenth-century scientific community on other fronts. According to the Royal Society Council’s minutes (1763-1768), Wegg negotiated with the Company to secure permission for Royal Society scientists to observe the 1769 transit of Venus from the Company’s trading post in Churchill, and this first contact seems to have established a greater spirit of intellectual exchange for the decades that followed.\footnote{Council Minutes of the Royal Society, Book V (1763-68), 187 ff. qtd. in Williams, “Critics,” 168.} To this end, Williams also traces the Company’s improving relationship with the Royal Society through its material products, “a steady stream of natural history specimens and notes, meteorological observations, and other scientific data [that] went from the Bay posts to the Royal Society…in the 1770s,” in exchange for which the “Society presented scientific instruments to the Company,” and, in a few fortunate cases, even offered lessons in how to use these instruments to improve the Company explorers’ surveying and mapmaking abilities.\footnote{Williams, “Critics,” 168; Newman, Company of Adventurers, 214. In a perhaps “prodigious” coincidence, Hearne was among the explorers who received these lessons: in 1768, when William Wales, a British astronomer and mathematician, arrived in Churchill to observe the transit of Venus, Newman reports that “his stay presented Hearne with the opportunity to improve his knowledge of surveying and chartmaking, which he had already gleaned while serving with the Royal Navy.” There are other, more explicit ways in which Hearne’s journal is shaped by the policy changes initiated under Wegg – indeed, Hearne’s published journal is addressed to Wegg (xlviii), and Wegg is among the “loving Friends” who issue Hearne’s instructions (lxv) – but this seems to be the earliest point at which their stories meet.}

For the Hudson’s Bay Company, this would be a fruitful collaboration in more ways than one. In addition to establishing the Company’s reputation for “training and us[ing]…explorers capable of making accurate surveys,”\footnote{Williams, “Critics,” 170.} this new willingness to record and exchange information of interest to geographers and naturalists did much to improve the Company’s public character – both within and beyond the critical spheres of the scientific community. Following the success of William Wales’s trip to observe the transit of Venus, for instance, not only had the Royal Society thanked the Company “for their readiness…to promote science in general, and particularly the knowledge of natural history” – but by 1784, The Monthly Review recalled the “great complaints” that had been
“made against this Company, on account of their neglecting to prosecute voyages of discovery,” and now directed its readers to acknowledge all that the Governor (Wegg) and his Committee had done to make “ample amends for the narrow prejudices of their predecessors” (462), and to “throw great light on the customs and manners of people inhabiting that most dreary and inhospitable clime, …North America, of which little was before, and with certainty, known to the public” (462).\(^80\) Praising the Company’s willingness to share its information with the Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, as Captain Cook prepared for his third voyage, the Review article pointed out that the Company’s current leaders “have not only done every thing in their power towards obtaining a perfect knowledge of those parts themselves, but have…most liberally and readily contributed every thing that could be required of them towards making that knowledge public and useful” (462).\(^81\) In little over a decade, then, public perception of the Hudson’s Bay Company had improved so much that the opinions of the Company’s critics no longer dominated every conversation about the Company’s operations in North America – and in fact, when The Monthly Review published a scathing critique of J.R. Forster’s History of the Voyages and Discoveries made to the North (1786) in 1787, the journal specifically denounced Forster for “retailing all the absurd stories…with which [Dobbs and Ellis] have endeavoured to mislead their readers” (292), and for “overlook[ing] all later information” about “the present state of the Company’s concerns” (292).\(^82\) Surveying this progress, Williams attributes most of these changes in the Company’s public activity and reputation to Wegg – as it was largely as a result of Wegg’s leadership, Williams explains, that “the Company built up goodwill instead of needless antagonism, [and] showed itself to be in the ranks of those seeking to increase both trade and knowledge” (171).


\(^{81}\) Indeed, even Adam Smith shared this sense that the Company’s “useful…knowledge” might be worth the risk of granting exclusive privileges to a publicly regulated company. After all, Smith explained, given the Company’s “necessary expenses” and extra preparations “on account of the ice…it does not appear that their profits deserve to be envied, or that they can much, if at all, exceed the ordinary profits of trade” (V.i 328-329). Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Vol. 2, ed. James Edwin Thorold Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1880).

\(^{82}\) The Monthly Review 77 (London, 1787).
For the Hudson’s Bay Company traders at work in Rupert’s Land, Wegg’s influence was more powerfully felt in the changes in the function and expected form of the reports they were expected to return – and for Hearne in particular, these pressures intensified as his own fortunes within the Company shifted after 1782. There is no question, however, about Wegg’s mark on the field notes that would eventually become Hearne’s published journal. As a consequence of the Company’s improving relationship with the Royal Society, explorers like Hearne were now more often equipped with and trained to use new navigational and surveying instruments, and expected to provide detailed accounts of how they had used the instruments to produce their reports, as Hearne’s prefatory remarks confirm. Likewise, the fact that the Company published Hearne’s journal at all in 1795 testifies to the vast changes in the Company’s sense of necessary privacy that had unfolded during the second half of the eighteenth century. Both in the moment of its composition and after the fact, then, Hearne’s journal bears the imprint of Wegg’s work as Governor – but Hearne also had his own reasons for striving hard to demonstrate that he shared the Hudson’s Bay Company’s values in general, and most of all this commitment to progress that Wegg had aligned with Enlightenment science. When Hearne set out on the first of the journeys north of Prince of Wales’s fort in 1769, he was – according to biographer Clarence MacKinnon – “young and fit, [with] a reputation for snowshoeing,” and though his journey north did not discover either a productive copper mine or anything, in his own words, “likely to prove of any material advantage to the Nation at large, or indeed to the Hudson’s Bay Company,” it was not difficult to reframe this failure as a nonetheless useful contribution to the Company’s knowledge of what limited resources existed north of Prince of Wales’s Fort, and to continue to recognize Hearne’s achievement in pressing farther over land than any other European in North America up to that point. By the time Hearne was revising his journals for publication

83 For more on this training, see Carey, “Inquiries, Heads, and Directions.” In their recent examination of the logbooks kept on board the Hudson’s Bay Company ships on their annual transatlantic voyages, Catherine Ward and Dennis Wheeler confirm this observation. Ward and Wheeler also identify “a high degree of homogeneity…in the logbooks in terms of presentation and methods of preparation, rendering them directly and helpfully comparable one with another,” and demonstrate this uniformity by detailing the common style and symbols used to record the date, the course, the direction, and the speed of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s vessels. Ward and Wheeler, “Hudson’s Bay Company Ship’s Logbooks,” 165.

84 C. S. Mackinnon, “Hearne, Samuel,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). In the summer of 1771, for instance, Hearne became the first European
in the 1790s, however, his star within the Company had fallen. After his successful work to establish an inland fort at Cumberland House (just off Cumberland Lake in Saskatchewan), Hearne had been reappointed Governor of Prince of Wales’s Fort – but in the six or so years that he spent there, his work had disappointed the London Committee on a number of fronts. To begin with, Hearne had failed to pursue either the northern trade or the white whale fishery upon which the Company increasingly hung its hopes for greater profit around Hudson Bay, insisting, much to the displeasure of the London Committee, that neither endeavour was productive enough to offset the costs of its undertaking. Much worse, he had also surrendered the fort to the French – and without protest. On 8 August 1782, three French ships holding 290 soldiers and 74 large guns landed on the high ground behind the fort, and Hearne, recognizing that he was “out-gunned, out-manned,” and charged with defending “a fort that had been built solely to defend itself from a sea approach,” surrendered to the Comte de La Pérouse’s forces without firing a shot. Although most of Hearne’s biographers now call this decision “prudent,” crediting Hearne with saving the lives of the 38 civilians with him at the Fort, the surrender further complicated his relationship with the Company – and even after he returned in 1783 to resume the British occupation of Prince of Wales’s Fort (under significantly more difficult circumstances), he remained, as MacKinnon observes, highly “sensitive to criticism” about his leadership through the 1770s, and wrote more than once that he had perhaps been “too Scrupulous” in his effort to become “a Respectable character in [the Company’s] service” during these years. Altogether, by the time that Hearne gave up command of the fort in 1787 and returned, health failing, to England to begin revising his journals for publication, his relationship with the Hudson’s Bay Company had been under strain for some time – and so in each of the many places that the journal seems to position first Hearne and then the Hudson’s Bay Company itself on the side of progress and the public good (rather than lassitude or obfuscation), these gestures are as likely to be informed by Hearne’s ambivalent effort to recover the

to reach the Arctic Ocean over land, and the first European to see and cross Great Slave Lake later that winter.
85 Ibid.
87 Hearne qtd. in Mackinnon, “Hearne.”
Company’s good favour at the end of his career as by the instructions he received at the moment of his journal’s composition. More recently, of course, Ian MacLaren’s invaluable archival research has demonstrated the myriad other ways that Hearne’s field notes were transformed (or altogether reimagined) on their way to publication\textsuperscript{88} — but because the primary text under investigation below is only Hearne’s published journal, and the subject of this investigation the changeable and notoriously difficult to measure weather, these two pressures on Hearne’s treatment of empirical information and commitment to the accuracy of his own report are especially worth bearing in mind. Even if it is impossible, in other words, to distinguish the effects of Wegg’s influence from Hearne’s own defense of his prudent attention to the Company’s best interests, it is clear that both forces did shape Hearne’s response to the bad weather that foils his forward progress, and its political function in the journal he ultimately submits for publication.

One consequence, of course, of the Company’s new commitment to transparency and the broad circulation of knowledge was that neither the fact that the Company’s policy had changed nor the influence those changes might exert on records like Hearne’s journal was a secret — and in fact, Hearne himself would invoke the evolution of the Company’s expectations between the composition and publication of his journal in his own defense. Writing back, for instance, to geographer Alexander Dalrymple’s complaints about the exaggerations, inaccuracies, and insufficient details provided in earlier versions of the journal, Hearne finds this policy change a convenient explanation for the gap between Dalrymple’s expectations and the experience the journal sets out: “When I was on that Journey,” he reminds readers, “and for several years after, I had little thought that any remarks made in [his journal] would ever attract the notice of the Public,” nor did he imagine that “it would ever come under the inspection of so ingenious and indefatigable a

\textsuperscript{88} In “Samuel Hearne’s Accounts of the Massacre Falls” (1991), for instance, MacLaren allows for the possibility that Hearne had originally omitted the details of his emotional response to the massacre of the Coppermine Inuit in order to better address the priorities of the likely audience to his field notes, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s London Committee. “No doubt,” MacLaren explains, “the Hudson’s Bay Company’s London governor, Samuel Wegg and his Committee would be interested in knowing that racial enmity might render difficult the establishment of trading relationship in the district (and might jeopardize the relations already well-established in the Bay),” but they “would not care to know Hearne’s emotional response to the events.” For this reason, MacLaren argues, Hearne “wrote knowingly that they would want to know only about the prospects of mining copper in the region, and of the navigability of the river and of the sea at its mouth.” MacLaren, “Accounts,” 33-34.
geographer as Mr. Dalrymple must be allowed to be” (xlix). Indeed, Dalrymple’s criticism of Hearne’s journal here represents another important material piece of evidence that Wegg’s relationship with the Royal Society directly informed the reception of Hearne’s journal. According to Williams, Dalrymple’s criticism only exists because Wegg gave Dalrymple “a free run of the Company’s documents and exploration” (169), and as early as 1789, Dalrymple’s *Memoir of a Map of the Lands about the North Pole* indicates that he had read Hearne’s draft journal of his second trip, as he takes special note of “the accident that befell [Hearne’s] Quadrant on the 11th of August, 1770.” For Hearne, then, the very fact that Dalrymple has been able to read Hearne’s draft merely illustrates how much the Hudson’s Bay Company has changed for the better, and the role that Hearne has played in that process – and so to capitalize on this generally flattering view of the Company’s new commitment to public knowledge implicit in Dalrymple’s critique, Hearne further elaborates on how his journal’s intended audience has evolved throughout the process of its production. In the 1770s, Hearne reminds his readers, “my ideas and ambition extended no farther than to give my employers such an account of my proceedings as might be satisfactory to them, and answer the purpose which they had in view” (xlix) – and though he is encouraged by the change in Company policy that would deliver his journal “not so much for the information of those who are critics in geography,” like Dalrymple, but also to a wide audience of “candid and indulgent readers,” Hearne insists that it is this composition history, or the influence of his employers’ “purpose,” that makes his journal an effective corrective to writers like Dobbs and Robson, and so guarantees the accuracy of this effort to bring “to their view…the face of a country…which was hitherto been entirely unknown to every European except myself” (xlix). By insisting upon the region around Hudson Bay as “entirely unknown,” that is, Hearne implicitly undermines the long efforts of the Company’s critics to present an alternative view of this country – and, most importantly, he makes his book representative of the new, more adventurous, more transparent “face” that Wegg’s changes have created for the Company itself. Unfortunately for Hearne, this approach

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89 Dalrymple qtd. in Glover, introduction to *A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay*, by Samuel Hearne, xxxin95. In his introduction to the 1958 edition of Hearne’s journal, Glover confirms this story, suggesting that the “generosity” with which Wegg was “prudely lending Hearne’s journals and maps to learned men…undoubtedly explains their lamented loss from the Company’s archives” (xxxvii-xxxviii).
would not entirely resolve the conflict with the cantankerous Dalrymple, who would continue to work to discredit Hearne’s “exaggeration” in subsequent years\(^90\) – but as a prefatory gesture and one of the frames Hearne offered for the rest of the work to follow, this rebuttal does help to further align the Hudson’s Bay Company as a whole with the pursuit of accurate empirical evidence and the broad circulation of any discoveries made, especially in the field of natural history, for the public good, and offers a clear signal to his readers that these, his “employers’…purposes,” are the standards against which his work should be evaluated.

In fact, Hearne probably did not need to work as hard as he does in this preface to position himself as a champion of the empirical observation and meticulous records that the Hudson’s Bay Company now promised – given that, aside from Dalrymple, many of Hearne’s contemporaries already identified him as an explorer with a special aptitude for taking measurements with fine instruments, and the instructions he received prior to his journey suggest that he was selected for the endeavour in large part because he could be trusted to return with accurate and detailed records. In the notes to his Introduction, for instance, Hearne cites a private letter “in the Company’s own words,” dated 25 May 1769, which explains that the Company “fixed on [Hearne] to conduct this journey…as an undertaking of this nature requires the attention of a person capable of taking observations for determining the longitude and latitude, and also distances, and the course of rivers and their depths” (lxiv-lxv, in notes). The Company’s letter flatters Hearne for his skills as a navigator, but in his Orders of 1769, Moses Norton clarifies precisely how Hearne is meant to apply his “attention” (lxiv). Instructing him to take notes on where the ‘Far Off Metal River’ is navigable or of “any utility” (lxviii), Moses also reminds Hearne that “you will have mathematical instruments with you,” and insists that Hearne “send [him], or the Chief for the time being, an account of what longitude and latitude you may be in at such and such periods” (lxvii). Hearne follows through – and so, especially in the first half of his text, he often represents himself engaged in the act of taking measurements, “observing the latitude,” “correcting [his] reckoning,” and “fill[ing] up [his] chart” (14; 24), and he frames his journal with a detailed account of the instructions.

\(^90\) Mackinnon, “Hearne.”
that request this particular use of his navigational instruments. For the most part, Hearne’s sense that this performance would resonate with his readers was well-tuned: in another private letter of 12 May 1773, the Company praises Hearne for his “journal, and the two charts you sent, [which] sufficiently convince[d] us of your very judicious remarks” (lxv, in notes). By suggesting that Hearne’s “remarks” appear more “judicious” alongside his “two charts,” the Company’s compliment thus illustrates the trend that Markley has observed towards “us[ing] tables, graphs, and charts to buttress…discursive descriptions of the natural world” (105) – but it also poses a challenge for Hearne. What would happen if those mathematical instruments failed him, or he could no longer consistently provide such “convinc[ing]” charts?

VI. Bad weather and broken instruments: “Now deprived of every means of estimating…with any degree of accuracy, particularly in thick weather”

In light of the Company’s improving relationship with the Royal Society and Hearne’s own interest in retaining (or recouping) the Company’s favour, the stakes of this question were high – and yet from the very moment that Hearne set out, on 23 February 1770, on his second expedition north of Prince of Wales’s Fort, the weather would confound nearly effort he made to meet the expectations set out for him in these Orders. Over the course of his narrative of this journey (and the next), his response to these “boisterous and changeable” conditions would evolve, softening his description in the process – but in the beginning, Hearne is profoundly frustrated with the obstacle that the weather presents to both the forward progress of his journey and his effort to produce the records that his employers so enthusiastically identified with progress of another kind. This irritation and anxiety is present everywhere in his writing about the weather, from the additional empirical jargon he introduces to describe (and counterbalance) the limitations it places on his exploration to his detailed commentary on the kinds of records it has prevented him from collecting – all, it seems, in an effort to demonstrate that he does share his employers’ “purpose,” even if he cannot realize this purpose under these conditions. Indeed, even when Hearne’s comments on the weather are more symbolic than practical, he begins by identifying it as an obstacle, or as a sort of static weakening his connection to the Company. While preparing to leave the Fort, for instance, Hearne
observes that “[t]he snow at this time was so deep on top of the ramparts, that few of the cannons were to be seen” (10) – but had the weather not so badly obscured his visibility, Hearne assures his reader that “the Governor would have saluted me at my departure, as before” (10). Here, Hearne’s character and secure relationship to the Hudson’s Bay Company seem to be readily recognized and applauded within Princes of Wales’s Fort, but as he moves beyond its ramparts, those signs and sounds of recognition are obfuscated by the deep and blowing snow – and though the scene feels more like a metaphor than an observation of a practical challenge, it also acts as brutal foreshadowing, as what follows is progressively worse.

Still early in this expedition, Hearne tries to salvage his methods (and mood) by treating the bad weather as opportunity to take more careful observations, reinforcing his commitment to the scientific project even as the conditions make its practice complicated. When the “remarkably boisterous and changeable” weather forces the company to “continue two or three nights in the same place” (10), for instance, he promises that he “embraced every favourable opportunity of observing the latitude of the place,” and presents this information with more attention to the quantity of his observations than usual – noting the “mean” of these latitudinal measurements, “which was 58° 46’ 30’’ North,” and that “the longitude by account was 5° 57’ West, from Prince of Wales’s Fort” (14). As the weather warms up, unfortunately, this strategy for managing the impassable weather seems increasingly unsustainable. To begin with, Hearne discovers that the snow in early summer was “so soft as to render walking in snow-shoes laborious,” and by 6 June 1770, “the thaws were so general, and the snows so much melted, that as our snow-shoes were attended with more trouble than service, we all contented to throw them away” (18). At this point, Hearne discovers that his instruments themselves are incompatible with year-round travel in Canada: travelling by foot is “much harder work than the winter carriage,” Hearne explains, in large part because his luggage “consisted of the following articles, viz. the quadrant and its stand, a trunk containing books, papers, etc., a land-compass…also a hatchet, knives, files, etc. beside several small articles, intended for presents to the natives” (19). This list invites the reader, like Hearne, to feel every one of the following articles he must heave on his back
– and to agree that “the awkwardness of my load, added to its great weight…and the excessive heat of the weather, rendered walking the most laborious task I had ever encountered” (19). Rather than distracting him from the increasingly uncomfortable condition, Hearne’s equipment now exacerbates the effects of the weather – and forces him to choose, it seems, between making forward progress on his journey and collecting the accurate empirical records the Company identified as its purpose.

This struggle reaches its crisis point in the final scene of his second journal – a devastating moment in which the wind knocks over Hearne’s quadrant, forcing him to return to the Factory (29), “after having been absent eight months and twenty-two days, on a fruitless, or at least an unsuccessful journey” (37). Even before he identifies the “great mortification” with which he observed the quadrant’s destruction, Hearne’s shame here is palpable – and it manifests, as above, in the language of the scientific project that he cannot complete. Once again, he introduces the scene with much more jargon than usual, noting that he set out to “ascertain the latitude by a meridian altitude” (29), and then he – somewhat defensively – underscores his exacting approach in the moments leading up to the quadrant’s destruction. Because it was “rather cloudy about noon, though exceeding fine weather,” he explains, “I let the quadrant stand, in order to obtain the latitude more exactly by two altitudes” (29). Nervously reminding his readers of his attention to detail, Hearne is trying to prove that he is still “a person capable of taking observations for determining the longitude and latitude,” still capable of using his “mathematical instruments” to send his Governor the reports he has requested (lxv) – whatever the weather might do to disrupt or delay this process. In this moment, however, Hearne must report that, “to my great mortification, while I was eating my dinner, a sudden gust of wind blew [the quadrant] down; and as the ground where it stood was very stoney [sic], the bubble, the sight-vane, and vernier, were entirely broke to pieces, which rendered the instrument useless” (29). In the passage immediately following this report, Hearne tries one more time to assert his commitment to fulfilling the instructions of his Governor and the London Committee, recording his disappointment in terms of the longitude and latitude of his last stop: as a “consequence of this misfortune,” he explains, he “resolved” to return to the Factory, “though we were then in the latitude of 62° 10’
North, and about 10° 40’ West longitude from Churchill River” (29). By the time he reports on the Company’s safe return to the Fort, however, his mood is markedly less positive, and he concludes by characterizing the journey as “fruitless” and “unsuccessful,” merely an “absence[ce] from the Fort” rather than an exploratory expedition (37). The weather, Hearne seems to admit here, has overwhelmed all his best intentions – and no matter how detailed his observations of the latitude and location of his quadrant’s destruction, the only thing he has discovered so far is that his navigational equipment and measuring abilities are significantly more limited than he (or the Company) had anticipated.

This crisis marks a turning point, however, both in Hearne’s description of the weather itself and in his characterization of his struggle with his environment that has organized the first half of his narrative. By the time that he sets out on his third and most successful expedition, Hearne seems significantly less invested in presenting his navigational equipment as a symbol of his responsibility to the Hudson’s Bay Company, and much less worried about the weather as an obstacle to his surveying efforts – but why he should suddenly be so much less anxious about his instruments’ (and his own) limitations is not immediately clear. That said, the shift in his thinking itself is impossible to miss, in part because Hearne experiences the same crisis twice: a second quadrant breaks, another casualty of the wind. This time, however, when Hearne must report on the quadrant’s destruction, he does not introduce the problem with any nervous reminders about his exacting work, nor does he allow the quadrant’s destruction to end his journey. Hearne also talks about his instruments less often in the entries preceding the second quadrant’s destruction on 6 October 1771, which diminishes the dramatic suspense surrounding the accident – and when he does comment on the crash, he does not insist upon his shock, “mortification,” or disappointment. Rather, his report on the second quadrant’s destruction is matter-of-fact: he emphasizes the “violence” with which the “wind blew,” such that it “overset several of the tents…in spite of all our endeavours,” and explains that although the quadrant “was in a strong wainscot case, two of the bubbles, the index, and several other parts were broken, which rendered it entirely useless” (134). Hearne does point out that his company has “endeavour[ed]” to prevent this kind of accident, but
he now gives more attention to the action that follows this windstorm – when, aware that the quadrant is no longer “worth carriage,” he “broke it to pieces, and gave the brass-work to the Indians, who cut it into small lumps, and made use of it instead of ball” (134). Faced with the same conflict between weather and instruments that so frustrated Hearne’s authority throughout the narrative of his first two journeys, Hearne here regains control of his third expedition by completing the quadrant’s destruction himself – thereby lightening the load of instruments that he has elsewhere found too heavy to carry through the Canadian spring, and discovering the immediately practical use value of the broken pieces through his indigenous guides. After this scene, Hearne also does not comment on the loss of his quadrant again until 14 March 1772, at which point he includes the quadrant among a series of instruments that he has had to abandon (180) – a new list of the weather’s casualties that echoes Hearne’s earlier description of his sixty-pound pack of equipment, and, in so doing, calls attention to how the weight of this obligation has changed.

Other scholars of Hearne’s work have noted this shift in his approach to writing about his environment, often characterizing it as a rhetorical move to reclaim some of the power he has lost during his first two journeys.91 This is a compelling interpretation, as the less anxious, less invested relationship with his instruments set out above did also require Hearne to develop a new vision of himself and his purpose in North America. By the time that he reaches Athapuscow [now Athabasca] Lake, for instance, and reveals that neither his watch nor his quadrant are working, Hearne must admit that he is “now deprived of every means of estimating the distances which we walked with any degree of accuracy, particularly in thick weather, when the Sun could not be seen” (180) – and very far away, in many senses, from his devoted performance as “a person capable of taking observations for determining longitude and latitude” (lxv). Even as the weather confounds his limited efforts to “estimate the distances which he walked,” however, Hearne persists in his daily observations, and continues to provide detailed accounts of that “thick” weather and its effects on the animals and people around him – and so, in Bruce Greenfield’s interpretation, Hearne thus maintains his connection to the

91 See the studies listed in note 75 above.
“embracing context of eighteenth-century science.” By rewriting his failure to discover navigable territory as a different kind of opportunity to “collect, categorize, and catalogue,” Greenfield argues, Hearne finds in the language of natural history a way to “portray the growth of his knowledge as a legitimate result of his effort and hardships and to substitute this knowledge for the copper and furs that his employers originally sought.”

What’s more, Greenfield concludes, Hearne’s effort to reassert “control” over both his environment and “his experiences with the Indians” by “render[ing] his observations…as scientific knowledge” ultimately represents “a form of power that, in the long run, was the European’s most effective weapon in the conquest of the continent.” This is why Hearne continues to “lament” the loss of his quadrant and watch, but does not describe his third expedition as “fruitless” (37): in Greenfield’s interpretation, framing his journal as a significant contribution to the natural history of the Bay has created a new sense of political purpose for Hearne, one unthreatened by the weather or complications with his navigational equipment – and perhaps even bolstered by this opportunity to describe the effects of these meteorological extremes at greater length.

There is plenty of evidence to support Greenfield’s analysis of the ways that Hearne repositions himself as a naturalist writing as much to other naturalists as to answer his employer’s purposes – but there are other aspects of Hearne’s description of his environment, and the weather in particular, that resist this reading, prompting us to consider what Hearne might gain from losing control over even the sphere of scientific authority that Greenfield suggests he finds in natural history. To begin with, though Hearne can adapt to the weather by reimagining his project as a contribution to natural history rather than the expansion of the Company’s trade, the weather continues to offer a serious challenge to his effort to establish the credibility of that natural history – particularly in what had become, since the Dobbs affair, a somewhat crowded field. Under these circumstances, Hearne reaches for the same strategy that served Sharpe so well a few decades earlier: emphasizing the prodigious force of the weather, dwelling – as Sharpe did by invoking Middleton – on the moments that it overwhelms his instruments, and elaborating his frustration with all the ways the cold itself makes it

impossible to collect more reliable evidence of just how cold it is, all to position his own work as more authoritative, if less empirically accurate, than the armchair natural histories circulated by the Company’s critics. Like Sharpe, in other words, Hearne finds the weather’s “boisterous and changeable” condition a politically productive quality because it presents such an obstacle to reliable reporting – and so turns the central weakness of his report, its incomplete or distorted information, into evidence both of its authenticity and of his own commitment to the progress of Enlightenment science.

VII. The politics of natural history, or “the unfounded assertions and unjust aspersions of…the only Authors that have written on Hudson’s Bay”

To insist, of course, that his own work offers a more authoritative record than any others on the market is also to make a bold statement about all those other naturalists – especially if Hearne’s main claim to superiority is the fact that he cannot deliver much accurate information about the regions he has explored. To prove this point, Hearne must either demonstrate that his fellows in natural history are circulating work that is worse than his incomplete or largely anecdotal records, or define “worse” through the dire consequences that come with accepting this other information – and so Hearne does both, oscillating between criticisms of other naturalists’ inexperience and speculation about how their poorly researched work might not just dilute the (still relatively small) sphere of knowledge about Rupert’s Land, but also dash British hopes of further trade across this territory. In the process, however, Hearne also implies that these ends might be mutually supportive, deftly positioning his own work as an example of all that the Hudson’s Bay Company has to offer to natural history: as scientific discourse might be improved by the Hudson’s Bay Company, so the Company could find its trade improved by the findings of the naturalists in its employ.93 In each case, Hearne suggest, authority can be best defined by the need the natural history serves – and in this light, the fact Hearne has been “necessitated to be a traveller” becomes a credit to his work (130), as it was the practical

93 At one point, for instance, Hearne spends almost half of one chapter disproving common naturalists’ misconceptions about beavers, taking great pains to establish the stakes of this misunderstanding – not just for the future explorers and fur traders who will rely on this information to enlarge their trade, but also for “those gentleman who have made natural history their chief study” (130).
matter of economic need that has driven him to acquire the direct experience with North American plants and animals he now invokes to correct his more comfortable peers.

“Regrettably” disadvantaged by their wealth, Hearne explains, his perceived competitors are “content to stay at home, …resting satisfied to collect such information for their own amusement, and the gratification of the public, as those who are necessitated to be travellers are able or willing to give them” (130) – but there are serious problems with reports produced primarily to flatter and inflate the fame of their editor. In the first place, Hearne declares, these fanciful accounts, masquerading as natural histories, are an “imposition” and “insult, on common understanding” (149) – and what’s worse, these “insults” are bad for business. While “Mr. Dobbs, in his Account of Hudson’s Bay, enumerates no less than eight different kinds of beavers,” Hearne’s experience among the Northern Indians had taught him differently, equipping him to explain where and why Dobbs has gone wrong. According to Hearne, the beavers of Hudson Bay “are all of one kind and species,” and Dobbs’s “distinctions arise wholly from the different seasons of the year in which they are killed, and the different uses to which their skins are applied” (154); this mistake “must be understood,” moreover, because these differences in the condition and quality of the beaver also represent “the sole reason that they vary so much in value” (154). Not by coincidence, then, Hearne’s chief complaint about armchair naturalists turns out to be an implicit statement of support for the Hudson’s Bay Company’s privileged position in North America: because the Company’s Adventurers have “been obliged to travel for ocular proofs of what they assert in their publications” (130), Hearne claims that they alone are qualified to tell the truth about Hudson Bay, and implies that misunderstandings about the habits and habitats of the Bay’s beavers compromise the “value” of future fur traders’ endeavours. By comparing his effort to these reports by naturalists sufficiently “remote from want to be obliged to travel for ocular proofs of what they assert in their publications” (130), Hearne thus positions the work he has done for the Hudson’s Bay Company as a uniquely useful contribution to the annals of natural history – and vice versa, as he demonstrates how a natural history like his could be leveraged to help the Company more efficiently extract profit from its chartered land.
By emphasizing the value of his work both for natural history and for trade, however, Hearne is doing more than aligning himself with his employers’ “purpose”: he is also making the politics of his debate with these other naturalists explicit. In the passages above, for example, Hearne is willing to name the sometimes mercenary objectives that have motivated his own work – but he does so in order to insist that the economic investments of the Company’s critics are just as real and relevant to this debate as the Company’s own stake in protecting its monopoly, and to force to the fore the many ways this wide range of interests has shaped (or limited) the available knowledge about Canada. From the first pages of his introduction, in fact, Hearne is surprisingly straightforward about the wider debate about the Company’s monopoly that he sees couched in complaints – from Dobbs’s to Dalrymple’s – about the qualifications and abilities that Company Adventurers bring to the field of natural history. In particular, he targets the “unfounded assertions and unjust aspersions of Dobbs, Ellis, Robson, [T.S.] Dragge, and the American Traveller [Alexander Cluny],” pointing out that these are “the only Authors that have written on Hudson’s Bay,” and insisting that they “have all, from motives of interest or revenge, taken a particular pleasure in arraigning the conduct of the Company, without having any real knowledge of their proceedings, or any experience in their service, on which to found their charges” (lvii). These authors’ “aspersions,” Hearne explains, have focused on the Company’s alleged “avers[ion] to making discoveries …and being content with the profits of their small capital” (lvii). By 1795, of course, these had become familiar complaints, and so Hearne begins by just briefly reminding his readers of the “various attempts made by [Hudson’s Bay Company Captains] Bean, Christopher, Johnson, and Duncan [as] proofs that the present members are as desirous of making discoveries, as they are of extending their trade” (lvii). Immediately following this nod to the rhetoric of “discovery” and “increasing…trade” that turns up so often in criticisms of the Hudson’s Bay Company, however, Hearne turns his attention to these critics’ preoccupation with the details of the Bay’s natural history – beginning with Robson’s inaccurate description of the “climate and soil immediately around the Factories” (lviii). To really prove that “Most of these Writers…advance such notorious absurdities, that none except those who are already prejudiced against the Company can give them credit” (lviii), Hearne suggests, he must first disprove the details of their
observations on the environmental conditions in the territory they describe – and, especially in Robson’s case, thereby illustrate that these natural histories have been “written with prejudice, and dictated by a spirit of revenge” (lviii).

To this end, Hearne does proceed to treat the Company’s most prolific critics as if they are familiar to him first and foremost as naturalists94 – but even in these moments, Hearne is not using the language of natural history to obscure or distract his readers from their claims against the Hudson’s Bay Company. Instead, Hearne explicitly recasts the political debate of the 1740s and forward as a dispute among naturalists – exposing both how the language of natural history has already been used to disguise the political and mercenary intentions of the Company’s critics, and the political implications of the competing scientific methodologies that are his literal subject. Where Hearne lampoons Dobbs for compiling natural histories from the “marvellous” tales of “romancing travellers” (149), for instance, he is referring to the climatological observations Dobbs collected to launch his campaign against the Company’s monopoly rights95 – but the reference itself suggests Hearne believes that if he can expose Dobbs as an imprecise natural historian, too “remote from want to be obliged to travel for ocular proofs of what they assert in their publications” (130), he can also undermine Dobbs’s climatological argument against the Company’s tidewater trading policy. More importantly, Hearne also aims to make it clear that Dobbs himself was incapable of directing an expedition to more productively settle the Company’s inland territory – and so, by reconstructing Dobbs’s attack on the Company as a conversation among naturalists, Hearne also asks his readers to recognize just how long the Company’s success or failure at maintaining its monopoly has hinged on its ability to prove that the weather in Canada is bad, too severe to permit settlement, and too changeable to measure. From this perspective, Hearne’s long

94 Even in his footnotes to his introduction, he points out that “the Continent of America is much wider than many people imagine, particularly Robson” (lxix), and, as above, Hearne elsewhere takes issue with “Mr. Dobbs” because his Account of Hudson Bay incorrectly “enumerates no less than eight different kinds of beaver” (154).

95 In this case, the “marvellous” tales Hearne mentions could refer to those long passages on the risks of establishing forts “exposed to all the Winds and Storms that happen” that Dobbs borrows from Joseph Lefranc, a Méetis coureur de bois (or, as Hearne might have it, a “romancing traveller”), or to the reproduction of Dobbs’s stories in editions like Campbell’s Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels (1744).
digression on the false reports by “Travellers who…seem less acquainted” with the habits and habitats of the North American beaver makes more sense, as it also starts to look like a synecdoche for the other consequences of these misrepresentations of North America’s natural history. In the same way that any “[p]erson who attempt[s] to take beavers in Winter should be thoroughly acquainted with their manner of life, otherwise they will have endless trouble to effect their purpose, and probably without success” (152), Hearne explains, these less “thorough” accounts of the “manner of life” in North America have been used to justify exploration and settlement efforts to “endless trouble, and probably without success” (152). By demonstrating that the debate about the Company’s monopoly has always hinged on these competing descriptions of Canada’s climate and geography, Hearne’s journal thus makes an important intervention in the historiography of the ‘Dobbs crisis’ – first exposing the political and economic claims that have motivated the many versions of the climate and geography around Hudson Bay that appeared earlier in the eighteenth century, and then illustrating the importance of these natural histories to the progress of the Company’s fur trade in Rupert’s Land.

For the contemporary scholar of eighteenth-century literature of exploration and discovery, Hearne’s technique here also offers an intriguing challenge to what has become, after Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, a conventional view of the naturalists’ role in imperial enterprise. In this foundational text for postcolonial studies of travel writing, Pratt has said much about the role of the scientific travel writer in narrating the “anti-conquest,” and her analysis of the “conspicuous innocence of the naturalist” offers one very likely explanation of how Hearne’s writing might have served his employers’ “purpose.”96 For the naturalist, Pratt explains, “[t]he activity of describing geography and identifying flora and fauna structures an asocial narrative in which the human presence…is absolutely minimal” – and this “asocial” narrative, which elides both “the anecdotal literature of survival” and the “sensationalist discourse of monstrosities and marvels,” can “underwrite colonial appropriation, even as it rejects the rhetoric, and probably the practice, of conquest and subjugation.” Some of Pratt’s remarks seem especially appropriate to Hearne’s project: throughout the story of his third expedition,

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96 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 50-56.
for instance, Hearne does try to distance his work as a naturalist from both his earlier “anecdote[s]...of survival” and the “sensationalist discourse of monstrosities and marvels” that take up so much space in existing natural histories of Hudson Bay. However, Hearne’s journal is not especially invested in demonstrating the “conspicuous innocence of the naturalist.” Far from attempting to obscure the Company’s intentions by obscuring his own presence in early Canada, in fact, Hearne works hard to foreground his role, amplifying his experience of bad weather in particular and positing his incomplete records, truncated by physical obstacles, as evidence of the authority of his own experience. Indeed, Hearne insists, no natural history is innocent – but if his account, which refuses to deny either the political interests behind his descriptions of good or bad weather or the fact that the weather is (for the most part) quite awful, at least makes the material conditions of its production explicit, this alone makes him a more credible witness than most. As a test of Pratt’s thesis, then, not unlike Campbell’s criticism of Sharpe and Middleton earlier in the century, Hearne’s work further highlights some of the scepticism with which savvy eighteenth-century readers might have been likely to view these “rhetorical strategies of innocence” where they appeared in travel writing – and where he turns his own natural history into an opportunity to rebut these criticisms of the Company’s monopoly, his journal also presents a rare window into the eighteenth-century reading and writing strategies that might have evolved to navigate these transparent (and seemingly inevitable) politics of natural history.

Having established the economic interests motivating the other natural histories of Hudson Bay, for instance, Hearne is still willing to meet these other naturalists on their own terms – countering geographical, meteorological, and broad anthropological descriptions with more of the same, but always insisting that his revisions to the facts up for debate will have concrete and political consequences. To this end, in the story of his third and most successful expedition, Hearne devotes a great deal of effort to disproving “marvellous” tales of the regions around Hudson Bay, rounding out his counter-account with two long Appendixes on “The Landscape and Its People” and “the Flora and Fauna.” Like most of those “marvellous” tales produced during and after the

97 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 56.
Parliamentary Inquiry on the Company’s monopoly, many of Hearne’s anecdotes about the social habits and migration patterns of North American animals emphasize the weather as a feature of note— but unlike these other naturalists, Hearne goes into great detail about why and how his readers should interpret this information about the weather patterns and seasonal change in order to improve the Company’s future trade. On 12 April 1772, for instance, Hearne takes note of “several swans flying to the Northward,” because “they were the first birds of passage we had seen that Spring, except a few snow-birds, which always precede the migrating birds, and consequently are with much propriety called the harbingers of Spring” (183-184). Knowing that a few species of bird can act as barometers for other seasonal changes is valuable, Hearne argues, because this information can help hunters position themselves to take advantage of those predictable patterns of migration: “The swans,” he continues, “also precede all species of water-fowl, and migrate so early in the season, that they do not find open water but at the falls of rivers, where they are readily met, and sometimes shot, in considerable numbers” (184).

Hearne’s third journal is thick with this kind of information about weather patterns and animal migration, all presented to the same purpose: to improve the efficiency of the Company’s hunting practices, and to demonstrate that trade in Canada need only come with “endless trouble, and without success” when it is informed by the misrepresentations that the Company’s critics have circulated from their armchairs (152). However, this also seems to be an interesting counterpoint to Campbell’s accusation that, in 1744, the Company had deliberately “represent[ed] the Coasts of Hudson’s Bay, as the most forlorn and dreadful Part of the Universe,” overstating the severity of its weather to discourage

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98 This deepening interest in the effects of the weather and seasonal change on animal behaviour marks one of the most important changes in Hearne’s attitude towards the weather in the journal of his third expedition. Rather than emphasizing the weather’s unsettling effects on his spirit or his company’s forward progress, Hearne’s third journal foregrounds the weather’s influence on animal migration patterns, and frames these observations as instructions to help future Company agents find food and trap animals at the moment when their fur will be most valuable. In his entry for 19-25 August 1771, for instance, Hearne declares that “[t]he scarcity or abundance of these animals [deer] in different places is caused, in a great measure, by the winds which prevail for some time before; for the deer are supposed by the native to walk in the direction from which the wind blows, expect when they migrate from East to West, or from West to East” (127). To make very clear why the deer’s response to the winds should be relevant to the Company’s practice, he surrounds this description with two different arguments for the season in which it is best to take deerskins: he opens the paragraph by explaining that, “at this time of year [August], their pelts are in good season, and the hair of a proper length for clothing” (127) – and then again, only a few lines later, he concludes by reminding his reader that “[i]t requires the primary part of the skins of from eight to ten deer to make a complete suit of warm clothing for a grown person in the Winter; all of which should, if possible, be killed in the month of August, or early in September” (127).
competitors in search of a Northwest Passage or more profitable inland development (291). By 1795, Hearne makes no effort to disguise the severity of the weather – but he does suggest that the Company’s critics have, by circulating incomplete or inaccurate information about the climate and geography of the Bay for all the fifty intervening years, doomed those travellers who rely on their accounts to “endless trouble” (152). Without denying the implications of Campbell’s accusation, then, Hearne exposes the version of the weather in Canada put forward by the Company’s critics – milder inland, “some Leagues from the Bay” (Campbell 292) – as no less fanciful than their view of the Company’s own weather reports, and so leaves his readers to wonder about both the methodologies and the political interests of these competing natural histories of Rupert’s Land.

In the end, however, Hearne insists that he is a superior naturalist not because he has returned a more accurate or more complete account of regions previously unknown, but because he has failed in this effort. He has, as Greenfield suggests, reimagined what was originally a journey to find copper and fur as a contribution to the wider sphere of knowledge about Rupert’s Land – but until he must explain how the weather has confounded his attempt to do more than record the moments at which his instruments finally fail to function, Hearne argues further, there was nothing to guarantee that his report was any more true than these others “marvellous” tales of agricultural potential and mild weather. Both as evidence of the great hardship he has experienced in pursuit of this knowledge, then, and as an explanation for the limited and repetitive descriptions of this “freezing and frightful” region, Hearne’s detailed accounts of his first quadrant, shattered by the wind (29), his struggle with his pack of equipment, too heavy to carry through the summer thaw (18-19), and his second quadrant, taken apart and distributed among his Chipewyan guides (134), all help to set the terms of reasonable debate about the conditions in Canada well beyond the reach of the armchair naturalists who had become the Company’s loudest critics – and so all make important contributions to the Company’s case for its superior knowledge of and exclusive right of trade in Rupert’s Land. In this light, however, Hearne’s stories about the weather also bear a striking similarity to Middleton’s 1742 statement to the Royal Society. In “The Effects of [the]
Cold,” Middleton, too, claimed that the weather in Canada was so bad that his navigational instruments wandered or simply broke, offering both charts of inconsistent longitudinal data and dramatic descriptions of the effects of wind chill to support this argument. In the context of a dispute that focused as much on the Company’s reticence as on the operations that it concealed, as above, Sharpe’s adaptation of Middleton’s report therefore helped to explain why the Hudson’s Bay Company had been so unwilling (or unable) to report on the utility of this land to this point, and made a convincing case for the superior authority of the Adventurer’s experience compared to the large-scale biogeographical comparisons between Canada and other regions at similar latitudes becoming popular among the Company’s critics. When so many of these strategies show up in Hearne’s journal fifty years later, however, the strong echo of Sharpe’s work both channels this prior conflict and raises questions about these enduring challenges to the Company’s claim to Rupert’s Land. Both for Sharpe (via Middleton) and for Hearne, emphasizing the weather as the primary obstacle to the successful use of these instruments helps to challenge the accuracy and method of all alternative natural histories of the Bay, and so to attest to the superior authority of the Hudson’s Bay Company records (to the extent that any records can be trusted at all). Reappearing at a moment when the Company was increasingly invested in its new reputation as a champion of Enlightenment science and Hearne’s own reputation was insecure, then, his journal’s many stories about the disasters that befall his navigational instruments are not at all “mortifying,” “fruitless” or “unsuccessful” (37). By confirming that the weather really does pose a serious obstacle to more materially productive navigation and reporting, Hearne’s stories recall one of the Company’s most persuasive arguments for both its policy of close secrecy and its limited trade – and so even when he abandons this narrative of frustration for the language of natural history, both this frame and his persistent focus on failure make it clear that Hearne’s treatment of the weather throughout his journal has been informed by his employers’ equally persistent “purpose.”
VIII. Success in failure, and another change in the weather

The revelation that the Company’s “purpose” has evolved so little in the fifty years since the Dobbs affair might be somewhat surprising, given all of the other ways that its approach to public relations and empirical science changed over the same period of time. As it turns out, however, Hearne would have good reason to borrow so much of Sharpe’s method for rebuffing the Company’s critics, as the dispute during which his journal ultimately appeared came with its own surprising echoes of Dobbs’s Charter challenge.

In 1790, Edward Umfreville published *The Present State of Hudson’s Bay*, arguing that the Company had continued to conceal information about the Northwest Passage and insisting that the climate and soil around Saskatchewan River were much more available for agricultural development than the Company’s current settlements around the coasts of Hudson Bay99 – all charges that Dobbs had introduced in the 1740s. The terms of anxious writing about the weather in Rupert’s Land, in other words, had remained surprisingly consistent throughout this period of otherwise significant change for the Company – and so Hearne’s journal, when it was published in 1795, certainly could have been meant to marshal both of the most effective counterpoints to these complaints of the past and present. At the very least, the return of these familiar complaints – especially in light of the wider shift in the Company’s relationship to the Royal Society – does help to explain why Hearne’s own approach to writing about the weather changes so much over the course of his journal. In his introductory marks, for instance, where Hearne cites the instructions to “use the mathematical instruments” that the Company has provided him to produce “convinc[ing] charts” (lxv), Hearne seems to begrudgingly acknowledge the extent to which Dobbs has already forced open the Company’s closely held records of the climate and geography surrounding the Bay – and yet also to insist that things are different now, such that it’s Umfreville, not the Company, that is out of step with the new scientific authority. From this perspective, likewise, Hearne’s abrupt transition between the “mortifying” story of his broken quadrant and his long digressions on animal habits and habitats look much more like a conscious and comprehensive counterpoint to these accusations of obfuscation than a flaw in his form – not least because he manages, on

both fronts, to combine and capitalize on the changes to the Company’s policies that have most improved the Company’s reputation for transparency, yet also to reassert the exclusive authority of the Company over the most accurate available information about the conditions in Rupert’s Land. Both to end this long debate, then, and to affirm his own commitment to the Company’s increasing enthusiasm for Enlightenment science, Hearne’s journal seems meant to tell an old story – Sharpe’s story, about “perhaps the most inhospitable place” on earth – in a new and more convincing way.

In this view, furthermore, Hearne’s records of his own failures continue to represent his most successful contribution to the Company’s case against its critics. Throughout the first half of his journal, for instance, and especially where Hearne describes his frustration with the obstacles that the weather offers to his careful observation and precise navigation, he casts himself as a good Adventurer foiled by the “boisterous and changeable” conditions of the air – thus aligning himself with the Company’s new commitment to discovery, transparency, and progress, and failing, deliberately and dramatically, in order to demonstrate just how true (if not accurate) the record to follow will be. These performances both acknowledge the role of the Royal Society in the superior training of the Company’s Adventurers and demonstrate Hearne’s effort to measure and communicate the severity of the weather in terms that will be recognized as legitimate and legible by his audience. In fact, Hearne even frames these offerings with a lesson from the Company’s London Committee in how to read them – motivated, perhaps, by critics like Campbell, who had asserted that the Company’s reports obfuscate in order to discourage further exploration (292). “In the Company’s own words,” Hearne reminds his (now more general) audience, his charts are meant to supplement his prose descriptions of the weather, and to prove those discursive observations more “judicious” (lxv). Looking back to Middleton’s similar remarks of 1742, however, Hearne’s repeated emphasis on the reliability of his report therefore marks an important change in the Company’s defense against its critics: if Hearne’s journal, both for his own purposes and for his employer, is meant to demonstrate and clarify the terms of the Company’s increasingly open communications policy, Hearne must move away from the unreliable

100 Williams, “Critics,” 170; Golinski, British Weather, 110; Markley, “‘Casualties and Disasters,’” 105.
data and “prodigious” tales that characterized Middleton’s earlier report. This is the other reason Hearne’s turn towards natural history is so important – not just because, as Greenfield suggests, it lets him save face as a discoverer of scientific knowledge rather than territory (207), but also because Hearne’s confrontation with the Company’s critics over the details of the Bay’s climate and geography demonstrates how the Company secured its version of the weather in Canada as the most accurate, the most reliable, and the least subject to further interrogation. To correct the versions of the Bay’s natural history that have been propagated by the Company’s critics, Hearne must reverse Campbell’s accusations about the Company’s “prodigious” accounts of the cold and recast Dobbs and his allies as lazy naturalists, unwilling to travel for ocular proof of the stories they compile and too inexperienced to distinguish the “marvellous” tales of “romancing travellers” from the truth (149). In Hearne’s hands, it’s the compilations of these Company critics that have been responsible for the “marvellous” misrepresentations of the conditions in Canada – stories that, if believed, will lead future explorers into “endless trouble to effect their purpose, and probably without success” (152). To achieve this reversal, Hearne thus presents his own frustrated efforts to produce an empirically accurate report on his travels as evidence of the authority of the observations he does provide, and so suggests that the most “marvellous,” “prodigious,” or “romantic” thing about the travel narratives produced by the Company’s critics might be the mild and hospitable backdrop to their natural histories; when Hearne’s work is done, in other words, the absence of detail about the difficulties of travel – and bad weather in particular – will be its own “ocular proof” of a fictional tale.

Both in Hearne’s journal and throughout the Company’s long campaign to secure its claim to Rupert’s Land against frequent contests and criticism, then, detailed descriptions of “boisterous and changeable” weather pull in two directions at once, bolstering the Company’s commitment to transparency while revealing little to answer questions about what the weather is really like around the Bay, inland, or relative to other habitable parts of the globe. Taken together, both Hearne’s *A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort* and “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” help to establish the weather as a key term not just in writing about early Canada, but also about the Company’s right to maintain its
monopoly – and so help to inaugurate a new era of pro-imperial politics of the weather. Looking back at the early eighteenth-century anxieties that characterized more conservative treatments of the weather as a limit on what human will could govern, this new approach to writing about colonial weather neither attempts to deny the weather’s overwhelming force nor insists that it could be governed; rather, these texts insist that the weather in the colonies is just as bad as readers at home could possibly imagine, and so shifts the qualities of the qualified observer away from impenetrability and towards an openness to change as a hallmark of the British imperial agent’s authority. In fact, this is one of the most important points of difference between “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” and Hearne’s journal: unlike the Company’s first move to break the silence surrounding its work in Rupert’s Land, the latter does not just insist that Canada is the “most inhospitable place” on earth (1), throwing out any criticisms of the Company’s policies that do not address the weather in the same way. Instead, Hearne’s journal acknowledges the terms in which the Company’s critics had already considered the weather – and, by reflecting and responding to the forms of the weather report that had taken hold since the case against the Company opened in 1741, goes on to prove that the weather in Canada is just as bad as the Company had always promised. From the first pages of his journal, Hearne encourages his readers’ faith in the use of mathematical instruments and charts to prove his prose remarks “judicious” (lxv), but he also makes those instruments the first causalities of the weather to demonstrate that that particular kind of surveying exercise is unsustainable under such “boisterous and changeable” conditions – until, in the end, his bare records both prove that “The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” was right about the weather, and establish Hearne’s apparently unique ability to find in these conditions something nonetheless profitable to the Company.

Hearne’s treatment of the alternative natural histories produced the Company’s critics is equally revolutionary. Without exposing the Company’s own stake in discouraging the kind of exploration or experience that might have helped its critics produce more accurate reports, Hearne challenges the methodology of any natural histories of the Bay that do not agree with his own, grounding his superior authority as a naturalist in his frustrated efforts to exercise the training he has gained – not by coincidence – in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company. All of this work recalls and elaborates the arguments that “The


Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company” had opened in the 1740s, but updates the approach to writing about weather in particular both to showcase the best of the Company’s new communications policy, and to direct the expectations of the now much wider audience to the Company’s affairs. The weather in Canada, both for Hearne and the Company as a whole, thus remained an obstacle worth keeping in the public eye for more than fifty years – and as the aims of the British Empire in North America would continue to evolve over the same period of time, the view of the “boisterous and changeable” conditions established by this long struggle for the Company’s monopoly would continue to exert a powerful influence on the terms of debate about British imperial authority and the form of the weather reports sent home in letters both real and imagined.
Chapter 3

“Set the winter…at defiance”: Emily Montague’s weather reports and political sensibility

When *The History of Emily Montague* was published in April 1769, reviews were divided. Many were enthusiastic about the book’s “exotic” setting “on the banks of the river St. Lawrence, in Canada,” but others complained that the novel’s “frost pieces” merely “decorate a short story with nothing extraordinary in it” – and some, like the *Monthly Review*, concluded that the “remoteness of the scene of action…does not affect the characters, which are those of English officers and English ladies,” at all. Conventional in plot and character, Frances Brooke’s epistolary romance has earned some of these objections, but the last is surprising. In the exuberant weather reports that open one fifth of the novel’s 228 letters, Brooke’s characters insist that they are deeply affected by Canada’s “frost pieces” – though not, they admit, in the way their correspondents in England have anticipated. For those “who have heard no more of a Canadian winter than what regards the intenseness of its cold” (147), these meteorological extremes are rumoured to put everything from romance to imperial ambitions on ice, chilling the hearts and minds of British travellers as surely as the cold seems to have stunted the French colonists’ productivity. Where Brooke’s travellers deliver their own weather reports, however, they consistently challenge these expectations. Capering between sleigh rides and “jaunts…by the falls of Montmorenci,” for instance, Brooke’s chief coquette explains that the winter is not at all “joyless,” but rather an occasion for “cheerfulness and festivity” (147-148). By the novel’s end, the

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2Brooke, *Emily Montague*, 148. Although some of Brooke’s recent critics prefer to cite the letter – for instance, “Letter 2” – rather than the page number, Mary Jane Edwards has identified some misnumbering that makes these references somewhat difficult to follow. In the first edition, she points out, there are two different letters numbered 112, two numbered 113, two numbered 149, and two numbered 221 – and some contemporary editions of Brooke’s novel have preserved these inconsistencies, including the 1931 Canadian edition published by Ottawa’s Graphic Press, and Malcolm Ross’s 1961 edition, published for McClelland and Stewart. To avoid this confusion, all in-text citations refer to the page numbers in Edwards’s 1985 edition, published for the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts. Edwards has chosen Dodsley’s 1769 edition for her copy-text (explaining that “this is the only edition of the novel printed directly from a manuscript,” and later emended by Brooke herself). Laura Moss’s more recent (2001) Canadian Critical Edition is also based on Edwards’s work.
associations that fuelled the English correspondents’ worst fears about Canada’s weather have been entirely reversed: the cold is revealed to be a source of pleasure, and the rumoured threat of its overwhelming influence poses no danger at all to English characters. What’s more, Brooke has leveraged this anxiety about the “intenseness” of Canada’s cold to expose a more pressing threat to the British imperial project in North America. By insisting upon the cold as an energizing – rather than enervating – force, Brooke suggests that the “warmth and vivacity” of the French Catholic colonists living in Canada must be stilted by something else. As pervasive as the cold weather but more persuasive, these local religious and cultural influences represent, for Brooke, an environmental force overwhelming enough to justify more aggressive intervention to release Britain’s new subjects from its hold.

Where the *Monthly Review* complains that Brooke’s “English officers” are “not affect[ed]” by the novel’s “scene of action,” then, the reviewer is right to point out that the cold does not change her characters for the worse – but this possibility was never Brooke’s chief concern. In the five years that had passed between the ratification of the Treaty of Paris and *Emily Montague*’s publication, public sphere debate about Canada’s value to the British Empire had become focused on questions of influence and affection, and from the novel’s frontispiece forward, Brooke positions *Emily Montague* as her contribution to this conversation.³ Both by dedicating the novel to “His Excellency, Guy Carleton” and by directly addressing the “political writers in England, who never speak of Canada without the epithet of barren” (63), Brooke demonstrates that she is familiar with the dispute regarding the colony’s difficult transition from military occupation to peaceful civil government, and with the frustrated effort to displace French Catholic loyalties among the new subjects⁴ – but it is the book’s “frost pieces” that illustrate her solution to these problems. Reframing the weather as a force by which her English


⁴ For more on *Emily Montague* as a response to the Seven Years War, see Edwards, “Frances Brooke’s Politics and The History of Emily Montague”; Perkins, “Imagining Eighteenth-Century Quebec”; and Moss, “Colonialism and Postcolonialism.” For more on Brooke’s periodical commentary on the Seven Years War, see Backscheider, introduction to *The Excursion*, xvi-xvii.
characters can choose to be governed (and so find “joy”), Brooke both makes her case for the relatively greater risk posed by environmental obstacles other than the cold, and stakes a claim for the British right to influence and assimilate a population that has not chosen its own leaders.

Where Brooke positions her characters’ weather reports as corrections to English misapprehensions about Canada’s “joyless” seasons and “barren” prospects, furthermore, she enters a wider conversation about the many obstacles to cultivating colonial affections at a distance. At the moment of Emily Montague’s publication, Britain had become engaged in an effort to win the hearts and minds of an increasingly diverse community of colonial subjects, all the while its tactical relationships with the other imperial powers of Europe – France, Germany, and Spain – remained insecure and unpredictable. In this context, Canada offered an important test case for Britain’s attitude towards both its new colonial subjects and the recently defeated France, and the 1763 Treaty of Paris presented an opportunity to reframe the Seven Years War as a fight for expanding trade, rather than for military dominance. 5 This was an important turning point. Like the fall of Quebec, which had marked the beginning of Britain’s rise as the world’s foremost imperial power, the negotiations preceding the Treaty of Paris represented a chance to begin thinking about the spoils and subjects of empire in a new way: not just as the arenas of future battles, but rather as future markets, a source of both raw materials and prospective buyers for British goods. All of a sudden, the tactical significance of Britain’s new territory seemed to turn on the affections and loyalties of the people who lived there – and Brooke’s epistolary romance, its emotional action necessarily structured by distance and contact with difference, was well positioned to respond to the change.

Both as a practical challenge to frequent correspondence, then, and as a productive metonym for the problems with coercion and liberty created by – in Linda Colley’s phrase – this “accident of successful war,” the weather in Brooke’s novel makes a

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5 Binhammer, “The Failure of Trade’s Empire,” 296.
political argument. Because the circulation of the novel’s letters and the moods of her protagonists depend together on the clear passage of the St. Lawrence, detailed reports on these changing conditions help Brooke to identify emotional and environmental threats as related obstacles to cultivating affection among far-flung colonial subjects. Never more than in a novel of transatlantic letters, Brooke points out, is the weather’s “changeable” nature a cause of concern for the progress of romance. Sometimes, of course, the weather’s changeability can be productive: observing the breakup of the ice, one of her correspondents realizes that readers at home “can have no idea of the universal transport at the sight [of]…A ship from England,” and goes on to discover a host of creative possibilities in the spring thaw (253). More often, though, Brooke positions the weather’s changeability as a possible threat to Canada’s market potential: the cold threatens to “congeal” the hearts that the English colonists had hoped to find open and available to persuasion, and so calls to mind of all those other local forces competing for the new subjects’ loyalty.

Thus exposing the limits of metropolitan influence over the spokes of empire, the weather in Brooke’s novel is at once an environmental condition that shapes her characters’ everyday experience in Canada, and a metaphor for a range of local influences that shape the values, economic priorities, and surprisingly stubborn political affections of the new colony’s subjects. However, even as Brooke’s frequent “frost pieces” remind readers of all of these challenges to governing a many-weathered empire, they also present her with an opportunity to redefine this environmental threat to the imperial project in more particular and limited terms. Having raised the stakes of the problem that these environmental forces pose to the coherence of the British Empire, Brooke turns away

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7 Comparing the frequency of references to the weather in Emily Montague to Brooke’s writing about the weather elsewhere helps to confirm this point. In The History of Julia Mandeville (1763), Brooke mentions the ‘cold’ as a quality of a character’s demeanour (or, in the second half of the novel, as a sensation associated with fear and death) approximately nine times, but only once in reference to the weather. Similarly, in The Excursion (1777), Brooke mentions the word “cold” seven times, but always to describe a sentiment, rather than a temperature or material condition; the only exception is her quotation from Hannah More’s “The Bleeding Rock; or, The Metamorphoses of the Nymph into Stone,” and even then, “Cold as the snows of Rhodope descend” is a metaphor for the “heart where vanity presides” (79). Frances Brooke, The History of Julia Mandeville (London, 1763); Frances Brooke, The Excursion, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Hope D. Cotton (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 79.
from the matter of the material cold to focus on other influences that operate in the same way: the stunted agricultural ambition that has left the land uncultivated (62-63), and the “cold…formal[ity]” stifling the “passion” of otherwise attractive French Catholic women (305; 218). Framing the reports that compare these two types of cold as corrections to English rumours about Canada’s “joyless” winter, Brooke reimagines the material cold as a positive force, rather than a threat – and so by the time her characters return to England, only coldness of character remains a significant barrier to peace and prosperity. With every “frost piece” that celebrates the warmth of character required to “set the winter…at defiance,” that is, Brooke models the affective position she recommends to British readers on both sides of the Atlantic: an optimistic belief that the land and spirit can be rejuvenated by new governance, and a willingness to be moved by new cultural influences, just as Brooke’s “English ladies” find their creative capacities fired by the “intenseness” of the winter. Far from being merely “decorat[ive],” Brooke’s detailed descriptions of the weather treat both the local influences she wishes to counter and the attitude towards new influence she wishes to cultivate – striking a balance, in the process, between liberty and coercion, and reinforcing a wider argument for more assertive colonial governance everywhere that her correspondents realize the cold can be made pleasant if only one is willing to enjoy its “changeable” force.

**I. Influence and obligation: The imperial family in *Emily Montague***

To make these claims about the sensibility that will “set the winter of Canada at defiance” (147), the figure that Brooke imagines to unite the empire – the imperial family – is as important as the meteorological metaphor that she uses to figure its divisions. Formally, Brooke’s epistolary novel is organized by the distance and economic pressure that the growth of empire has placed between the family members who comprise its major authors. As a literal description of the parents, children, and siblings scattered across the world of the novel, then, the “imperial family” helps Brooke to more precisely define the obstacles to cohering a meteorologically diverse empire, and to more clearly identify the qualities that draw that family together, despite the divisions created by distance or cultural difference. To this end, the imperial family and the many-weathered
empire are mutually reinforcing figures: reading *Emily Montague* as a story about the obstacles and opportunities that befall the family divided by empire, the threat that the weather poses to the family’s future happiness is more obvious – and Brooke’s lovers’ persistent anxiety about “exile” in barren Canada certainly raises the stakes of their return to England’s “smiling” spring. As a brief introduction to the actions and arguments of *Emily Montague*, furthermore, tracing the movements of the novel’s imperial family also reveals a constellation of Brooke’s other interpenetrating concerns: with the economic forces that make travel to North America necessary; with the affective and domestic commitments that justify the flow of money back to England; with the limits and responsibilities of imperial administration; and with the rhetoric of liberty – or freedom of choice – in colonies that have neither chosen nor embraced British governance. Brooke has lifted many of these subjects from periodical debate about the appropriate administration of the North American colonies, but her special interest in the limits and sources of appropriate influence is clear, and these questions are never far removed from her treatment of the filial relationships that drive the novel’s major action.

As early as the novel’s first letter, for instance, we learn that Colonel Edward Rivers has come to Canada to settle land he has earned by military service – and though one “may perhaps call my project romantic,” he assures readers that emigration has been necessary because his “little estate…is scarce sufficient to support my mother and sister in the manner to which they have been accustom’d” (3). In other words, Rivers has emigrated

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*Although, as historian Philip Lawson explains, the “reading public [was] well informed about Canada…as a distinct entity amongst the colonies of the Atlantic empire” by 1769, the “numerous descriptive articles [about] its people, trade, religion, and geography” published between the fall of Quebec and the Treaty of Paris rarely agreed: for those who supported the colony’s acquisition, Canada was a vast tract of land available to support subsistence agriculture, bountiful families, and eager new consumers of British manufactured goods; for those who opposed Britain’s claim, the colony was already home to a rebellious mob of French loyalists, and the French hold on the sugar colonies that Britain would give up to keep Canada imperilled more trade than the new market could compensate. Either way, Lawson points out, the intractable French influence among the new colonial subjects presented a serious threat to the future stability of the Atlantic empire – and though the Treaty of Paris would ultimately secure Canada for Britain, this fight would continue to shape most of the debate about Canada’s worth in the periodical sphere for almost another decade. Philip Lawson, “‘The Irishman’s Prize’: Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774,” *The Historical Journal* 28.3 (1985): 577-578. For the pamphlet war, see Douglas, *A Letter Addressed to Two Great Men*; Franklin, *The Interest of Great Britain*; and Burke, *Remarks on the Letter*.

For more on economic insecurity and transatlantic migration in Brooke’s work, see Ellison, “There and Back.”*
only because his military status and income have been “reduced” by the end of the Seven Years War, that massive military expenditure that now needed to be recouped – and his movements for the rest of the story are no less subject to the unpredictable needs of his parents. At the very moment, for instance, that the object of his affection, Emily Montague, breaks off her inconvenient engagement to the tedious Sir George Clayton, Rivers must return home to ease the concern of his now ailing mother. Fortunately, Emily – now “free as air” (129) – is willing to follow him to England, but there, both lovers discover a further filial complication: Rivers’s future marriage to the daughter of Col. Willmott, a wealthy family friend, has already been arranged. Predictably, however, Col. Willmott turns out to be Emily’s father, long displaced by empire and the lesser fortunes of having been born a second son – and so Emily and Rivers marry as much to celebrate their love as to celebrate their good taste, having each freely chosen the partner that best affirms their parents’ wishes. Turning from economic obligation to the “arts of persuasion,” the book’s secondary romance follows a similar pattern (221): while Arabella Fermor, Emily’s best friend, believes she is falling in love with the charming Captain Fitzgerald, her father, Captain William Fermor, is busy writing his own letters of confession to an unnamed English Earl, outlining all of his off-stage machinations to ensure that Arabella, too, will settle in England with a husband he prefers. For Brooke, this is the family as it is scattered and reconstituted by the end of an imperial war: the struggle for land and new markets has created a wider stage on which filial commitments might be tested, but the bonds of affection among these characters are nonetheless central to the action that unfolds across the ocean (and back again).

As the strong parental influences that drive the love plots are rewarded with one wedding after another, however, Brooke also opens the possibility that these family dynamics can be leveraged to cultivate similar satisfaction in the British political sphere. To this end, as Pilar Cuder-Domínguez has persuasively argued, the letters between Captain Fermor and that unnamed English Earl lie “at the heart of the novel” – both literally, with regard to their positioning, and also for what they communicate about Brooke’s position on the most effective way to bring the hearts and minds of the governed in line with the aims of
the British Empire. In the same letter, for instance, that Captain Fermor declares that “a good mother will consult the interest and happiness of her children” – here, the subjects of the colonies – “but will never suffer her authority to be disputed,” he also explains that he has “secret[ly]” preordained Fitzgerald’s seduction of his daughter: “without my appearing at all interested in the affair,” he says, Fitzgerald will “ask my consent in form, though we have already settled every preliminary” (241-242). Particularly where she describes Fermor’s relationship with Arabella, then, Brooke parallels the tacit surveillance and quiet direction Fermor exerts over his daughter’s life with the slow assimilation of colonial subjects through the introduction of a universal language (English) and religion (Anglicanism) that Fermor elsewhere recommends (221-222) – and she places special emphasis on the gradual appreciation of “duty” to the “mother” country that these policies are intended to inculcate in the newly British subject. In the end, it comes as no surprise that Arabella’s seemingly independent choice to marry Fitzgerald coincides precisely with her father’s wishes, since even her father’s seeming disinterest has been cultivated in order to support her attraction to her future husband. These, apparently, are the “gentle arts of persuasion” that Fermor elsewhere explains that he has in mind for the colonial subjects (221) – and while his emphasis here seems to be on what is “very pleasing” to his daughter, there is no question that his priority is securing a match that is “extremely agreeable” to “the will of her father” (161).

Arabella’s happy ending also reframes the complicated financial exchange that concludes Emily and Rivers’s romance with the promise that the imperial parent has always had the interests and happiness of colonial “children” at heart. As the unexpected appearance of


11 Months before they marry, we observe Fermor musing to his correspondent upon “whether it would not be good policy to seem to dislike the match, [as] there is something very pleasing to a young girl, in opposing the will of her father” (161).

12 For a similar perspective on the relationship between Cpt. Fermor and his daughter, see Devereux, “One firm body.” Devereux also points out that it’s no “happy coincidence” that all of the novel’s final pairs “actually fulfill patriarchal plans”; Brooke offers this comedic ending, she argues, to prove “that what is best for – colonial – children, is best for the – imperial – family” (470). Like Cuder-Domínguez, however, Devereux does not make much of the filial metaphor that she identifies before moving on with her argument, as both she and Cuder-Domínguez are ultimately more interested in future significance of the companionate marriage to the literary treatment of Canada’s two solitudes. For an alternative perspective, see Howells, “Dialogism in Canada’s First Novel”; Howells argues that the novel’s interplay of voices demonstrates Brooke’s reluctance to privilege one perspective over the others.
Emily’s father illustrates, the English Eden in which Brooke’s lovers plan to spin out their lives is entirely dependent on the imperial wealth with which this patriarch returns from his own travels (407). If Fermor’s enthusiasm for his daughter’s eventual match suggests only one (figurative) way in which the life of the imperial parent will be enriched by the happiness and productivity of its children, then, the end of the novel’s primary love plot makes this process explicit: to make the novel’s comic ending possible, England must be enriched by the spoils of empire, and the happiness of its local subjects is entirely sustained by – indeed, impossible without – the productivity of the colonies. As an appeal, then, to those readers who might find the novel’s conclusion unsatisfying – or an unsettling admission of the increasing dependence of English family values on foreign imports and money – the figure of the imperial family offers a convenient way to justify this economic exploitation. Even as Canada’s value to the empire was being reframed in terms of the growth of the market it represents, this metaphor emphasizes the fond feelings shared between the subjects of imperial margins and centre, and insists – at least where Fermor speaks – that the imperial parent really does have the interests, the pleasure, and ultimately the happiness of colonial children at heart.

Brooke did not, of course, invent or discover this metaphor, nor did she invent the situation that would have made its argument familiar to her readers. The first four decades of the eighteenth century were defined by an intensifying competition between Britain and France, and, as Linda Colley explains, the persistent threat of being overwhelmed by the latter’s “superior army and much bigger population” had inspired a rash of new civic investment in British family planning. This was both a practical and a rhetorical effort to draw Britons into a community that recognized itself as a family. Alongside the London “societies [that] sprang up… [to] promote the national birth-rate,” Colley also observes a deepening affection for the British monarch as Father to the

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13 For other critical analyses of the historical function of the imperial family, see Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; and Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Colonial relations of authority, Stoler asserts, are established and entrenched by the reorganization of domestic life, through marriage laws, legal systems of racial and linguistic classification, and policies regarding whose children are legitimate. See also Van Kirk’s writing about the “many tender ties” that bind colonial subject populations to their colonizers and *The Birth of Biopolitics*, where Foucault locates this state surveillance over matters of reproduction (or genetics) and domestic arrangements in late eighteenth-century liberal capitalism.
Nation, and she suggests that both changes were motivated by the same “imperial grandeur and anxiety, the need to control a growing and disorderly population infected by more democratic ideas,” and the surprise of Britain’s success in the second half of the Seven Years War. Where Brooke takes up this metaphor to explore the economic pressures that had helped to create the imperial family, however, she seems especially curious about how this image of the family divided could be used to imagine the affective conditions of empire. Markets and money alone, Brooke insists, are not enough to hold the imperial family together – and even if her novel’s major action is motivated by financial obligations, she also maintains that the successful transfer of funds from colony to metropole must be justified by some other, more sentimental attachment. To more precisely define this attachment, Brooke gives most of her narrative time to the many threats to the divided family’s coherence and eventual happiness, and she is particularly attentive to the local conditions that create obstacles to the safe movement of money from one corner of the empire to another. In a novel carefully positioned to respond to political commentary about Canada’s troubled administration, threats to the progress of the colonists’ intimate relationships become real threats to the financial security of the entire family – and weather, which presents both a physical disruption to epistolary

14 Colley, Britons, 228-230. The 1760-1761 pamphlet war about Canada’s value bears out Colley’s thesis. In these papers on the preferred terms of the Treaty of Paris, the figure of the family is invoked both literally (to describe the responsibilities of British taxpayers to the children of North America), and as a metaphor for the broader – and idealized – relationship between England and its unfamiliar and distant new subject populations (those other “accident[s] of successful war”). To counter William Burke’s suggestion that leaving Canada to the French would provide a useful check on the expansion of the American colonies, for instance, Benjamin Franklin explores the consequences of determining imperial responsibilities by proximity or size of the population in distress with his own “Modest Proposal”: “Let an act of parliament be made,” he declares, “enjoining the colony midwives to stifle in the birth every third or fourth child” – an approach based on “an example from Scripture,” wherein “the ‘infinite increase’ of the children of Israel was apprehended as dangerous to the [Egyptian] state.” For Franklin, already in favour of expanding both the territory and the population of the British Empire, the metaphor of the colonial child offered a rare opportunity to affirm the relationship that already existed between British colonists in North America and the British acts of Parliament that determine their fate, and a chance to expose the hypocrisy of a discourse of sensibility that permits British policy-makers to keep these particular “children” at a distance. Franklin, The Interest of Great Britain, 44.

15 Although a detailed theorization of Brooke’s imperial family model is beyond the scope of this chapter, there is much more to say about her interest in the metaphor. Where Brooke imagines the family reorganized by empire in terms typically associated with a family model united by proximity (rather than by blood or by patronage), she also makes a case for the ius soli, or the “law of the soil”, a theory – recently rearticulated by Baucom – that suggests not only that any British territory can beget a British subject, but also that any place can be made a British place by the worldwide export of British values. See also Tadmor, Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England, 18-25, 44-46; and Baucom, Out of Place, 8-9. For more on the other domestic economic changes that contextualize Brooke’s treatment of the companionate marriage, see Perry, Novel Relations, 77-106.
communication and a potentially transformative influence on the moods and affections of English colonists, neatly captures both dimensions of this risk.

II. Expectations, experience, and two types of cold

For Brooke’s characters, of course, the weather is worth watching for quite different reasons – but over the course of the novel, the shift in her protagonists’ thinking about the kind of threat the weather represents strongly foreshadows their response to the romantic conclusions that are determined, in large part, by their parents. Particularly in the novel’s first half, both forces are associated with coercion and obstruction: Brooke’s characters’ earliest comments on the weather emphasize their anxiety about being overwhelmed (rather than inspired) by the cold, and as the love plots begin, both male and female heroes celebrate their freedom of choice in marriage as a special English liberty. By the triple-wedding of the novel’s conclusion, however, the success of each union is marked by the fortuitous combination of luck, perfect sensibility, and “gentle…persuasion” that ensures each child has selected the partner that his or her parents prefer (221) – and marital “joy” is deemed finest when free from the “damp” and “gloom” of disobedience (403). The meteorological rhetoric here belongs to Emily Montague, but it captures a much larger pattern. Unfolding parallel to these stories that champion the lovers’ capacity to find pleasure in the place and person that their parents “persua[de]” them is best, the novel’s weather reports also insist that the most important distinction between an “exile” and a “frost piece” ultimately rests with the viewer’s sensibility. More striking, Brooke’s love plots and weather reports both mark progress in the same way: in the movement from an anxious preoccupation with overwhelming influence to a more tempered perspective on the pleasure possible under circumstances beyond one’s control, or the turn by which her characters – all imperial subjects – begin to embrace the persuasive power they had originally feared.

Whether Brooke’s subject is a matter of the heart or the material cold, then, she begins by identifying inappropriate influence, and then leverages her negative examples to define the kind of freedom that British subjects should find more pleasant and productive.
Observing with concern, for instance, that Huron “mothers marry their children without ever consulting their inclinations,” Arabella finds in this “foolish tyranny” both a reminder to be grateful for that “dear English privilege of chusing a husband,” and proof that “[t]here is no true freedom anywhere” but England (56). Five months later, unfortunately, Arabella’s father reveals that he has been hard at work directing his daughter’s preference for the man she imagines she “chuse[s]” – but even for the reader who does not know how Arabella’s story will end, the upshot of her remarks on the Hurons is the same: Brooke’s characters dwell on local threats to others’ freedom to confirm the superiority of English rules, and to open questions about what type of paternalistic intervention could secure “true freedom” for this colony. Some liberties, Brooke suggests, are more necessary to happiness than others – and in letter after letter, her English travellers insist that the local forces at work are “tyrann[ical]” and “vile,” keeping the subjects of all rule but British rule “slaves…in the most essential point” (56).

The same concern – about pervasive constraints on the “inclinations” of those not yet assimilated to British standards – colours the novel’s early weather reports. Writing home to those who “ask [for an] opinion of the winter here” (109), both Arabella and Colonel Ed Rivers, the novel’s man of feeling, persistently suggest that the cold might really change them – and as the temperature drops, the parallel between Arabella’s near-daily weather reports and her notes on her companions’ moods seems to endorse this opinion. The similarity is suggestive: by mapping her protagonists’ shifting views on freedom of choice along the same arc as these anxious comments on the weather’s “changeable” power, Brooke both highlights the problem of influence itself as a pressing concern in Canada and positions the weather as a metonym for other forces at work on the colonists’ affections. In the same way that Arabella dwells on Huron “tyranny” to recommend the “true freedom” found in England and the administration that will secure these “dear privilege[s]” in Canada, in other words, Brooke veers towards pathetic fallacy in order to raise the specter of environmental influences more compelling than the cold.

By framing Arabella’s and Rivers’s weather reports as answers to specific questions about the “intenseness of the cold,” furthermore, Brooke identifies her implied audience
as a group already curious about the unruly influence at work in early Canada. Her contemporaries might have recognized themselves in this suggestion: trading in terms like force, liberty, and the “gentle arts of persuasion,” Brooke draws the subjects of her investigation from the headlines about the colony’s troubled administration, exploiting Canada’s bad reputation in the periodical press and literalizing the environmental threats rumoured to make the colony a “barren…exile” (63, 89). In the process, Brooke also has put her finger on a productive problem with these hyperbolic reports on far-away weather: no one knows what the weather in Canada *feels* like. More important, as Arabella and Rivers insist over and over again, because English readers have “no idea” how cold it really is, they also have been wrong about the affect the weather produces. To respond to a friend, for instance, who “asked…[his] opinion of the winter here,” Rivers explains that “it is far from being unpleasant…if you can bear a degree of cold, of which Europeans can form no idea” (109); likewise, when his sister, Lucy Rivers, wonders whether the winter is “joyless,” Arabella assures her “tis…quite otherwise,” though “there are indeed some days here of the severity of which those who were never out of England can form no conception” (147). These letters follow a pattern: each traveller identifies their readers’ preconceptions about the weather in Canada (“unpleasant,” “joyless”), and then goes on to correct them, all the while acknowledging the limitations of their European readers’ present knowledge. Taken together, the second and third steps of this rhetorical pattern suggest that Brooke is interested in the difficulties of representing differences as ephemeral as the weather to readers across an ocean – but there’s another reason Arabella and Rivers must first remind their readers that most “Europeans can form no idea” about the conditions they describe. Ultimately, Brooke suggests, it’s only these “agreeable” feelings (109), this “cheerfulness” and “festivity” (147) that run counter to their reader’s expectations – and so, without ever suggesting these readers have been wrong about the “intenseness” of the cold itself, Brooke here makes a case for the surprising pleasure her characters discover in its influence. Weather-watching, Arabella and Rivers admit, *is* an experience with an emotional valence, but that entanglement has turned out to be more generative than rumours about Canada’s “barren” prospects have allowed.

16 See note 8 above, as well as Lawson, “‘The Irishman’s Prize,’” 577-578.
Here, too, the weather reports are metonymic of Brooke’s broader political themes, as the rhetorical pattern of these corrective letters predicts the shift in the operations of the cold that seem to chill the progress of the love plots. Far from diminishing her epistolary authors’ powers, however, Canada’s “extremities” often inspire Brooke’s characters to find creative new ways of articulating their experience – just as Brooke has discovered in the weather report a creative new figure for the local forces that make communication difficult and socializing tense. Without denying the strangeness or severity of Canada’s cold, then, Brooke lingers over these descriptions of the weather in order to help her readers look past it – and as her characters slowly come to recognize coldness of character as the more tenacious source of conflict in their romantic lives, Brooke makes her case for the rigid rule of local French Catholic authorities as the more serious risk to the progress of British values in North America.

This shift in the target of Brooke’s complaints about the weather unfolds slowly, but her effort to distinguish these two types of cold is visible from the novel’s first letters. In his second letter home, Rivers celebrates the bravery and sacrifice of “the foundress of the Ursuline convent, Madame de la Peltrie” by highlighting the “severities” she has encountered on this “unknown shore”: the list includes the “dangers of the sea…thirst and hunger…[and] the extremities of cold and heat,” all to “perform a service she thought acceptable to the Deity” (17). Rivers insists, of course, that her Catholic “motive” is a “mistake,” but this caveat does not stop him from characterizing her story as one of “heroic virtue” (17). Rivers returns to this image – of Canada as a heroic crucible – only a few letters later. In a long account of the many admirable qualities he discovers among the Hurons, he observes that “they are patient of cold and heat…even beyond all belief,” and though he says that “their address is cold and reserved,” he also insists that “their treatment of strangers, and the unhappy, [is] infinitely kind and hospitable” (37). He goes on to prove this point by recounting a story about “a priest shipwrecked in December on the island of Anticosti” (38): his distresses exacerbated by the severity of an especially cold winter, the priest makes his way to a Huron community, and there he finds his “wants…liberally supplied” by men who explain that they “cannot but feel for the
distresses that happen to men” (38). In both anecdotes, the weather creates the conditions for extraordinary action. The cold and heat are severe, strange, and among the most noteworthy characteristics of the new physical environment, but they are not the determinants of character that some of Brooke’s more Hippocratic contemporaries might have anticipated. Instead, Rivers is impressed by the qualities of character – self-sacrifice, compassion – that appear in the face of the physical cold, and his reaction establishes an important tension between two different kinds of “sensibility.” Rivers’s exemplars of heroic virtue have been able to survive incredible variation of heat and cold – but rather than numbing their capacities for fine feeling and generous action, the experience of these extremes has set off their superior ability to be moved by “distress” to better (or more affecting) advantage.

Just by emphasizing the “cold and heat,” however, Rivers has raised the possibility that the sensibility he admires here might be environmentally determined – and although the two case studies he presents are positive, that possibility does present a problem. For a reader with an eye towards the administrative difficulties that had occasioned the colony’s “interregnum of government,” these anecdotes could certainly have aroused some concern about bringing too much of French Canada “home” to England: that the novel opens with its English settlers so inspired by local examples, particularly those linked to French Catholicism, would have triggered some anxiety about what Tara Ghoshal Wallace calls “the wrong sort of transculturation,” or that fear that English travellers might be too easily transformed by these new surroundings to carry out any cultural reform of their own. Here, this anxiety might not be misplaced, as Brooke also invokes the possibility of environmental influence in the structure of her sentimental plot. In this respect, Rivers’s early anecdotes about a possible relationship between sensibility

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18 Consider, for instance, how different this view of the Hurons’ hospitality is from Montesquieu’s view of the “little sensibility” he has observed among those in “cold countries” (compared to the “exquisite” capacity for both aesthetic pleasure and sociable fine feeling he purports to find where it is “warm”). Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws, 1: 318-319.

19 Wallace, “‘About Savages,’” 239. For more on the possibility that Brooke’s characters might be “improve[d]” or “reshape[d]…in response to encounters with the Canadian climate, landscape, and peoples,” see Snader, “Masquerade,” 119.
and extreme variation of heat and cold prefigure the strong seasonal influence on the progress of his romance with Emily: both are happy and fruitful right up to November, at which point Canada is “shut up from all the world for the winter” (96), and Arabella’s near-daily reports on the effects of the cold also begin to map the turns of each lover’s frustration with the other’s confounding coldness of character.

Within a month, for instance, of the January day on which Rivers promises his English reader that he “can form no idea” of the “degree of cold” (109), all of the novel’s correspondents become preoccupied with the same quality in their objects of affection. Emily, alternately disappointed and relieved, complains about a “coldness not to be described” in the “indolent” Sir George Clayton (129), but she is equally anxious about having “observed a coldness in [Rivers’s] manner lately,” too (144). Rightly worried that Emily has misconstrued his relationship with Madame Des Roches, a charming French widow, Rivers reports that the former has received him “with a disdainful coldness I did not think had been in her nature” (164), and weeks later, Arabella is still struggling to explain Emily’s “cold reception” away (170). By March 20, fortunately, all of these complications have been resolved, at least one with a nod to the spring thaw: Rivers, having reversed his opinion on “the coldness of which I complained,” now admits that he enjoys in Emily an “inexpressible melting languor…which it was not in man to see unmoved” (171). From Emily’s “cold” mid-winter reception through Rivers’s enthusiasm for her “melting” qualities in the spring, Brooke takes up the turning of the seasons to mark the progress of her protagonists’ emotional lives – and so seems to suggest that there might really be some causal connection between the effects of the cold and matters of the heart.

If this structural parallel were not enough to raise the stakes of Arabella’s regular observations on the weather, Brooke also embeds these anxieties about influence in the materials of the epistolary novel itself. On 29 December, for example, Arabella observes her ink “freezing” as I take it from the standish to the paper” (102), and then complains that her “faculties are absolutely congealed” – to suggest, altogether, that she could not
think of anything to say even if her ink should thaw enough to write it.²⁰ Two days later, she clarifies the connection she imagines between the ink and her freezing faculties, and with it the threat she sees in the weather: like the “strongest wine,” she explains, which will “freeze in a room which has a stove in it,” or “brandy…thickened to the consistency of oil,” the weather in Canada will “freeze…the blood…in our veins” (103). These passages, with their echoes of popular and scientific writing about the “feeling” capacity of meteorological instruments and the movements of the blood, demonstrate that Brooke is at least familiar with contemporary debate about environmental influences on mood, creative potential, and ethics, and that her treatment of the weather in Emily Montague is in conscious conversation with these broader debates about how the outside gets in.²¹

### III. Climatic determinism, Catholic tyranny, and Canada’s “barren” prospects

Given Brooke’s vehement anti-Catholicism, there is at least one likely political end to this persistent suggestion that the hearts and minds of Britons in early Canada might be governed by a powerful but stultifying force. A long-standing advocate for more assertive colonial governance, Brooke wrote many petitions and letters through the 1760s that emphasize the insidious and even tyrannical effects of Catholic ministry upon the passions of the Canadian colonists, many of which foreshadow Emily Montague’s similar interest in the operations of weather upon mood.²² For Brooke, the dire consequences of this arbitrary power had been realized in the administrative approach of General James Murray, military governor of Quebec after its fall and civil governor after August 1764. Murray was a friend and frequent correspondent of the Brooke family in the early 1760s,

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²⁰ For other perspectives on creativity and Canada’s climate, see Snader, “Masquerade,” 132-133; Hammill, “A Daughter of the Muses”; and McMullen, An Odd Attempt in a Woman, 89-90. Hammill and McMullen take Arabella’s complaints about the cold at face value; Snader argues, as I do here, that “[n]egative climatic effects can be remedied by mirth,” but he is specifically interested in how “Europeans combat the threat of the climate by adopting native modes of dress and…behaviour” (132).


²² This activist writing also reveals which features of the post-war political climate most worried Brooke: namely, what Linda Colley identifies as an “entirely realistic [British] fear that adapting to their new responsibilities would involve a sacrifice of their own intrinsic and insular qualities,” a concern “particularly acute in the face of the empire’s Asiatic and Roman Catholic subjects, since Asia, like Catholicism, was for many Britons synonymous with arbitrary power.” See Colley, Britons, 102; and Wilson, The Sense of the People, 137-185. For more on Brooke’s political writing, see Backscheider, “Hanging On and Hanging In.”
but as public opinion on his governance grew divided in England and Quebec, the Brookes took a firm stand – along with local English merchants – against what they perceived as Murray’s too-fond relationship with Quebec’s French loyalists and Catholics. By the time Emily Montague appeared in London in April 1769, Murray had been recalled, and the Brookes’ campaign to ensure his departure had established the family as a formidable influence on social opinions in Sillery. The rhetorical pillars of Brooke’s campaign to unseat Murray are significant, however, not because she characterized Murray as a tyrant (she didn’t, and he wasn’t), but rather because she held up Murray’s bad example to illustrate the effects of local Catholic influence on what should be unshakeable British values. In Brooke’s view, Murray was both a casualty and a cause of the problem: having already fallen victim to the influence of the Catholic Church, she suggests, the Governor’s failure to govern his own “passions” had exposed the colony under his leadership to similar corruption.

Recasting Murray as a man overwhelmed, the anecdotes with which Brooke attempts to embarrass him draw heavily on the rhetoric of environmental influence – but initially, Brooke’s frustration focuses on the individual weakness (and individual enemies) that seem to compromise his administrative abilities. In November 1764, accompanied by Samuel Johnson, Brooke visited Reverend Dr. Burton, Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, to present a petition to appoint her husband a missionary at Quebec. This was the second such petition from the civil officers and

23 Murray Papers, Vol. 2, 184 qtd. in McMullen, Odd, 75-78. For more on the Brookes’ campaign against Murray, see McMullen, Odd, 75-80. Frustrated by Brooke’s persistent campaign to demonstrate that he had failed to effectively curtail the spread of French Catholic values across the troubled new colony, Murray finds his own target in Brooke’s undue influence on her husband. According to correspondence with his brother, Patrick Murray, Lord Elibank, Murray believed that John Brooke could have made a better chaplain if he would only “keep better Company than he does,” learn to “govern his tongue,” and cease his “perpetually interfering] with things that do not concern him” – and he worried, in all of these instances, that the presence of the chaplain’s wife was encouraging his worst inclinations. In a letter to Robert Cholmondeley, Quebec’s absentee auditor-general and Brooke’s patron, Murray explains that he hoped “the Ladys would have wrought a change [in John Brooke], but on the Contrary, they meddle worse than he does” – and, writing from England about what he has heard from and about Brooke on a recent trip home, Lord Elibank agrees, admitting that “Mrs. Brooke has been a Devilish Instrument against you.” Although Elibank reassures his brother that Brooke’s complaints about his administration have “done no harm,” his 1765 letter appears in a long series of similar examples of the Brookes’ active interference with the early Canadian “empire over hearts” (98) – and in 1766, Murray would eventually be recalled as Governor, at least in part due to the Brookes’ “meddling.”

24 McMullen, Odd, 76.
merchants of Quebec, and this time, Brooke attached a letter of her own, outlining her husband’s work to govern the affections of his parishioners in the English national interest and describing the Catholic threat in detail. The Protestant cause had met two obstacles, she complains: first in the Governor himself, who “gives every Discouragement to Protestants, is indifferent to all Religions, [and] cannot govern his Passions,” and second in the “Romish religion” that Murray “always saith is a good one, & makes good subjects.” Despite her husband’s best efforts, Brooke worries, Murray’s “passions” will ultimately dictate the passions of the colony – and already, as a result of his lack of support, “the discharged Soldiers every day turn Papists, else the Priests will not marry them.” If Murray’s absent political will and financial support were not problems enough, Brooke continues, Anglicans must also contend with aggressive opposition from Catholics like “M[onseigneur] Riches, Cure of Quebec, the most bigoted priest in Canada,” and the man who “let the part of the Cath[olic] Ch[urch] Yard on wch the English are buried to build Houses on; & sufferd their Bodies, 25 at a time, to be dug up & exposed” and “the dead Protestants…thrown into the River.” For Brooke, M. Riches and Murray are part of the same problem. In the “bigoted priest,” Brooke offers her readers an explicit example of Catholic arbitrary power – but she also suggests that his tyrannical behaviour is the consequence of a larger failure of governance, pointing up Murray’s inability to “govern his own Passions” before this local influence in order to secure greater financial support for her husband’s alternative conversion work.

Although Murray would dismiss Brooke’s claims as mere “meddl[ing],” her campaign was effective, and it seems to have helped her define the relationship between affect and politics that she would eventually use to structure the argument of Emily Montague. As her vision of the Governor who can no longer “govern his Passions” suggests, Brooke was already curious about how local influences shape the affective commitments of

26 According to the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, this anecdote might refer to Jean-Félix Récher (1724-1768); though neither Récher’s biography nor his 1757-1760 diary comment on this churchyard scene, Récher would have been parish priest of Quebec at the time of Brooke’s writing, and his name is easily corrupted to make Brooke’s joke on the relative wealth of the Catholic Church. Jean-Pierre Asselin, “Récher, Jean-Félix,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974). For more on the anti-Catholic tropes and sentiment that Brooke exploits here, see Haydon, Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, 22-75.
colonial subjects, and when she imagines M. Riches casting dead Protestants into the river, she positions the spread of local religious influence as both an explanation for and a consequence of the Governor’s impotence. In this case, she insists, Murray’s misguided “Passions” have compromised the security of the English bodies that he is supposed to protect – and so Brooke finds in the curate’s aggression the proof that she needs to insist that English forces must fortify the “empire of sentiment” along the colony’s other garrisons (8). Reimagined as a feature of the setting for Emily Montague, however, the French Catholic threat appears more ephemeral – and the increasingly diffuse nature of the danger Brooke does acknowledge in the novel suggests a shift in her thinking about the aim of the imperial project she means to endorse. Emily Montague includes no French Catholic villains, nor any straightforward vectors of local religious and cultural influence to match the nefarious priest of her 1764 petition; the central challenge that the novel’s characters face is no longer a claim to territory (previously the disturbed “Yard on wch the English are buried”), but rather a claim to the affections of those who already live in Canada. In fact, the novel’s greatest sources of conflict are passive, pre-existing forces that seem to deter or distract the new Canadian subjects from “acquir[ing] the mild genius of [an English] religion and laws” (221-222) – and so, Brooke points out, the bad weather and these lingering French Catholic loyalties operate in much the same way, penetrating and hardening the hearts of even the most sensible characters. For Brooke, writing in 1769, French Catholic culture still represents the force from which Canada must be freed in order to become productive – but in the five years since she delivered her petition to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, she has reimagined the mechanism by which this “congealing” occurs, and concluded that the problem of overwhelming influence in Canada now has more in common with the weather than with the individual tyrant.

For an especially devoted reader of Brooke’s sentimental writing, of course, this shift might have seemed predictable – both because glimpses of the novelist’s growing interest in the affective conditions of an increasingly diverse empire are visible even when she briefly considers the problem of Canada’s acquisition in The History of Julia Mandeville (1763), and because the references to the periodical sphere that appear in that novel
suggest that Brooke’s writing has, on the whole, tapped into a much wider shift in thinking about what Britain might make of this new territory. Published one year before her letter to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and six years before Emily Montague, Julia Mandeville – like its anticipated audience of the early 1760s – is still primarily concerned with Canada’s tactical significance (rather than the emotional entanglements of the people who lived there), but even this relatively early view of the French Catholic threat shares a great deal with Emily Montague’s forthcoming remarks about Britain’s “empire of sentiment.” For instance, in a debate between Lady Mary and her nephew, Lord Belmont, the former offers a short summary of the shifting opinions regarding what the (still very new) colony might be worth to the British Empire. To begin with, Lady Mary explains, she can “remember when…this Canada…was thought of great consequence,” and that “two or three years ago, pamphlets were wrote…to prove it was the only point we ought to have in view; but a point in which we could scarcely hope to succeed.” Things seem to have changed, however, by the time she writes her letter in September 1762, and so she wonders, “Is it really so trifling an acquisition? And how comes the nature of it to be so changed now we are likely to keep it?” Lord Belmont’s reply captures precisely the new interest in the subjects of empire that seems to have changed the nature of the colony in question:

Canada, considered merely as the possession of it gives security to our colonies, is of more national consequence to us than all the sugar islands of the globe: but if the present inhabitants are encouraged to stay by the mildness of our laws, and that full liberty of conscience to which every rational creature has a right; if they are taught by every honest art a love for that constitution which makes them free, and a personal attachment to the best of princes; if they are allured to our religious worship, by seeing it in its genuine beauty, equally remote from their load of trifling ceremonies, and the unornamented forms of the dissenters: if population is encouraged; the waste lands settled; and a whale fishery set on foot, we shall find it, considered in every light, an acquisition beyond our most sanguine hopes.

Emphasizing the shift towards thinking about subjects of “national consequence” in terms of “personal attachment” (rather than “security”), Julia Mandeville’s Lord Belmont here maps out the movements of one especially dramatic pamphlet war about Canada’s value

27 Brooke, Julia Mandeville, 47-49.
28 Ibid.
that had unfolded in between 1760-1761 — and where he concludes by yoking Canada’s potential to the future political and religious sympathies of “its present inhabitants,” he also anticipates the chief concerns of Emily Montague’s Captain William Fermor, Arabella’s father. Belmont, like many advocates of Canada’s acquisition before him (and Fermor to follow), is especially interested in how the “present inhabitants” might be “encouraged,” “allured,” and “taught by every honest art” to embrace a constitution that he believes will “make them free.” Belmont and Fermor also share an increasingly common language of affection to describe this process of assimilation: Belmont emphasizes the “mildness” of English laws and the “alluring” powers of the English church, for instance, and he seeks to cultivate in these new subjects both “a love” for the English constitution and a “personal attachment” to the English crown. Belmont, however, does not seem at all troubled by the seeming contradiction between the “honest arts” required to “encourage” and “allure” the present inhabitants of Canada into “that full liberty of conscience” and acceptance of a constitution that “will make them free.” That struggle will be Fermor’s alone, as is his greater emphasis on the reciprocal feelings of trust and friendship required to realize “our most sanguine hopes” for the new colony. Taken together, then, these changes suggest that Brooke became much more attentive to the mutual obligations of the imperial governance project in the years between the publication of her first novel and her second — and that she became more concerned with possible obstacles or risks to cultivating that sense of reciprocal concern, too.

If Brooke’s sense of the more widespread shift in thinking about the value of this new colony is accurate, furthermore, and Canada really did seem to have become a “trifling”

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29 As note 14 above explains in more detail, a vigorous periodical debate had unfolded regarding the supposed “choice” between Canada and Guadeloupe between the fall of Quebec and the ratification of the Treaty of Paris — and Brooke, ever attentive to the local economic and partisan forces directing British martial policy in North America, would have been watching it closely. For these pamphleteers, the “choice” between Canada and Guadeloupe offered a useful emblem for debate about what would motivate the further expansion of empire: weak rivals and secure borders, or markets with promising growth potential. More recently, historian Philip Lawson has worked hard to debunk the (tenacious) myth that the negotiations of the terms of the Treaty of Paris actually involved this specific choice between Canada and Guadeloupe — but he does admit that the decision’s intense consideration in the 1760-61 “pamphlet literature in particular contains all the doubts and anxieties about what should be done at the peace table [that would have been] experienced by politicians.” Lawson, “‘The Irishman’s Prize,’” 577-578. For the pamphlet war, see Douglas, A Letter Addressed to Two Great Men; Franklin, The Interest of Great Britain; and Burke, Remarks on the Letter.
acquisition, the rhetorical force that Belmont finds in foregrounding matters of colonial “love…and personal attachment” might also help to explain both Brooke’s turn away from the figure of the French Catholic tyrant as a justification for more assertive imperial administration, and her growing enthusiasm for the “frost pieces” that would eventually make Emily Montague famous. Reconsidered in light of her novels, the tyrant of Brooke’s earlier political writing appears less threatening and less responsible for the problem of persistent French Catholic loyalties in the new colony: though M. Riches does stand out as a clear villain in her 1764 petition to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, both Julia Mandeville and Emily Montague betray a more persistent concern for the consequences of the ungoverned passions and misdirected “encouragements” that have “so changed…the nature” of Canada’s value to the empire. In these novels, that is, Brooke’s real target is sensibility, and particularly the risks and rewards of beginning to identify the “love…and personal attachment” of the new colonial subjects as a political priority. To this end, environmental metaphors – like the rumoured “barren” land – are more useful to Brooke’s argument than clear tyrants or villains, if only because these figures more effectively register the possibility for positive change (or productive cultivation) alongside the risks of failure.

Consider, for instance, Arabella’s response to the “political writers in England [who] never speak of Canada without the epithet of barren” (63). In the same spirit that Brooke once wrote against the ungoverned “Passions” that left the bodies of Murray’s subjects vulnerable to Catholic invasion, Arabella now identifies something in the air weakening the colony’s agricultural prospects – though this narcotic force is not so great, she is careful to point out, that it could not be diffused by “cultivating” things differently. Surveying the farmland that so many call “barren,” Arabella admits that “the corn here is…not equal to ours,” and the “harvest not half so gay as in England,” and briefly acknowledges that it might be this unproductive land that has formed such unproductive subjects: close on the heels of her observations about the corn and hay, she suggests that it is “for this reason, that the lazy creatures leave the greatest part of their land uncultivated” (61). When pressed to define “this reason” for the colony’s disappointing harvests, however, Arabella reverses her causal argument to more clearly identify French
culture as the local condition that has so far determined the productivity of the land. She implores Lucy to imagine “how naturally rich the soil must be, to produce good crops without manure, and without ever lying fallow, and almost without ploughing” (63); the “epithet of barren,” she suggests, has been earned by local “indolence” and poor husbandry in place “before the English came,” and has little to do with the “snow, which lies five or six months on the ground” (63). In Arabella’s hands, what began as a description of the “barren” landscape and oppressive precipitation becomes a way to process differences in culture and work ethic – and in light of the wider debate about whether Canada’s obstinately French population represented an altogether “barren” market, the land also becomes a metaphor for the people in whom a different sort of husbandry could produce a more productive resource.

This is a timely change in thinking about the problem with this ostensibly “barren” region, particularly as it reinforces the capacity of British imperial agents to intervene. In the years between the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, the British Empire had become, for many, unrecognizably diverse, and cohering self-definition through negative comparison to French Catholic “others” had become increasingly untenable – particularly when, as Canada’s example demonstrates, so many new Britons turned out to be both Catholic and French.30 In this context, any suggestion that the new territory might be naturally barren or these subjects intractably indolent would have been to admit a certain failure for the colony’s prospects. For those among Emily Montague’s readers who were anxious about their obligations to these new Britons, then, Brooke’s emphasis on local environmental conditions would have repositioned the novel’s English forces in a comforting way. By reframing the obstacles to Canada’s assimilation as a notoriously “changeable” environmental condition, Brooke affirms the possibility that superior imperial administration might discover new potential in the colony’s present circumstances – at once justifying more assertive intervention to displace French Catholic influence, yet aligning the British presence in North America with improvements in sensibility rather than with conflict.

30 Colley, Britons, 145.
IV. Coldness of character, Catholic civility, and the triumph of sensible expression

Turning away from the figure of the Catholic tyrant and towards the persistent rumours about the “joyless” Canadian winter, Brooke thus discovers two advantages in writing about the weather. With her eye on the conversation already unfolding among “political writers in England,” Brooke’s notes on Canada’s “six months” of snow do acknowledge the possibility that the weather is responsible for the colony’s disappointing harvests and lazy subjects – but in nearly every letter in which Brooke comes closest to confirming this claim, she immediately revises her argument, rejecting determinism to insist that the real danger in the air is French Catholic sloth. These “political writers,” she implies, have incorrectly identified the problem, their mistakes marked first by their failure to acknowledge the fertilizing effects of the snow, and second by the fact that they focus on the “barren” land rather than the conditions that have created it. By confronting these rumours head-on, her epistolary authors’ daily weather-watching offers Brooke a chance to correct both of these records – and even where Arabella herself misrecognizes the effects of the cold on her creative faculties and friendships, Brooke insists that this gap between her protagonists’ expectations and experience of the Canadian cold might be the most politically productive feature of her weather reports.

In other words, Arabella’s most explicit complaints about the weather get Brooke’s argument right by getting her theory of environmental influence all wrong. For instance, in the especially vivid letter of 29 December mentioned above, Arabella describes her faculties “congealing” and her ink freezing, but even as she makes these claims, the communication of her grievances demonstrates that she is still capable of writing it all down – and her writing gets better as the weather gets worse. In the same passage that she declares that “the rigour of the climate suspends the very powers of understanding,” she also presents that carefully wrought parallel between her thermometer’s mercury, her ink, brandy, and blood, and she follows this with an entertaining description of men who “look just like so many bears in their open carrioles, all wrapped in furs from head to foot” such that “you see nothing of the human form appear, but the tip of a nose” (104). This letter is also one of the novel’s most allusive, moving quickly from Robinson
Crusoe to “old knights in errant romance” to describe the gentlemen’s “coats of beaver skin,” and then looking back to Ovid’s Pygmalion to imagine the “frozen Canadian gentlewoman” (104-105); a few lines later, Arabella even suggests that that weather has made her “hard-hearted as a tiger,” and borrows an image from Joseph Andrews to explain that the “little god,” passion, has taken flight from her heart, “like the swallows” (105).31 Despite her best efforts to attribute the failures of creativity in Canada to the “congealing” cold, Arabella has countered her own point. If anything, the weather has invigorated her powers of expression, inspiring her to generate new metaphors to describe the cold that even her thermometer cannot capture – and so almost by accident, Arabella has confirmed that the “snow, which lies five to six months on the ground” helps to improve, rather than restrict, fertility of both land and mind (103-104).

Condensed in her memorable image of the “frozen Canadian gentlewoman,” the style of Arabella’s letter also betrays the extent to which these rumours about the weather have both undermined the real potential in the land waiting under the snow and obscured the operations of a greater force “congealing” social relations. To drive this point home, the progress of Arabella’s relationship with Madame Des Roches, French foil to Brooke’s female protagonists, tracks the results and resolution of a similar error: here, too, Arabella misrecognizes the French widow as a threat to Emily and Rivers’ romance, and so fails to identify the real obstacle to the British assimilation project implicit in her story. When introduced as Emily’s rival, Madame Des Roches appears to offer Rivers vivacity without warmth: “lively,” “divert[ing],” and “always contriving some little party for [Rivers]” (76-77), she seems to be a conventionally “impenetrable” French coquette, or one of those for whom flirtation is not “dangerous” because, being of “the salamander kind,” they do not deeply feel the fire of temptation (125). Preoccupied by this national prejudice, Arabella and Emily are therefore surprised to discover that Madame Des Roches is both less vivacious and less impenetrable than anticipated. When the widow eventually confesses her desire to write to Rivers, Arabella observes a cool propriety – of precisely the type typically associated with rule-bound Catholicism – constraining her

“very tender” expressions. Reviewing the “meer complimentary kind of card” that Madame Des Roches completes, Arabella calls it “cold and formal,” and recapitulates a conversation in which the widow continues to worry that “there was an impropriety in her writing to him” (305-306). Once again, Arabella has misapprehended the threat: where she assumed that Rivers might find in Madame Des Roches a vapid flirtatiousness to draw him away from finely feeling Emily, the only real danger the widow reveals to Arabella is the wedge that her “cold” civility could drive between French and English friendships. Having discovered, however, that “when the heart is really touched, the feelings of all nations have a pretty near resemblance” (306), Arabella now replaces the competition she imagined between “salamandrine” French vivacity and trembling English sensibility with a new theory of common feeling (379). Like the land rumoured to lie “barren,” she explains, Madame Des Roches is merely an uncultivated resource; though the potential of her friendship has been obscured by cold formality, this “noblest and most amiable of women” might be as sensible as any English traveller if only she were governed by a different set of rules (216).

By arguing that the only difference between a British belle and her French foil is the propriety that keeps the latter from expressing her “trembling sensibility” (219), Brooke also reiterates an important distinction between the cold of the climate and the coldness of character that creates so much confusion between November and May. Considering the possibility that Canadian characters might be “congealed” by the weather only to refuse it, Brooke here suggests that the real problems with the love plot are caused by failures of sensible expression – and to this end, Madame Des Roches is not the only one to offer the British protagonists a choice between “trembling sensibility” and cool propriety. The unfortunate Sir George Clayton, Emily’s first romantic match, presents a similar coldness of character – but unlike Madame Des Roches, cold in practice but warm within, Sir George’s stolid self-expression has evolved free from religious or cultural constraints. Blessed from birth with all the liberties that a British administration claims to offer a figure like Madame Des Roches, Sir George has chosen his coldness for himself –

32 For more on the longstanding association between convents, Catholicism, and impenetrability, see Acosta, “Hotbeds of Poperty”; and Little, “Cloistered Bodies.”
so his chief contribution to the novel’s argument seems to be merely to present Emily with a similar decision, figured in the contrast between himself and Colonel Ed Rivers.\textsuperscript{33}

Out of place in a love story preoccupied with the limits of fine feeling and persuasion, it is ultimately Sir George’s freedom from environmental influence that most repulses the woman he wants to impress. On 4 January, Arabella observes his imperviousness in action – and though she admits the weather has been “cold beyond all that you in England can form an idea of,” there is no question about which type of coldness is the greater obstacle to romance (106). The anecdote that follows recalls Rivers’s “exemplars” among the Ursulines and Hurons, but this time, Rivers himself is the virtuous hero: Arabella recounts a “little scene” in which a “story…of a distressed family in our neighbourhood, was told [Rivers] and Sir George,” and though “the latter…very coldly expressed his concern, and called another subject; [Rivers] changed colour, his eyes glistened,” and “he took the first opportunity to leave the room, [find] these poor people…and reliev[e] them” (106). Unlike Sir George, “concern[ed]” but cold, Rivers is moved to action by the warmth of his emotion, and Arabella suggests that the reader should be moved to “love him a little” for this sensibility, too (106). These two emotional extremes, presented in the same letter, make it clear that the weather is not a sufficient explanation for either response – and yet the weather is also not an insignificant detail: by recalling the “extremities of heat and cold” that once helped Rivers to recognize other expressions of “heroic virtue” (17), the “frost piece” in the background better flatters Rivers’s warmth.

Insofar as Sir George’s romance plot tracks the same change that Brooke has been trying to make in her reader’s thinking about the real threat to the British project in North America, however, the problem that his coldness creates for his love life makes a political claim of its own. In many material ways, after all, Sir George offers Emily a good match: when they meet, he is introduced as “what the country ladies in England call a sweet pretty man,” “as handsome as an Adonis,” and “of an amiable character” (40; 45).

\textsuperscript{33} For an alternative interpretation of Sir George’s “coldness,” see Snader, “Masquerade,” 137-138; to illustrate his argument about how “Britons modified by their active experiences as travelers,” Snader aligns the “inanimate, insensible” Sir George with “the untraveled Lucy” rather than with Madame Des Roches. For an analysis of the novel’s “Self and Other” binary more closely focused on Madame Des Roches, see McCarthy, “Sisters Under the Mink.”
Arabella’s father, Captain William Fermor, endorses the partnership, too – if only because it comes with “a fortune” to “compensat[e] for the want of most other advantages” (161). Given the enthusiasm for the “dear English privilege of chusing a husband” expressed elsewhere, however, all this praise is ultimately to Sir George’s disadvantage (56). Every time he is identified as precisely the sort of man that a father would want Emily to marry, he is ever more strongly associated with the absence of freedom that Arabella and Emily each so thoroughly condemn. Worse, the terms that Sir George’s rivals invoke to mock him echo those used to describe life under French Catholic rule: each is “heavy, unmeaning, formal; a slave to rules, [and] to ceremony” (52). Increasingly aligned with patriarchal authority and tyranny of two kinds, Sir George now seems to offer Emily only an opportunity to test that “privilege of chusing a husband” for herself – and with Rivers always “chang[ing] colour” next to him, even an otherwise gentlemanly reserve looks cold, constrained, and “against…inclination” (237).

Particularly in the scene where the material cold sets off the difference between Emily’s romantic options, then, Sir George reminds us that the “dear[est] English privilege” rests not just with the right to choose, but specifically with the right to choose to be overwhelmed by strong emotion – as Emily does, moved to “blushing” and to “tears” – and ultimately to follow the “real feelings of [the] heart” into marriage with an equally “sensible” match (126). Recalling Brooke’s condemnation of General Murray’s inability to govern his “Passions,” however, the fact that Sir George’s coldness costs him the affection he had hoped to win here marks one further turn in Brooke’s political argument. Where Brooke once held up Murray’s example to illustrate how “ungoverned” passions might leave the whole colony vulnerable to encroaching French tyranny, she now holds up Emily and Rivers’s “sensible” romance, celebrating the choice to be overwhelmed as a stand against the tyranny of parental inclination. Just as the cold weather now appears more “agreeable” than her English readers anticipated, warmth of feeling has turned out not to be the threat to British happiness that Brooke once imagined – and unfortunately for Sir George, nothing he can offer can “compensat[e] for the want of” his enthusiasm for these advantages.
V. “Talk of the weather” and “indifferent things”: Small talk and the weather report

In the end, then, the weather in Brooke’s novel is never the problem that “those who have heard no more of a Canadian winter than what regards the intenseness of its cold” have expected (147) – and in fact, the cold that Arabella mentions here often helps to facilitate the novel’s happy conclusion. For Arabella, especially worried about the “congealing” effects of the cold, the severe weather turns out be generative; for Rivers, likewise, the physical cold sets off the warmth of character that the novel champions, and so helps to secure his preferred lover’s affections. Ultimately, for both characters, the biggest difference between a “barren” exile and a charming “frost piece” seems to lie in the viewer’s attitude rather than any meteorological fact – and seems to be easily resolved if only the traveller is willing to find pleasure under the influence of forces once feared.

Having corrected the “political writers in England [who] never speak of Canada without the epithet of barren” on all of these points, however, Brooke’s protagonists have also uncovered a new problem. As the ice begins to thaw and their gaze shifts across the Atlantic ocean, Brooke’s travellers begin to wonder what this new way of looking at the weather in Canada might have to offer weather-watchers in England – and how the willingness to be overwhelmed by the weather they have discovered in North America might help to resolve enduring British anxieties about what it means to be subject to unpredictable or unknowable external influence, lately sharpened by British success in the Seven Years War. Once again, then, Brooke begins by addressing the worst rumours about the weather – but this time, she addresses the weather in general, rather than her English readers’ assumptions about the “intenseness of the cold” in Canada in particular.

Aiming instead to recuperate the weather’s bad reputation as a boring subject of small talk wherever it appears, Brooke contrasts this view of the weather with her characters’ expanding sense of the exhilarating and even transformative sensations that can be found in its frequent observation and discussion – and so seems to invite her readers in England to see their own weather differently, and to recognize this very different approach to imagining the weather as opportunity for (rather than an obstacle to) fine feeling as a possible and productive model for managing a “many-weathered” empire.
In this light, Arabella’s near-daily weather reports have another political function, tracking a gradual change in the meaning of conversation about the weather even as they record the seasonal change and spread of the seemingly “stultifying” cold up for discussion. Through the novel’s first and second volumes, that is, “conversation about the weather” operates as a code for reservation and disinterestedness – but by the time the protagonists depart again for England, contact with the Canadian cold has both refined their sense of the weather’s real risks and effects and elevated the social function of previously banal meteorological observation. During one peevish weekend set at the end of the novel’s first volume, for instance, Arabella complains that Emily “is strangely reserved with me” by observing that “she avoids seeing me alone, and when it happens [she] talks of the weather” (113). Here, conversation about the weather is a sign of Emily’s “strange reservation,” an attempt to avoid substantive or sensible conversation – and though Arabella has, by this point, already made a number of more passionate observations about the strangeness of the Canadian cold, this complaint about Emily’s behaviour specifically engages the weather as shorthand for things not generally worth talking about; weather, in other words, presents here an obstacle to social intimacy and fine feeling. Days later, Arabella invokes the weather again in the same terms, this time to illustrate an anecdote about the unwanted attentions of one Captain Howard – who, she explains, is “inclined to “shew me all the little attentions of a lover in public, though he never yet said a civil thing to me when we were alone” (120). To demonstrate just how false this performance of affection really is, Arabella recalls an encounter wherein “we had been talking of indifferent things, [and] his air was till then indolence itself,” until he “with…the most passionate air protested his life depended on mine” – all, Arabella realizes, upon seeing “a gentleman and lady close behind us” (120). Hoping to expose Captain Howard’s insincerity, Arabella calls out to the couple on approach, promising that “we have no secrets, [and that] this declaration was intended for you to hear,” because, she explains, “we were talking of the weather before you came” (120). In this case, “talking about the weather” stands in for the very conversation that Arabella has previously identified as “indifferent,” and she expects that her listeners will interpret it as such – as the precise opposite, that is, of the “passionate…declaration” that they happened to overhear.
Taken together, Arabella’s references to “talking about the weather” as shorthand for conversation that is reserved, indifferent, and insignificant closely recall Samuel Johnson’s 1758 *Idler* essay, “Discourses on the Weather,” and in particular Johnson’s frustration with trivial observations on “what each must already know.” Where this apparently commonplace view of the weather turns up in *Emily Montague*, however, it looks out of place next to Arabella’s daily weather reports, which become more animated and entertaining as the days grow shorter – and so Brooke, by juxtaposing these two ways of talking about the weather, here seems to try to teach the reader to see what Johnson has been missing. Just before complaining about the “strange reserve” suggested by Emily’s “talk of the weather,” for instance, Arabella inserts an anecdote about how “the savages assure us…on the information of the beavers, that we shall have a mild winter” (92). Exoticizing both her sources and their methods, these meteorological observations seem intended to amuse: “I take it very ill,” Arabella quips to Lucy, “that the beavers have better intelligence than we have” (92). She returns to the point six weeks later, this time to declare that she “will never take a beaver’s word again as long as I live”; contrary to the promise of a mild winter, “the Canadians say it is seventeen years since there has been so severe a season” (102). Only two weeks (and a handful of pages) before she introduces Emily’s “talk of the weather” as banal and indifferent, then, Arabella reveals that the local weather is the subject of great conversation between British visitors and the Canadians, and well worth writing home about – if only for the punch line (“I had thought,” Arabella concludes, “that beavers had been people of more honour”) (102). The proximity of these observations is suggestive: by juxtaposing the failed predictions of “exotic” local forecasting agents and the weather’s typical association with banal small talk, Brooke both disrupts those associations and introduces the possibility that weather might be a subject of greater social significance than European readers have, to this point, had “any idea” (109; 253).

To disentangle weather’s association with the predictable and trivial, that is, Brooke emphasizes the weather’s unpredictability and consequence. As they remain in Canada, Arabella, Emily and Rivers begin to recognize new dangers attendant on quick changes in

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34 Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.”
the weather – and so, in addition to sending home jokes about cold so severe that it foils even the beavers’ best predictions, their letters also begin to reflect a more general awareness of environmental risk. And with this new knowledge of risk, Arabella discovers, comes a wider range of emotion now associated with warm and cool temperatures:

[E]very warm day gives you terror for those you see venturing to pass [over the ice] in carrioles; yet one frosty night makes [the ice] again so strong, that even the ladies, and the timid amongst them, still venture themselves over in parties of pleasure; though greatly alarmed at their return, if a few hours of uncommon warmth intervenes. But, during the last fortnight, the alarm grows indeed a very serious one: the eye can distinguish, even at a considerable distance, that the ice is softened and detached from the banks; and you dread every step being death to those who still have the temerity to pass it, which they will continue always to do till one or more pay their rashness with their lives. (235)

“Terror,” “alarm,” “dread,” “temerity,” and the ever-present threat of “death”: during this month before the ice breaks up, Arabella has discovered that meteorological observation can be an intensely affecting endeavour indeed. She has also discovered that the conditions that constitute “good” weather change with the location and objective of the observer – and so, she concludes, whether it operates as a cathartic agent or a limiting condition, the weather in Canada is well worth watching (and discussing).

This shift towards greater awareness of the risks that come with rapid and unpredictable change in the weather is most dramatically registered by the sea voyages that bookend the novel. For the most part, the trip from England to Canada is unremarkable – “fair,” even, and spurred by a “gentle breeze” (4) – but on the way home, both Arabella and Rivers find themselves preoccupied with the now-obvious dangers of transatlantic travel. With Emily always in mind, Rivers sees her possible death by drowning everywhere: “though the wind was fair,” he insists that the “very tumultuous head-sea” is “a certain sign there had been stormy weather, with a contrary wind,” and he “suffered” to think of “Emily exposed to those storms” (291). Here, it is unclear whether Rivers’s anxiety is merely evidence of the sensibility he has cultivated in Canada or a consequence of too many hours spent watching “those who still have the temerity to pass” the softening ice – but either way, his fifteen months in Canada have certainly taught him to recognize dire risk
in even the *traces* of bad weather. Arabella’s report on the “fright[ening]” weather of her “unpleasant” return voyage is similarly preoccupied, as she has also become more attentive to the risks that await those “who can fix on a sea life as a profession”: “how strong must be the love of gain,” she muses, “to tempt us to embrace a life of danger, pain, and misery…Even glory is a poor reward for a life passed at sea” (309-310). Echoing (again) Rivers’s observations on the sacrifice and motivations of the Ursuline nuns, Arabella’s comments reflect Brooke’s consistent work to draw out the risks associated with “fright[ening]” weather over the course of the novel – but they also illustrate an important shift in her protagonists’ thinking. For Rivers, the Ursulines and Hurons had the Canadian weather in common, and their bravery and sacrifice could, to a certain extent, simply reinforce his European readers’ expectations about Canada’s brutal environmental extremes. By turning her attention to the “glory…danger, pain, and misery” that awaits the sailor, however, Arabella extends this sense that “unpleasant” weather might operate as a sort of heroic crucible well beyond Canada’s shores – now suggesting a deeper awareness of the human consequences of change in the weather wherever it happens, and a more careful attention to the philosophical potential of what has previously been the subject of only “indifferent” conversation.

Up to this point, then, there are two strong threads of association with the weather in Brooke’s novel. First, Brooke explicitly engages with the expectations of European readers that turn up around the edges of Arabella’s and Rivers’s letters in order to disprove them: the weather, albeit cold, turns out to be neither as “unpleasant” nor “joyless” as these English readers had anticipated, and instead provides the occasion for much “chearfulness” and “festivity” (109; 147). At the same time, however, Brooke tracks a dramatic change in the social function of conversation about the weather in Canada – and that change depends on her protagonists developing a more personal sense of the “dread,” “terror,” “pain, and misery” attendant on meteorological variation. Even as she deflates expectations about the severity of Canada’s winter, in other words, Brooke seems to be raising the stakes for otherwise (or previously) trivial comments on the weather in general. Why? In a book punctuated by near-daily weather reports, Brooke tangles these threads of association together in order to teach her readers, along with her
protagonists, to read those weather reports with more interest – both as they illustrate the risks and obstacles to cohering a “many-weathered” empire, and as they suggest a possible resolution to those problems of environmental difference, a route to “chearfulness” and “festivity” that transcends the “unpleasant” conditions that divide margin and metropole.

VI. “Mais il faut cultiver notre jardin”: Cultivating affection

By emphasizing her protagonists’ increasing emotional investment in the weather (both good and bad), that is, at the same time that she insists Canada’s weather really is better than the rumours have allowed, Brooke is teaching her reader to watch the weather carefully in the world beyond her novel, too. By the novel’s fourth volume, this capacity to find joy in Canada’s weather demonstrates precisely the sort of sensibility that Brooke recommends to readers both at home and abroad – and as Brooke’s protagonists turn back to England to find even their memories of local weather improved by their recent experience in Canada, their enduring enthusiasm for meteorological change confirms that this willingness to be moved by the right kinds of environmental influence could improve British prospects on either side of the Atlantic. For Arabella, for instance, England’s “foggy climate” now appears more temperate and “smiling” compared to Canada’s “severities” (230) – and even while frustrated with Canada’s long winter, she now recommends weather-watching itself as source of pleasure. “Why,” she chastises Lucy, “did you give me the idea of flowers? I…envy you your foggy climate,” as “the earth with you is at this moment covered with a thousand lovely children of the spring; with us, it is an universal plain of snow” (230). Using the same technique she once developed to teach Lucy that that plain of snow, “of which you…entertain such terrible ideas,” can inspire “the utmost chearfulness and festivity” (147), Arabella now helps her English reader to see the pleasures made possible by fog. While in Canada, she explains, she has learned that the summer can be “delicious, and the winter pleasant with all its severities, but alas! the smiling spring is not here; we pass from winter to summer in an instant, and lose the sprightly season of the Loves” (230). England is flattered by the comparison, of course, but it is not the fact of spring alone that Arabella invites Lucy to savour: rather,
she asks her to see the “sprightly season of the Loves” blossoming with the flowers outside, and so to embrace a sensibility that will set the gloomier dimensions of both winter and fog “at defiance.”

Upon his own return to England, Rivers, too, finds his memory of local weather and his current emotional experience improved by the meteorological awareness he has cultivated in Canada. Meditating upon an “almost Canadian sunshine” that has produced the “finest day I ever saw,” he realizes, with “inconceivable delight,” that the same sun shining over Canada and England also shines over England old and new. While “bathing…in the same stream in which I laved my careless bosom at thirteen,” he reports, he has discovered that the “dry soft west wind” and “air as mild as April” have produced a “heart…as gay and tranquil at this time as in those dear hours of cheerfulness” (379). Taken together, these anecdotes suggest that Brooke’s characters’ preferences have been altered by their time in Canada, just as Arabella once worried that they might be (103) – but what has changed most is the tone of these descriptions of environmental influence. Having sloughed off the fear of being overwhelmed along with the rumours of the “joyless” winter and “congealing” cold, Arabella and Rivers now find this capacity to be moved by the weather a source of great pleasure, and each enthusiastically recommends this willingness to embrace external influence to readers near and far.

To drive this point home – and to confirm the relationship between the romantic plot and the meteorological metaphors that have structured the novel – Brooke’s last letters return to the subject of cultivation and its proper object. By this point, both Arabella and Rivers have married for love – and yet with these “romantic adventures being at an end,” Arabella has become worried that they will “degenerat[e] into sober people, who marry and settle” and “seem in great danger of sinking into vegetation” (406). “Vegetation” has a negative connotation here: associated with sobriety and “settl[ing] down,” vegetation, for Arabella, happens in the absence of further animating adventures of the heart – and marriage seem to be the very same sort of exile that she, Emily, and Rivers once imagined Canada (89; 139; 211; 224). After so many pages showcasing both the real and rhetorical effects of the cold on Arabella’s creative powers, this is an unusual
transformation of a botanical metaphor, particularly in the context of so many happy heterosexual marriages – but Rivers’s counterpoint helps to clarify Brooke’s target. Promising Arabella that “not one amongst us has the least vegetative quality,” he transforms what she has identified as a process (and its end point: “sinking” or “falling into vegetation”) into a personal trait – a subtle shift, but one that should also recall the only “one amongst [them]” who has previously been identified with this “quality”: the unfortunate Sir George (406). Lamenting the bad match between “my Emily” and his romantic rival, Rivers previously declared that Emily’s best efforts would only ever be able to “raise [George] a little above his natural vegetative state,” and does not hesitate to predict the further personal qualities that he will inevitably “sink into…after marriage”: “he will be a cold, civil, inattentive, husband,” Rivers declares, “a tasteless, insipid, silent companion,” and “a tranquil, frozen, unimpassion’d lover” (41). Where Rivers returns to the possibility of “vegetation” after marriage, he is equally personal in his attack: “[T]his is the defect of the cold and inanimate,” he explains to Arabella, “who have not spirit and vivacity enough to taste the natural pleasures of life” (406-407).

Vegetation, for Rivers, is associated with an especially “cold” way of looking at and being in the world; it is an attitude, rather than an activity or place into which one might “sink” or “fall” – which means that it can be countered with another attitude more successful at “prevent[ing] the languor to which all human pleasures are subject” (408). And pleasure and positive affect, above all, are what Rivers would like to cultivate – including pleasures like “love,” which he says requires only “a variety of amusements…to be kept alive” (408). Similarly, though he lists “rural pleasures” and “gardening” – more literal forms of cultivation – among the first of the further “entertaining…adventures” he claims to see “springing up every moment” (407), Rivers concludes by declaring that “the affections are the true sources of enjoyment: love, friendship, and, if you will allow me to anticipate, paternal tenderness” (408). It’s “enjoyment,” in the end, that helps Rivers discover this enlivening “spring” in a part of the world (England) that previously held neither economic nor romantic prospects for him – and it’s “affection,” he suggests, that makes possible this further botanical and heterosexual reproduction. To dismiss Arabella’s concerns about “sinking into
vegetation,” then, Rivers introduces a whole host of prospects for further cultivation – and, with a backwards glance at the “cold and inanimate” qualities that made Canada seem at one time as much an “exile” as Arabella now sees marriage (89; 139; 211; 224), he reminds her that this is the same approach that this vivacious group of model lovers has already engaged to turn Canada’s “barren” prospects into charming “frost pieces” (63, 148).

That said, and despite his adamant claim that “affection” and the “spirit to act as we have done, to dare to chuse their own companions for life” are all that is required to be happy (408), Rivers does not forget the money that has made his success possible. Although he continues to insist that he has always “had infinite contempt” for a fortune, “and fancied it would take from, than add to my happiness,” he also does not deny that “Colonel Willmott has made me just as rich as I wish to be” (407). For a cynical reader, this revelation might undermine everything else that Rivers has done to reassure Arabella about the variety and pleasure of married life, pointing out that it is, in the end, only financial freedom that really permits “no rule but inclination,” and that it is only the spoils of empire that make possible the attitude (and pleasure-seeking priority) that Rivers claims will secure them from “any danger of vegetating” (406). Brooke works hard, however, to resist wrapping up Rivers’ story as a celebration only of upward mobility. Rivers admits, of course, “all [the] value” of a fortune now that “I can possess it as well as [Emily],” but he continues to insist upon “spirit,” vivaciousness and an openness to fine feeling as the resources that have really made his English Eden possible (407); he does not deny that the influx of colonial wealth has made things easier and the future brighter, but he points to the fact of his fortune as an indication of his success, rather than its instrument. To this end, even Rivers’s famous conclusion – with a reference to *Candide* – emphasizes the work on his affections to shape a world that he ultimately finds “agreeable”: to demonstrate to Arabella that the “beneficent Author of nature…gave us these affections for the wisest purposes,” he interrupts himself, speaking as if in Arabella’s voice, to say, “‘Cela est bien dit, mon cher Rivers; mais il faut cultiver
notre jardins’ (408). Here, his affections themselves are a gift from God, the most “beneficent author of Nature” – and so Rivers will use those affections, as he claims that God intends, to cultivate his garden. In this light, it does not matter that Rivers will never be a gentleman farmer capable of literally improving Canada’s “barren” prospects; rather, the hero that Brooke imagines here will cultivate the garden of his future by nurturing his gifts, the “affection,” “spirit and vivacity” that have so far brought his romantic – or affective – story to such a successful conclusion.

VII. Conclusion

Although the novel opens with the “epithet” levelled against Canada’s prospects and “the intenseness of its cold” (63; 147), Brooke thus concludes with an emphasis on the delight inspired by Canadian sunshine, and “affection” itself identified as the key to cultivating a garden in what seemed to be a barren exile. This transformation has significant implications for future writing about Canada’s weather, particularly in the context of the colony’s troubled administration. Taking up what was already a flexible metaphor for unpredictable change, Brooke’s early references to rumours about the strangeness of Canada’s weather – so extreme that English readers “can form no idea” (109) – figure the immeasurable differences that an increasingly global empire must attempt to integrate, and Arabella’s complaints about the “congealing” cold reflect a pervasive concern with

35 Although this topic is also, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present chapter, Voltaire’s treatment of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake also presents an interesting intertext for Brooke’s novel – and it is, after all, Voltaire’s observation that Canada is nothing but a few acres of white snow (“quelques arpents de neige”) that helps to establish the reputation Brooke works so hard to counter in Emily Montague. By looking closely at how Voltaire and Brooke each engage with the theory of a divine order and human suffering set out in Pope’s Essay on Man, we might also see Brooke transform Voltaire’s argument against optimism into an argument for more assertive linguistic and cultural assimilation of the French – or a way to realize the potential Voltaire denies could lie in these “few acres of snow.” Both, of course, are interested in the limits of practical action, or what role we should play in pursuing and seeking to secure the happiness of our own lives, and each seems to find in Pope’s sense that all liberty is limited a sort of freedom to focus on “cultivating” one’s own happiness; in Candide, however, Voltaire’s conclusion is meant to confirm that Pangloss’s optimism has failed (and so the characters should struggle instead to cultivate their gardens), while Brooke instead seems to invoke Candide’s call to action to make one final point about not leaving Canada to improve on its own, and so to advocate for more assertive intervention in the farther flung gardens of empire. For other critical perspectives on this reference to Candide, see Howells, “Dialogism in Canada’s First Novel”; Sellwood, “A Little Acid is Absolutely Necessary”; and especially New, “Frances Brooke’s Chequered Gardens.”

36 From a novel that begins with “barren” prospects and proceeds with such a focused attention on the effects of weather, of course, a final imperative to cultivate one’s garden might be taken literally – but here, Brooke specifically identifies the tools of that cultivation as “affections,” not the implements of farmers.
the wide range of local influences hard to control in colonies so far away. For all the moments that the weather appears to affect the behaviour of those living under it, however, Brooke’s correspondents’ anxiety about environmental influence is consistently misplaced. From the agricultural productivity that seems buried by the snow to the love plots that seem iced over by the cold, Brooke invokes the threat of determinism only to subvert it, each time pitting the risk associated with the weather against local cultural and religious forces to redirect her readers’ concern towards the problem she sees in the latter. By aligning Canada’s cold with tyrannical influence, Brooke aims to cultivate support for a more assertive administration in the name of British liberty, but she ultimately insists that it is the deadening and wasteful French Catholic influence – rather than the material cold – that has made the region’s human and natural resources so unproductive.

At the same time, however, that Brooke argues that there are forces at work on those living in Canada worse than the “intenseness of its cold,” she has been changing what it means to be overwhelmed by the weather. Comparing the cold out of doors and the coldness of character that make trouble for her British protagonists, Brooke’s love plots consistently champion “trembling sensibility” over cold civility – insisting both that it is better to be too warm than too cold in matters of the heart, and that the fine feeling that makes an attractive lover can also help one discover the fun in any “frost piece.” By the novel’s end, weather has shifted from being a force that overwhelms to a force by which Brooke’s protagonists frequently choose to be overwhelmed – a position that, as Arabella and Rivers happily demonstrate, can be modeled with ease by readers on either side of the Atlantic. By correcting the rumours of bad weather that open the book not with evidence that the weather is good, then, but rather with scene after scene that demonstrates the pleasure her characters find in occasionally allowing their impulses to be governed by the weather, Brooke develops a model of sensibility that might be productively exported to the colonists already in Canada. If only those subjects constrained by their Catholic sympathies might choose to be governed by this British virtue, Brooke suggests, Madame Des Roches could reveal the “trembling sensibility” of “an English girl, who loves for the first time” (306). Like the “melting languor” of the spring thaw that brings her English characters such joy (171), the warm front Brooke
imagines has agricultural consequences, too: if only those French subjects stultified, like the farmers Arabella observes “too idle to work,” might choose to be governed instead by British sensibilities, Brooke promises they could plough up “a field of wheat…as fine as I ever saw in England,” just waiting under the fertilizing snow (61-62).

Although not quite an advocate for Johnsonian mind over matter, then, Brooke does seem to believe that the right attitude – or affection – can make any scene a “frost piece” (148), and so she unfolds her love plot amidst the worst Canadian winter in seventeen years to illustrate just what sort of sensibility she believes will help the British cultivate the increasingly diverse gardens of their growing empire. As Brooke knew as well as any other “political writer in England” (63), the struggle to win Canadians’ affections had long turned on questions of influence, both regarding the colonists’ persistent French Catholic commitments and the limits of a response that would not compromise the freedom of choice British governance purported to deliver. To counter the concern that these obstacles might render “barren” the most promising spoils of imperial war, Brooke presents here a new fantasy about how British agents in Canada might align themselves with a liberating spirit of “chearfulness and festivity” that could set even the most intense local influences “at defiance” – and by taking up the still-controversial rhetoric of environmental determinism to do so, Brooke also reveals the politics of the weather underpinning her characters’ predilection for pathetic fallacy. To this end, always attuned to her readers’ concern that the cold might exert real power over those already living in Canada, Arabella’s weather reports – and the creative potential she eventually finds in her “frost pieces” – are never just experiments with the boundaries between emotional and external conditions. In an age of massive imperial expansion, Brooke argues, travellers’ reports on being governed by a force like the weather offer a useful model for other sorts of governance – particularly, as she demonstrates here, if this experience can be recast as optional and positive, as free as the choice to look for the “thousand lovely children” in the rolling fog, and as easy to export as the reminder to “smile” along with the spring.
Chapter 4

“Very little…civil regulation”: Governing the weather in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*

For British writers throughout the eighteenth century, the weather never appeared more dangerous than when it began to saturate debate within the House of Commons. Writing for *The Humourist* in 1720, for instance, Thomas Gordon is troubled by a vision of a Parliamentarian “inspired by a cool walk in the Garden,” his “best speeches” no more than the reactions of an animal enslaved by instinct.¹ Twenty years later, Joshua Sharpe’s case for the Hudson’s Bay Company would invoke a similar view of the weather’s “prodigious” influence to quite different ends – and for the rest of the century, the Company’s critics would complain, as John Campbell does, that this view of the Company Adventurer too overwhelmed to return a reliable report on the “freezing and frightful” conditions in Rupert’s Land was simply too good for the Company’s monopoly to be true.² In 1759, likewise, Samuel Johnson imagines an astronomer “tyrannize[d]” by the “airy notion” that he can control the weather, a warning about the failures of self-governance implicit in any claim to govern the world³ – and even in 1769, as Frances Brooke attempts to reframe a willingness to be overwhelmed by external influence as an attractive quality in a British subject, she can’t help but remind the new Governor of Canada (to whom her book is addressed) that these “gentle arts of persuasion” are meant for the children, not the parents, of a strong imperial family.⁴ Over and over again, the texts under investigation in this dissertation have been preoccupied with problems of good governance, and specifically concerned with the challenge that “boisterous and changeable” weather seems to offer to British decision-makers’ abilities to govern themselves. As the introduction and first chapter of this dissertation have demonstrated, there are good political and economic reasons for this trend. To begin with, the technological changes that popularized daily meteorological observation had also inspired a raft of eighteenth-century writing about “changeable” weather, emphasizing its

² Hudson’s Bay Company, “Case,” 1-3.
⁴ Brooke, *Emily Montague*, 221.
ability both to overwhelm rational faculties and to level the distinctions between social types – and especially where this “changeable” weather turned up in writing about empire, the image of the British character under pressure from unremitting and unpredictable external forces had become a powerful emblem for the dangers of imperial overreaching. Particularly during this period of perpetual war in the name of expanding British territory all over the world, writers and weather-watchers alike thus found themselves increasingly worried about both the operations of external influence and about the limits of self-governance that the weather – that banal but inescapable evidence of external influence – so often seemed to expose. By 1771, however, Tobias Smollett would tell a very different story. In The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, the weather is worse and the travellers are testier than any this dissertation has considered so far, but neither of these conditions is entirely out of the sphere of human control. In Humphry Clinker, that is, “weather-beaten” bodies – bodies drenched with rain or shivering with cold – appear not to mark the limits of human agency, but rather to call the reader to action: these bodies, marked by bad weather, appear wherever Smollett’s protagonists identify a city or situation that could be governed more effectively, often asserting his characters’ right to intervene to keep the most brutal effects of the weather under better control. What changed? How, in the space of fifty years, did the weather turn from a force that governs the mind and marks the body into a force that could be mitigated by more forward-thinking governance?

In the 1749 Parliamentary Inquiry surrounding the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Charter and in Frances Brooke’s The History of Emily Montague (1769), this dissertation has identified two case studies that illustrate how writing about the weather – and about the threat of influence implicit in writing about colonial weather in particular – evolved throughout the middle of the eighteenth century. Both case studies emphasize the politics of the weather, or the way that eighteenth-century writing about the weather helped to bolster British claims to contested colonial territory; however, the two quite different functions of rumours about hyperbolically bad weather in the colonies also illustrate how British writing about environmental influence changed along with the shape of the empire. As British enterprise in Canada shifted away from territorial acquisition and raw
resource management and towards trade and assimilation, the liberty that Britons claimed
to export also became a more pressing concern in narratives attempting to articulate
Canada’s value – and so the threat that the overwhelming influences of the colonies
seemed to pose to the British character became less of a problem by the time Brooke was
writing *Emily Montague* than it appeared during the fight for the Hudson’s Bay
Company’s monopoly. Under pressure to justify the British right to influence those who
have not chosen their own leaders, writing about colonial weather in the years after the
1759 fall of Quebec more often emphasized its levelling effects, highlighting a universal
experience of inevitable influence in order to justify the types of British intervention that
might make this experience even a little more pleasant. Everyone, Brooke suggests, is
subject to the weather, but whether this is a painful or liberating condition depends on the
enthusiasm with which British subjects embrace its changeable force – and so colonial
weather comes to stand in for the similarly inevitable, similarly persistent British
influence in Canada that promised to “by every means induc[e]” these French Catholic
colonists to “adopt…the mild genius of [British] religion and laws, and that spirit of
industry, enterprise, and commerce, to which we owe all our greatness.”

To explain how Gordon’s vision of the Parliamentarian “enslaved” to the weather could
give rise to the imperial sensibility Brooke celebrates in these “frost pieces,” this
dissertation has also tracked the following change in writing about environmental
influence: from a source of fear meant to register a lack of control to a source of freely
chosen pleasure, the changeable force associated with the weather reflects a series of
interrelated shifts in thinking about the vulnerability of the British character, the relative
influence that external forces are able to exert over the shape of that character, and the
place of liberty – or freedom from tyrannical influence – in protecting and promoting the
promise of British imperialism. Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* condenses and amplifies
these themes. Like Brooke, Smollett is interested in the social benefits of “sensibility,” or
the uniquely English receptiveness to external influence that she recommends for export
at the end of *Emily Montague*; like Brooke, Smollett tells a story about an enervating
“change of air,” tracing the travels of Matthew Bramble, man of feeling, across urban

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5 Brooke, *Emily Montague*, 148.
England and rural Scotland. Unlike Brooke, however, Smollett is curious about the physical consequences of this vulnerability to airy influence. Bramble travels to improve his health, which means that he is as much afraid of air-borne infection as he is hopeful that this “change of air” will cure him – and Humphry Clinker, as above, is full of the weather-beaten bodies that seem to bring Bramble’s fears to life. These bodies, already weak and weakened further by the weather, pose serious risks to one another: they ooze, smell, and fall apart, casting off contaminated bits and pieces that threaten to corrupt not only the air but also the character of the nation they comprise. Viewing the world through the eyes of a hypochondriac man of feeling, Humphry Clinker thus diagnoses the social diseases responsible for all this deterioration, and presents Smollett’s prescription for the problem. This is a novel, first and foremost, about how Matthew Bramble gets well – and in the parallel between Bramble’s progress and the movements of the other weather-beaten bodies Bramble meets along his way, Smollett reveals the real action that the civic-minded traveller could take to bring this improving “change of air” home to England.

To this end, the role the air plays in Bramble’s self-diagnosis and eventual cure both affirms the shift in thinking about the dangers of environmental influence that this dissertation has set out so far, and illustrates the implications of this shift for the emerging eighteenth-century theories of environmental medicine and good governance. Initially, Bramble views the air as a threat, but one that travel might eventually help him to escape, if only he can find the external conditions that will help him to keep his internal conditions in better balance. Where Bramble imagines his body as a hydraulic machine, however, subject to the same physical forces that govern the rest of the natural world, he is also engaging with emerging theories of environmental medicine – and shifting, along with them, the responsibility for maintaining good health away from the doctor and patient, and towards those responsible for managing other kinds of everyday risk. To test this theory, Bramble travels to Bath, a city in the midst of a massive renewal project, and one that Smollett’s contemporaries would have recognized as an experiment in improving the physical and moral health of the nation through architectural

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6 Smollett, Humphry Clinker, 339. All parenthetical citations refer to this text.
redevelopment and considered urban planning. Bramble is disappointed, however, with the practice of environmental medicine that he observes at work in Bath: though he does find that the recent architectural redevelopment has had an effect on the character of the travellers passing through the city, he is frustrated to discover that so many of these changes promote greater circulation of both people and money – because with these forms of circulation, he insists, also comes heightened exposure to disease, among other forms of environmental danger. Everywhere he looks in Bath, he finds the weather-beaten bodies that seem to prove his point – the marks of their exposure evidence not just of the infection waiting everywhere in the air, but also an indictment of the city’s architect, who has failed to address this predictable risk.

By tying the image of a weather-beaten body to scenes of unregulated liberty, excess, and an unhealthy lack of restraint, Smollett both identifies these bodies as the products of poor governance and positions any intervention that can prevent or reverse the effects of this exposure on the side of (relatively) better governance. Each of these moves, however, speaks to the significant shift in thinking about the weather that has already taken place since Gordon and Johnson published their articles about how “reproachful” it must be “to a being endowed with reason…to resign its powers to the influence of the air.”7 To begin with, both the emerging theory of environmental medicine and Bramble’s sense that city design has anything to do with good health depend on the early eighteenth-century technological and epistemological shifts that had recently re-invented the weather as a daily phenomenon available to empirical measurement; it’s only in an age in which even the most variable of variations can be predicted within a relatively temperate range, as Smollett points out, that readers should be concerned by evidence of the weather’s harm, because these marks now suggest that the British body has been left vulnerable to damage that easily could have been mitigated. In each scene in which these weather-beaten bodies appear, furthermore, Bramble’s prescription for good governance always introduces new restraint: more shelter, less free circulation, and a willingness to resign oneself to any

7 Johnson, “Discourses on the Weather.”
paternalistic intervention that might make these conditions even slightly less punishing.⁸ This is as true in Bath, he argues, where more arcades would protect the city’s “gouty and Rheumatic” travellers from the rain (35), as it is in North Britain, where Bramble encounters the book’s most “weather-beaten” body in a Scottish soldier, Lismahago (202), exposed both to the worst “storms of life” and torture in an undersupported outpost of Britain’s North American empire (56). In each case, Bramble asserts, the weather-beaten body reveals the dire consequences of unfettered liberty, unobstructed circulation, and the rapacious pursuit of growth – and the only action that seems to be able to reverse this damage, “smooth[ing]” out the haggard face of the Scottish soldier “like a raisin in a plum-porridge,” is restraint, the imposition of physical (or legal) barriers that will limit the freedom that has left the British body so vulnerable (347). Borrowing an argument already refined in writing about the potentially overwhelming influence of the colonies – that relative freedom is better than none – Smollett thus extends an invitation to all British readers to demand more of those responsible for managing the increasingly global spaces through which they circulate, and to expect less of the liberty with which they plan to circulate in the first place.

Although Humphry Clinker seems to be a book about managing the risks posed by the air, then, it’s actually a book about managing people. “A change of company,” as Bramble discovers, is “as necessary as a change of air” (339) – and by dwelling on the dangers that seem to lurk everywhere in the air, Smollett has found a way to make a British right to manage people appear natural, necessary, and even welcome. By exploiting what had become a common fear of the universal and overwhelming effects of environmental influence, Smollett makes a case for any intervention that will make the

⁸ Here, “restraint” might be differently characterized as shelter. From the novel’s outset, Bramble imagined that the solution to his physical aches and pains might be better equilibrium, or the external conditions, as above, that might help keep his internal conditions in better balance. As he discovers that the air might not improve anywhere, he shifts the target of his search towards freedom from overwhelming influence; if he cannot find air free of infection, he can at least find a space in which that infected air need not encroach quite so closely. Seeking shelter thus became one way for the valetudinarian traveller to avoid contamination from too-free circulation – but by the novel’s conclusion, Bramble takes on the responsibility for creating the sheltered space he seeks, both for the preservation of his own body and for others. Given the similarity between this approach and Brooke’s efforts to export a British sensibility that embraces external influence, that paternalism seems to be the most argumentatively significant part of the solution he recommends.
physical burden of this influence somewhat easier to bear—and so promotes a vision of relative liberty, relative freedom, and a British right to impose restraint for even this modest gain and self-defence.

I. Hypochondria in Humphry Clinker and eighteenth-century environmental medicine

For all of Bramble’s anxiety about the operations of environmental influence, however, and his persistent fear that he will be changed for the worse by the forces of the air around him, the book begins with a complaint about the opposite problem: his correspondent, Dr. Lewis, has not been able to change his condition fast enough, and so Bramble has started to wonder about the limits of the prescriptions that his doctor can offer. “I have told you over and over again,” he complains to his doctor, “how hard am I to move,” and yet he has just swallowed another set of pills so “good for nothing,” he declares, that he “might as well swallow snow-balls to cool my reins” (5). Here, Bramble has adapted one of Falstaff’s quips (from The Merry Wives of Windsor, in which he calls for sack to warm a “belly as cold as if I had swallowed snowballs”) to explain that Lewis’s pills have kept his reins (loins) cool when he wants them warm enough to “move”9— but, from his very first lines, he has also identified himself as a man interested in both the weather and the hydraulic principles by which his body might be brought into better balance (say, by swallowing snowballs). Bramble already seems curious, in other words, about the relationship between his external and internal conditions, but critical of the cures currently available to him—and so from the moment the book opens, Smollett has identified this frustration with the way emerging theories of environmental illness and its remedies have so far been applied as an important context and concern for the rest of the story to follow.

Despite Bramble’s exasperation (“Prithee send me another prescription” [5]), however, Smollett does not identify Dr. Lewis as the cause of his protagonist’s problems. Instead, both formally and thematically, Humphry Clinker is preoccupied with environmental

9 “Cooling the reins” was a common euphemism for stopping diarrhoea; for instance, see Sharp, The Midwives Book, 159 (and notes on 225).
influence and the risks that come with it. Formally, for instance, it is significant that twenty-seven (or one-third) of the book’s eighty-two letters are narrated by Bramble, a hypochondriac: predisposed to identify not just emerging but all potential illnesses and possible dangers, Bramble is constantly shifting his attention from his immediate aches and pains to the errors of environmental design that might have caused – or could have prevented – the illnesses that he imagines await him around every corner. It is equally significant, however, that the rest of the letters are not narrated by Bramble, as the novel’s own shifting attention lends credence to his fears. Famous for its formal experiments to register – as Walter Scott put it – “the various effects produced upon different members of the same family by the same objects,” Humphry Clinker is narrated by five wildly dissimilar characters, each with as much to say about where to find the truth in their competing versions of the same story as any Smollett scholar in the long critical conversation about this technique. On the subject of Bramble’s letters, in particular, and their uncanny tendency to expose the dangers hidden in plain sight in scenes his fellow travellers have enjoyed without concern, Bramble’s niece proposes that “people of experience and infirmity” simply “see with very different eyes” from those of the young and healthy (93) – and yet the very fact that each traveller in the Bramble party so often seems to “see with…different eyes” than the others makes it difficult to insist the risks Bramble sees aren’t real. After all, as Tom Keymer has observed, the “mutually incompatible reports of the five narrators” also suggest that “partiality is an ineradicable condition of all experience and discourse” – and so perhaps, by dwelling on the “imperfect conditions of knowledge” acquired by any one character in any one place, Smollett means to demonstrate that the world can never be shown “as it really is,” but only as “it is…variably perceived.”

For further commentary on the proportion of the narrative devoted to each epistolary author, see Skinner, Constructions of Smollett, 190. As Skinner points out, most of the book is narrated through Jery Melford, both in terms of number of letters (28 to Bramble’s 27) and in terms of number of pages (166 to Bramble’s 135). On the other hand, as Skinner observes but does not investigate, critical interest in Humphry Clinker has focused on Smollett’s treatment of the Bramble party’s female characters (who together make up less than one third of the book), often positioning Bramble as the patriarch.


makes him more attune to airborne dangers as invisible to others as, say, the airy pleasures of Vauxhall Garden are to him (93). However, even if both danger and pleasure might exist at once at Vauxhall, Smollett still devotes nearly twice as many letters to Bramble’s fears as to any other, more optimistic character (other than Bramble’s nephew, Jery) – a decision that both highlights the hypochondriac’s perspective, and suggests this anxious way of looking at the world might be uniquely capable of illuminating something that the rest of the novel’s readers in fact need to see.\(^\text{13}\)

By delivering so much of the narrative through this hypochondriac gaze, first of all, Smollett directs the novel’s criticism away from poor Dr. Lewis, who is only ever responsible for treating Bramble’s individual symptoms, and towards the flawed environmental design that seems to have caused the illness in the first place. To this end, weather is still the vector of physical disease that most often catches the hypochondriac’s eye – but even where he identifies it as a source of likely danger, Bramble himself rarely names weather as the cause of the illnesses he fears. In part, this is because the cantankerous Bramble is less concerned with the weather’s broad characteristics (like changeability) than with his specific complaint about its condition at any given moment: though he dislikes the “hot weather” that makes the fish stink in London (121), he is equally unhappy when the “wind blowing from the north” makes the water too cold to swim in at Scarborough (183), and more frustrated still with the “perpetual drizzle” that makes riding impossible through Clifton-Downs (111).\(^\text{14}\) In almost every letter in which he grousches about the weather, however, Bramble is most concerned with the poor civic

\(^{13}\) See Rousseau, “Smollett and the Picaresque.” In this chapter, I follow Rousseau in identifying Bramble as an important unifying figure for the narrative; though his letters do often contradict his fellow travellers’, Bramble is also, as Rousseau observes, somewhat more “multidimensional and psychologically complex” than the rest of his party (1896) – and because it is his hypochondria that so often reveals Bramble’s psychological complexity, this chapter argues that these persistent worries about the risks associated with the weather ultimately contribute to, rather than undermine, Bramble’s authority. For another perspective on the way that Smollett’s own “deteriorating health,” demonstrated in his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), “sharpens his observations about the ways in which cultural, social, economic, and political practices corrupt the physical environment and, therefore, jeopardize the stability of the state and the well-being of its inhabitants,” see Van Renen, “Biogeography”; Van Renen reads Bramble as a sort of “alter-ego” for the author (397).

\(^{14}\) For other examples of Bramble’s frustration with “perpetual rain” in particular, see his letters from Hot Well (April 20) (24), Bath (April 23) (35), and Nithsdale (Sept. 15) (269). This chapter focuses on the “almost perpetual…rain” Bramble observes at Bath (35).
planning that has turned this wide range of predictable meteorological conditions into *risks*. “Shock[ed]” by the incredible “inconvenience[s] that exten[d] over the whole city” of Bath, for instance, Bramble claims he cannot turn his head without discovering a new instance of bad weather made worse – that is, more dangerous – by poor urban planning (35). Not only do the “chairs standing soaking in the open street…till they become so many boxes of wet leather, for the benefit of the gouty and rheumatic,” he observes, but even the “close chairs, contrived for the sick, by standing in the open air, have their frieze linings impregnated like so many spunges, with the moisture of the atmosphere” (35). Here, the bad weather does not necessarily cause gout or rheumatism, but it does signal some potential danger to those already ill – and because the hypochondriac is always looking past this present danger and towards its worst possible outcomes, Bramble’s particularly anxious approach to these problems also invites the reader to think beyond the symptoms of his concern towards their cause. Fortunately, the solution to this potential problem starts from the outside and works inwards, too: if only, Bramble muses, “instead of the areas and iron rails [that ring the Circus]…there had been a corridor with arcades all round, as in Convent-Garden”; under these circumstances, “the appearance of the whole would have been more magnificent,” and, more importantly, “those arcades would have afforded an agreeable covered walk, and sheltered the poor chairmen and their carriages from the rain” (35). As he once worried that the rain will work on the chairs and so work on the body, he now imagines that the shelter that protects the boxes from the rain will protect even the most “gouty and rheumatic” from further harm – and so, trading in hypothetical causes and consequences, the hypochondriac Bramble presents the preservation of health as a matter of managing large-scale environmental forces, including but not limited to the weather.

While diagnosing the dangers of the city through a series of worst-case scenarios, the weather provides Bramble with a shorthand for possible but predictable dangers: one among many possible hazards, but one that might be easily contained (as in the case of the arcades, above). Returning to the hazards of Bath, for instance, Bramble complains at length about the Circus’s short-sighted design: the “only entrance,” he finds, “through Gay-street, is so difficult, steep, and slippery, that in wet weather, it must be exceedingly
dangerous, both for those that ride in carriages, and those that walk-a-foot” (35). Once again, rain itself need pose no threat to “those that ride in carriages, and those that walk-a-foot,” but it can be made risky for these travellers by a city plan that forces their bodies to linger in it, or any space designed to exacerbate – rather than mitigate – the predictable effects of exposure. Here, Bramble’s argument relies on a few new but important ideas about environmental influence and the risks associated with the weather. Tracing the developments that helped to produce this “topocentric approach” to viewing “health and disease as a matter of how the body was placed vis-à-vis its surroundings,” Janković argues that environmental medicine – or the “medicalization of physical surroundings” – became “possible” and then “integral” over the course of the long eighteenth century, and he identifies two key economic and epistemological contexts that helped to facilitate this shift in thinking about environmental risk and its management. To begin with, he argues, “comfort engendered discomfort” (5). “Only at points in history when people achieve security, in a space sheltered from hazards such as leaky roofs, cold, dirt, and hunger,” Janković proposes, “can they enjoy the privilege of reflecting on such misfortunes as avoidable threats rather than intrinsic modalities of life” (4). For Janković, safety and a sense of harm exist in an inverse relationship, and so it should be no surprise that the eighteenth century, marked by its “steady growth of affluence and…improvements in housing, clothing, heating, and communication,” also is the period in which weather became a subject of special concern for the medical profession (4-5). As the “technological ascent of comfort dislodged weather from its place in mundane experience,” Janković explains, medical writers became increasingly preoccupied with “the ills attributed to airborne poisons, seasonal change, indoor pollution, and occupational and endemic exposures” – and so, he concludes, the eighteenth-century ability to “enginee[r] a ‘weather-proof’ lifestyle might have been the source of, rather

15 Vladimir Janković, Confronting the Climate: British Airs and the Making of Environmental Medicine (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 4-5. All parenthetical citations to Janković in this section refer to this text. Janković acknowledges that “the eighteenth-century medicalization of physical surroundings was not new,” and he does point backwards to sources like Hippocrates’s Airs, Waters, Places to demonstrate that previous medical treatises also “discussed street direction, sunshine, and prevailing winds” (3); however, only in the eighteenth century, he explains, did this approach become “integral, not only to medical and architectural considerations, but also to enlightened humanitarianism, moral theory, and political argument,” such that “the locus of illness move[d] from the individual body to the space between bodies,” and the “healthy body came to be seen as an asset exposed to hazards, but that could also be trained to withstand them” (3).
than the solution to, health hazards, in that it raised expectations about environmental comfort” (5).

Reading *Humphry Clinker* with Janković’s history of environmental medicine in mind, Bramble’s hypochondria seems both to reflect this change in thinking about the environmental causes of all illness, and to model a new way of thinking about who is responsible for helping him maintain his good health. According to Janković, “the beginning of ‘environmental’ attitudes lies in the separation between the experienced and achievable” (4), and it is in this widening gap that eighteenth-century readers began to fear any “experienced” condition that falls short of these new expectations about what constitutes safety. Janković also observes, however, that “hazards that elude prevention are perceived to be more threatening the greater our faith in the means to prevent them” (5), such that medical concern with the possible effects of exposure expands in inverse proportion to the means to mitigate its harm; only once readers can compare their current experience to what is achievable, or some better alternative that is also now known to be possible, can those readers begin to identify one environment as safer than another.

Turning back to consider the politics of Smollett’s weather in light of this argument, Bramble’s careful attention to the operations of environmental influence now also seems to shift the responsibility for keeping the British body safe away from the doctor and patient, and towards those responsible for managing other kinds of risk. As a hypochondriac, Bramble lives in this gap between what is experienced and what is achievable: he is always looking ahead to future failure to identify (and learn to fear) danger in his current experience, and always looking backwards to past failure to place

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16 In an age of growing empire, of course, this sense that safety is relative has other implications. As the two case studies at the centre of this dissertation have demonstrated, contact with the colonies’ “extremities of heat and cold” helped to make the conditions in England appear both more safe and more vulnerable: on the one hand, the contrast with colonial extremes shifted British readers’ expectations about the comfort possible in one (familiar) part of the world, while on the other, the extremes themselves appeared more threatening as these readers became more aware of what they had to lose if too much of this colonial difference should make its way “home.” There is little question, furthermore, about Smollett’s interest in the comparative analysis and corrective self-reflection made possible in this age of global travel. Both as picaresque tale and as an epistolary novel narrated by many different characters, *Humphry Clinker* is formally invested in this process of contrast and adjustment. By presenting so many of his comments on these environmental dangers through this particular hypochondriac’s letters home to his doctor, however, Smollett also illustrates how this gap between what is experienced and what is achievable can be opened by the passage of time just as well as it is opened by travel through space.
blame for this unnecessary exposure. If, however, the eighteenth-century invention of comfort helped to produce Bramble’s sense that his potential harm increases in proportion with his potential safety, as Janković suggests, Smollett’s decision to commit one-third of the book to this anxious way of looking at the world also raises some questions. What, he seems to ask, are the political implications of viewing harm, and particularly the harm done by overwhelming external influence, in this way – growing greater with the awareness that it could be prevented, and growing faster with the ability to compare one situation to another?

An answer to this question is revealed in Bramble’s frustrated request of Dr. Lewis in the novel’s opening letter: “Prithee send me another prescription” (5). Because he imagines better health as an achievable condition, Bramble expects to be able to move towards that goal – either by treating his current condition, or by travelling to another environment that might do less harm to the health he already has. By seeking out treatment, furthermore, Bramble has also exposed the interventionist argument implicit in an emerging theory of environmental medicine: each time the hypochondriac notices that he could be safer, he also presumes that he should be safer – and so begins casting around for an agent to blame for this failure. Initially, as above, Bramble identifies his doctor as the source of his problems (“Why will you be so positive?”), but his ire spreads quickly outwards: to his fellow travellers, for instance (“As if I had not plagues enough of my own, those children of my sister are left me for a perpetual source of vexation”), and ultimately to the “artists” who design the cities that he must travel through on his way, he hopes, to better health (5; 36). What these “plagues” have in common, of course, is that they exist outside of Bramble’s body: the “source of vexation” is always external, moving from the outside in, and so the “prescriptions” he presents to address these plagues seem to work the same way. (Indeed, he declares, “I have told you over and over how hard I am to move” – and here, even the passive construction of his sentence, in which he presumes he must be moved, suggests his sense of his body’s place in this medical order; it will be acted upon, and it will not move itself) (5). In fact, Bramble’s impulse to identify all potential threats to his safety as external is so strong that he does so even when the problem exists entirely in his head: in the case of the slippery staircase at Bath,
for instance, nothing has happened to hurt the people he imagines using these stairs in mid-winter – and yet the “hazard” persists, imminent in the weather, the “inconvenient” location of the staircase itself (35), and in the myopia of the man who built it without considering these environmental conditions.

Given that so much of this action regarding health and illness takes place inside Bramble’s imagination, it is possible that Smollett means to critique this point of view – and yet other characters seem to share this view that the real risks to health here are both external and universal (rather than rooted in, say, the traveller’s own vulnerability). When asked to evaluate Bramble’s character, for instance, his nephew, Jery, agrees that Bramble seems to be “as tender as a man without a skin” (49) – but Jery also sees this as a condition worth celebrating; indeed, he claims he “never knew a hypochondriac so apt to be infected with good-humour” (49), inviting his reader to imagine Bramble’s physical weakness as a necessary condition for other sorts of tenderness. Unperturbed by the early eighteenth-century anxiety that this receptivity to external influence reflects some weakness of mind or conscience, and unwilling to blame Bramble for his vulnerability, Jery thus draws out the political consequences of this new way of thinking about whose failure poor health actually represents. If, as Jery proposes, Bramble’s body seems to work just like any other body, except that it is a bit more sensitive than most (more likely to be “infected,” that is, if only by good humour), this means that everywhere that Bramble lingers over the harms done to his sensitive skin and nerves, his uniquely impressionable body is merely making legible the forces acting on everybody else. This proposition also refigures Bramble’s vision of his body as a meteorological instrument – a metaphor of the same sort that early eighteenth-century writers once used to express their fear of an “automatic” response to the weather. Bramble insists, for instance, that his “opinion of mankind, like mercury in a thermometer, rises and falls according to the variation of the weather” (77); elsewhere, overcome as if by “an Egyptian gale,” Bramble faints – and finds, in this “swooning entirely occasioned by an accidental impression of fetid effluvia upon nerves of uncommon sensibility” (65), that he had become a human “hygrometer, or a paper of salt and tartar exposed to the action of the atmosphere” meant to measure the extent to which the air is “load[ed]….with a perpetual succession of
vapours” (36). In each case, Bramble’s body is “impress[ed]” by the “action of the atmosphere,” and so the impressions on his surface act on his spirits as the air acts upon his skin – but unlike Gordon or Johnson, again, this character is not worried about whether he can trust the “opinion of mankind” occasioned by the “variation in the weather.” Rather than being ashamed of his susceptibility to the effects of the air, Bramble presents his body as a “test”: his uniquely sensitive skin becomes a “paper” that makes the “action” of the air visible, the effects of its “effluvia” upon his nerves a record of the contents of the atmosphere. His skin might be thinner and more impressionable than others’, he suggests, but his “automatic” response merely makes the problem in the air visible, and so calls the reader’s attention to the potentially dire consequences of the shelter everyone is missing.

Once again, this analysis of what constitutes an environmental risk – a thin skin, a weak shelter – has further implications for Smollett’s political argument, raising urgent questions about governance, or what kinds of oversight and action are necessary in order to improve these risky conditions. In this view, the interior conditions of the body are governed by the forces operating on its skin, just as the conditions of the skin are governed by the conditions of the air – and to this end, Smollett’s theory of environmental influence is also an extension of his (widely-acknowledged) vision of the body as a hydraulic machine, “subject to the quantifiable laws of matter in motion.”

As Janković points out, however, this view of the body is tightly entangled with the emerging theory that the environment surrounding the body might constitute a site of influence. Tracing “aqueous” images throughout Smollett’s œuvre, for instance, Duhaime argues that the satirist is equally critical of overhasty or overzealous purgation and stopped circulation, and so points up these broken hydraulic systems in order to propose a balance between “inanition and excess.” Following Janković, however, this chapter will conceive of the “hydraulic body” more broadly, turning away from the movements of liquid in the body to explore the range of influences – from air to the “civic regulation” that Smollett suggests might exert more external pressure – that operate on the body to drive circulation in a hydraulic system. For more, see Janković, *Confronting the Climate*, 18; Duhaime, “Between Inanition and Excess”; and McMaster, “The Body Inside the Skin.”
risk, and – by corollary – with the shifting models of eighteenth-century medical intervention: its targets, its agents, and its markers of success and failure. “Following the work of William Harvey, Borelli, Robert Boyle, and Herman Boerhaave,” Janković explains, early eighteenth-century medical philosophers turned away from “a dualist ontology, based on the separation of the body of its surroundings,” casting the body instead “into a space ruled by contingency, governed by laws no different from those governing the body’s surroundings” (18). Suddenly, managing the health of the body required managing all of the physical laws of the universe, and so the perception of control associated with this vision of the body pulled, not surprisingly, in two directions. On the one hand, this change made everything risky: “being subject to the impact of heat, electricity, humidity, and gas elasticity,” Janković observes, this “hydraulic body” was vulnerable to “risks to health arising from something as indispensable and erratic as common air” (18). On the other hand, this change made almost everything a problem to be solved in the name of good health, and so seemed to encourage both doctors and patients to manage more assertively the matters of everyday life; as Janković observes elsewhere, this “hydraulic body operated in a world in which it had to be maintained through vigilance, surveillance, and management” (18). For Smollett, the second of these positions seems to be the most compelling, as Humphry Clinker makes an argument both for expanding control over those physical forces to which the hydraulic body is subject, and for an expanding sense of the spaces perceived to be “environmental.” From Bramble’s perspective, for instance, the “environments” that threaten his health open outwards from his tender skin to the air that impresses itself upon that skin to the design of the urban space that circulates that air. By the same stroke that he recasts Bramble’s body as a “test” for the quality of the air, Smollett thus also refigures the marks the air leaves upon this impressionable body as a record not of an individual failure or excessive vulnerability, but rather of a structural failure to keep the air clean – and an implicit

18 For his own purposes, Janković seems split on whether this vigilance constituted a reduction or expansion of the “medical art:” at one point, he suggest that the scope of medical intervention was “reduced…to the maintenance of a living machine by means of a change of air, dieting, purging, sweating, cold baths, and the like” (19); particularly where he surveys the work of Scottish practitioners George Cheyne and John Arbuthnot, however, he notes that both men identified a strong connection between “health and habit,” promoting a sort of “methodical self-care” in which “the medical art lay in deterring mundane risk, rather in curing their effects” (21).
criticism of the city below, source of the “vapours” that leaves its impressions on this human hygrometer’s surface. Under a new medical model that identifies risks to health in “something as indispensable and erratic as common air,” Smollett suggests, the scope of responsibility for managing the health of these hydraulic bodies must therefore open outwards from the patient and doctor to the urban architect and city planner.

II. Reactionary or restrained: Critical controversies about Smollett’s satire

Up to this point, this chapter has surveyed the eighteenth-century economic and epistemological conditions that helped to position the body’s environment as a risk to health and safety. Drawing on Janković’s history of environmental medicine, the previous section has proposed that the eighteenth-century “invention of comfort” helped to reframe the increasingly incidental experiences of everyday life – including the weather – as potential risks to be managed, and that the popularity of a medical model that conceived of the body as a hydraulic machine, subject to the same forces as the rest of the physical world, helped to expand the scope of responsibility for managing those risks. Fear of environmental influence has persisted as an important theme, too, particularly in the examples that demonstrate how Smollett engages with this “topographic approach” to health. Envisioning his body as an air quality test, Smollett’s hypochondriac protagonist often interprets his illness as evidence that the air is unclean – but in each moment that Bramble identifies the air as a possible risk to his health, I argue, Smollett also identifies the air as an environment that might be managed differently.

When it comes to identifying the specific agents responsible for managing the now diverse environments and external forces that must be kept in balance to keep the hydraulic body healthy, however, contemporary scholars of Smollett’s work have differed. While most agree that Smollett does mobilize medical metaphors to make a political argument, there is some debate about the particular positions that all of his diseased bodies and failed doctors are meant to endorse. Many, like Douglas Duhaime, believe that Smollett’s medical metaphors are “reactionary,” intended to expose problems
with the unbalanced circulation of commodities and capital. Some in this camp are more strident than others, though: the former, like Susan Jacobsen and John Sekora, believe Smollett takes a firm stand against all luxury, identifying his medical metaphors as evidence of his contempt for both the trading classes and the “corruption as self-interest” that allows too much of anything – specie, people – to become trapped in one bloated part of the national body. Even among more measured interpretations of Smollett’s medical metaphors, however, synecdoches like this one – in which the health of the body reflects the health of the nation – crop up everywhere, frequently mobilized to explore Smollett’s prescriptions for the social problems he diagnoses. According to Alex Wetmore, for instance, the sentimental novel presents itself as a “book of physic,” its textual (“physical”) practices meant to work upon the reader’s body to promote both health and virtue. Juliet McMaster, by contrast, puts a finer point on the mechanism by which Smollett’s satire achieves its therapeutic effects: just as Bramble finds his “spirits and health affect each other reciprocally” (and his “bodily complaints…remarkably mitigated by those considerations that dissipate the clouds of mental chagrin”), she suggests, the satirist treats the reader by inspiring a mental “evacuation.” By laughing at the suffering of the hypochondriac, McMaster concludes, “we are taking a bolus,” or a purgative pill, of our own.

There is another “prescription” implicit, however, in all this writing about the role of Smollett’s satire in treating the problems that his quack doctors cannot. By introducing the nation’s economic inequities as illnesses to be cured, Smollett also endorses certain types of political intervention in the name of restoring both fiscal and individual health. Among Smollett’s recent readers and critics, however, this argument is only ever implicit, because the agent charged with making social and political change is often

21 For more on this figure of the dropsical head, for instance, see Landa, “London Observed.”
22 Alex Wetmore, Men of Feeling in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Touching Fiction (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), especially Chapter 4: “Public/Health.”
23 Smollett qtd. in McMaster, “The Body Inside the Skin,” 291.
unclear. For McMaster, as above, the narrative of disease itself positions the satirist himself as a hero, operating on the part (the reader) to improve the condition of the whole (the nation)—but even as writers like Duhaime and Jacobson give more attention to “large-scale” circulatory problems that plague both part and whole, these critics are also more circumspect about what action Smollett proposes to bring Britain back to an equilibrium. Taken together, these two trends in writing about Smollett’s medical metaphors expose a gap: on the one hand, those who emphasize the satirist’s effects on the body of the reader do not typically treat Smollett’s wider political concerns (with commerce, luxury, or corruption), while on the other hand, those who emphasize his interest in the diseases of the body politic often do not identify the mechanism by which he imagines this body might be cured.

Behind Jacobsen’s suggestion that Smollett is frustrated with “the negligence of authorities” in general, however, rest a few questions that could help close this gap: who are these “authorities,” what do they govern, and what have they neglected to do? In the previous section, this chapter proposed that Smollett’s interest in sick and injured bodies is part of a wider movement towards thinking about illness as environmental, and the body as a hydraulic machine that must be maintained, in Janković’s phrase, “through vigilance, surveillance, and management” (18). In this view, the “authorities” charged with this vigilance are not just patients and doctors, responsible for the health of the individual body, but those who govern the circulation of many bodies through public

25 As eighteenth-century doctors “mythologized the process of disease and cure,” McMaster explains, the “cause of the disease usually has moral significance; the progress may be hastened or retarded, according to the patient’s behaviour; [and] the crisis, or determining moment of judgement, arrives when the patient, aided by the physician, succeeds or fails in evacuating the disease.” In this view, the humour Smollett finds in the body’s involuntary responses itself keeps the reader’s body in balance, and so the satirist’s “evacuation” acquires its moral significance from the inside out. McMaster, “The Body Inside the Skin,” 284.

26 For his part, Duhaime does acknowledges two competing efforts to “naturalize the emerging structure of the state” coalescing over the long eighteenth century – but even as he explains how both visions of the body politic reflect their adherents’ increasing interest in how new medical models could be mobilized to consolidate or redistribute political power in the name of maintaining public health, he does not attribute either of these biopolitical positions to Smollett himself. Jacobsen, by contrast, does identify in Smollett a specific interest in “regulation” and “restraint,” (81-82), but does not align this with a particular political program (or any hope for real change). Duhaime, “Between Inanition and Excess,” 565-591; Jacobsen, “Tinsel of the Times,” 81-82.

space and open air – and their “negligence” is marked, at least in *Humphry Clinker*, by the impression that the air leaves upon a body like Bramble’s, more sensitive to the everyday operations of environmental influence than most, but for that reason a good “test” for universal threats. By lingering over these weather-beaten bodies to demonstrate how the theory of environmental medicine has been put into poor practice, however, Smollett goes further than Jacobsen suggests – not just expanding the scope of the authorities responsible for good health (both individual and collective), but in fact demanding concrete and specific political action in order to rein in these environmental risks. Early in his trip to London, for instance, Bramble offers Dr. Lewis a “catalogue of London dainties,” a list of unfortunate foodstuffs that includes a “tallow rancid mass, called butter, manufactured with candle grease and kitchen stuff,” and laments that he has found “not sense enough among” those who would consume these goods “to be discomposed by the nuisance I have mentioned” (122). Surveying the table with disgust, Bramble calls it all “pollution” – and here, he might mean either that these substances will pollute (or “discompose”) the bodies of those who consume it or that the substances have already been polluted (“with candle grease and kitchen stuff”). Either way, he proposes that “all these enormities might be remedied with a very little attention to the article of police, or civil regulation” – but unfortunately, “the wise patriots of London have taken it into their heads, that all regulation is inconsistent with liberty; and that every man ought to live in his own way, without restraint” (122). By lingering over the potentially serious harm done to the body (“discomposed”) by the “pollution” it takes in, Smollett thus makes his case for the relatively minor intervention – here, “very little…civil regulation” – necessary to clear the air. This is the political argument always implicit in Smollett’s analysis of environmental risk. Physical health is positioned here as a relative condition, and so the “discomposed” body is identified as a failure that could and *should* have been prevented through better “regulation” (here regarding the composition of the butter); environmental risk is inevitable, Smollett insists, but the “enormity” of its effects “might be remedied,” if only the patriots of London would abdicate just a bit of their “liberty.”
III. “Altered it is, without all doubt”: Smollett’s complaints about city planning at Bath

By emphasizing the worst effects of unmitigated environmental influence, in other words, Smollett tries to justify the limits on British liberty that might make this influence somewhat easier to bear. In the two sections to follow, this chapter will investigate how Smollett applies this logic first to an argument for more conservative city planning, and then to the management of the British Empire. In both circumstances, the worst effects of unmitigated environmental influence are realized in the British body made sick by external “pollution” – and so Smollett lingers over these images of diseased, weakened, or otherwise “discomposed” bodies in order to make his case for the restraint and regulation that might have kept them safer. Even in an age of increasing economic and political circulation, Smollett discovers, fear of exposure offers a useful wedge against the persistent pressure to expand – and in the image of a weather-beaten body, framed here as a call for more vigilant oversight and more assertive intervention, Smollett further finds a way to endorse a theory of environmental medicine while condemning its present poor practice.

For contemporary readers of *Humphry Clinker*, discovering that these recurring images of bodies injured by their environments are meant to recommend restraint might also help to resolve a persistent critical controversy about the particular political argument implicit in Smollett’s treatment of Bath. With his eye always trained on hypothetical dangers, the hypochondriac Bramble is especially critical of Bath’s public architecture: he finds the houses cheaply made and ugly, the pump-rooms crowded and disgusting, and the city itself, “with those growing excrescences,” a “monster” (36). Given Smollett’s established interest in the synecdochal relationship between the health of individual Britons and that of the nation, however, Bath is a surprising target for this ire. Under the collaborative leadership of Richard “Beau” Nash and John Wood the Elder, Bath of the 1760s had become a well-known site of experiments in social planning through urban design – and so by the time that *Humphry Clinker* was published (1771), all of the new houses, new pump-rooms, and new staircases to new public arenas that Bramble dislikes so much would have been associated with this (again, synecdochal) effort to improve the health
and virtue of individual Britons by managing their movements through space and society.\footnote{Both the speed of Bath’s transformation and Wood’s reputation as a social planner will be discussed in more detail below; for more on Bath’s transformation, however, see Summerson, “John Wood and the English Town Planning Tradition”; Borsay, “Bath: An Enlightenment City?”; and Gesler, “Bath’s Reputation as a Healing Place.”} In light of the similarity between Smollett’s own interest in environmental influence and the program underway at Bath, furthermore, it is unlikely that Bramble’s constant complaints about Bath are meant to critique the general impulse towards managing people by managing space – and yet, at least among Humphry Clinker’s contemporary critics, there remains some debate about what, specifically, Smollett dislikes about Bath. Some, as Charles Sullivan has also recently observed, insist that Smollett is most concerned about the “unbalanced” concentration of wealth in the cities that will leave England’s rural communities drained, while others, such as Susan Jacobsen, believe Smollett is more worried about the possibility that urban mingling will cheapen the character of the “genteel people” with whom wealth and power should, he argues, be concentrated.\footnote{For a summary of this debate, see Sullivan, “Enacting the Scottish Enlightenment,” 439n8-10.} With attention to the way that Bramble articulates his concerns about Bath’s re-development, however, and specifically to the weather-beaten bodies that he uses to identify the city’s failures of governance, Smollett’s specific preoccupation with the “decomposition” of the British character facilitated by all this unrestrained circulation becomes more obvious. By emphasizing the “inconveniences” of Bath’s architecture, Smollett directs his criticism towards the aspects of Bath’s development led by the city’s chief urban planner (Wood), rather than by its Master of Ceremonies (Nash) – and so he seems to target Wood’s specific commitment to increasing the circulation of Bath’s many bodies through its new public spaces, and to praise, by contrast, Nash’s emphasis on the rules meant to organize a growing and increasingly diverse public sphere.

In the same way that Bramble’s opening quip about snowballs reveals that he is at once curious about emerging theories of environmental medicine and critical of their current application, that is, Humphry Clinker’s strong emphasis on the evidence of environmental risks exacerbated by Bath’s architecture reveals Smollett’s particular concern with the city architect’s social project. Just as the decision to dedicate nearly one full volume of the novel to a detailed description of Bath in particular would have been legible as a
serious contribution to an on-going conversation about cultural transformation and the “social organization of space,”

furthermore, Smollett’s first readers would have recognized, in Bramble’s persistent complaints about the city’s architecture, the speaker’s preference for one of two distinct stages in Bath’s recent revitalization. For most of the eighteenth century, Bramble would not have been alone in his sense that Bath is a “mean, dirty, dangerous” place, the destination of choice for “every upstart of fortune” who hoped to “mingle with the nobles and princes of the land” (34; 36). In 1700, for instance, the anonymous author of *A Step to Bath* paints a picture of the city that looks very much like Smollett’s: known best for its “reeking steams,” the place is “a Valley of Pleasure, yet a sink of Iniquity; nor is there any intrigue or debauch acted in London, but it is mimick’d here.”

Many other early visions of Bath make the same point, and with good reason: in the first half of the century, Bath was changing very quickly, and a massive migration from country to town was the primary engine of that change. Where Bramble comments on the specific architectural changes unfolding at Bath during the 1760s, however, he is more out of step with popular opinion of what was now more widely perceived as a rising city – and so these complaints reveal more of his real problem with the city’s revitalization program. In 1768, when Bramble arrives in Bath “shocked” to

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31 *A Step to Bath* (1700) qtd. in Gesler, “Bath’s Reputation,“ 32-33; see also Borsay, “Bath: An Enlightenment City?,” 9-11-12. In 1737, similarly, “The Diseases of Bath” presents a theory of the city’s environmental ailments that would not have seemed out of place in one of Bramble’s letters to his dear Dr. Lewis: from the observations on the “shallow stream / (whose oozy floods exhale a sickly steam) / …and in unwholesome fogs the city hides” to the “circling hills, thro’ whose wide-yawning chasms, / rough, jarring winds belch rheumatic spasms,” these early caricatures of the city seem to set the terms and the tone for Smollett’s later complaints. “The Diseases of Bath” (1737) qtd. in Borsay, “Bath: An Enlightenment City?,” 9.

32 In his cultural history of Bath, Peter Borsay provides the demographic data to support these anecdotal examples: during the course of the eighteenth century, he observes, “The Somerset spa grew…from a smallish country town of (about) 3000 inhabitants to a city of 33 000 people – about the tenth largest town in England and Wales.” In fact, most of that growth is concentrated in an even narrower span of time: though the city had already more than doubled in size between the Glorious Revolution and the beginning of the eighteenth century, it “boomed after Beau Nash arrived in 1703.” Given these similarities between Bramble’s complaints and contemporary records of the changes overtaking the city, it is likely that Smollett’s readers would have recognized the Bath they knew in his descriptions of the city. Borsay, “Bath: An Enlightenment City?”, 3; see also Ford, “Continuity and Change,” 258.

33 For most visitors, the city’s reputation significantly improved over the course of the eighteenth century – and around the time that *Humphry Clinker* was published, Bath had become known much more for its physical beauty (and the “coherence” of its architecture) than for the “reeking steams” of those portraits
find its staircases steep and its arcades left uncovered, he is in fact observing the second of two massive efforts to “eras[e] Bath’s medieval heritage and build[d] in its place a Georgian city modeled on the grandeur of Rome.” The first of these efforts at urban improvement was led, as above, by Richard (“Beau”) Nash (1674-1691), posthumously hailed as “The King of Bath.” The most generous treatments of Nash’s influence credit him with “introduc[ing] elegance and gentility to the hitherto raucous bathing scene,” and even more measured versions of Nash’s story agree that his long reign as master of ceremonies (1705-1761) coincided with a campaign to “put into practice aspects of the current theory of social conduct which equated politeness less with an adherence to manners than with an easy and enjoyable sociability.” To this end, Nash banned swords, standardized lodging fees, regulated “anti-social customs” like smoking and drinking, and established a series of “Rules to be observ’d at Bath” – and these rules, as biographer Philip Carter points out, “though humorous, indicate [Nash’s] attachment” to a

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34 Ford, “Continuity and Change,” 258.
35 For more on the fictional chronology of this section of the text, see Preston, introduction to The Expedition of Humphry Clinker. According to Preston, “The fictional chronology of Humphry Clinker covers about eight months from the first of April to the last of November during some unspecified year in the 1760s. The factual information, however, covers a longer time period. As Byron Gassman shows, ‘Seventeen sixty-three may be considered as the earliest necessary date because nothing appears in the novel that must be dated before then.’…The descriptions and allusions in the Bath section of the novel…indicate that the Bath of the travelers is the same Bath that Smollett visited often between 1765 and 1768. At that time Samuel Derrick was master of ceremonies, and though John Wood’s Circus was completed, his Crescent was only projected – to name a few of the many facts Matthew Bramble discusses that fit into a 1767-1768 chronology. Bramble’s further note that the streets were covered with snow for ‘fifteen days successively this very winter,’ as Lewis M. Knapp points out, refer to the winter of January 1767” (xxiii). See also Knapp, “Smollett’s Self-Portrait,” 151. Preston doesn’t cite a source for his reference to Gassman, but this probably refers to his unpublished dissertation for the University of Chicago, “The Background of Humphry Clinker” (University of Chicago, 1960).
36 Ford, “Continuity and Change,” 258. Nash’s Dictionary of National Biography entry is less effusive, pointing out that even if Nash’s appointment as the master of ceremonies at Bath did coincide with “Bath’s transformation from a place of convalescence to one which combined with a successful dedication to fashionable entertainment,” in fact Nash just happened to arrive at the same time that the city’s “corporation sought, through local legislation, to respond to the demands of an increasingly prosperous visiting public.” Philip Carter, “Nash, Richard (1674–1761),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., May 2008.
37 Carter, “Nash.”
particularly regulated approach to “civilized co-existence.”\footnote{Altough Nash’s reign as master of ceremonies overlaps with two distinct periods of infrastructural renewal in Bath (roughly speaking, before 1738 and afterwards), both Bramble and contemporary historians strongly associate the first of these with Nash’s cultural programme, and the second with the architects that reimagined Bath’s buildings, streets, and public spaces from the late 1730s forward. Most of the credit for this second period of transformation is given to John Wood, especially celebrated for “bringing an}

Although Nash is never mentioned by name in Humphry Clinker, he is everywhere in the background of Bramble’s observations on the city he visits for the second time in 1768. For example, when Bramble writes that he finds “nothing but disappointment at Bath; which is so altered, that I can scarce believe it is the same place that I frequented about thirty years ago” (34), he is looking back fondly at the city as it was run by this former “King.” In so doing, however, Bramble also attempts to draw a distinction between the influence of Nash’s regulatory approach and the other forms of architectural change that started during the same period (“thirty years ago”).\footnote{Altough Nash’s reign as master of ceremonies overlaps with two distinct periods of infrastructural renewal in Bath (roughly speaking, before 1738 and afterwards), both Bramble and contemporary historians strongly associate the first of these with Nash’s cultural programme, and the second with the architects that reimagined Bath’s buildings, streets, and public spaces from the late 1730s forward. Most of the credit for this second period of transformation is given to John Wood, especially celebrated for “bringing an}

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overall cohesion to town planning by using common materials (Bath limestone), a common idiom (Palladian designs), and a common scale, all fitted to the surrounding topography.”

The same terms (common, coherent) turn up across treatments of Wood’s contributions: for Gesler, as above, Wood’s major innovation was to enforce a common pattern across the buildings he erected towards a “New Rome”; Peter Borsay agrees, observing in Wood’s work, and in particular in “the treatment of the sequences of Queen Square, the Circus, and the Royal Crescent…innovations in town planning which contributed to the physical coherence of Bath, and were to spread later throughout Britain, reinforcing the city’s role as an engine of change.” When Bramble looks back fondly at the city he knew “thirty years ago” (34), then, he draws attention to the particular changes in the time between his visits that have been specifically attributed to Wood. Although both Wood and Nash were celebrated for bringing order to the “hitherto raucous bathing scene,” only Wood is credited for his efforts to unify the image that the city presented to its visitors. For Bramble, the distinction between these projects seems to turn on the question of legibility, or his ability to perceive the differences between these newly unified subjects. Under Nash, the new “Rules” helped to ensure that all revellers at Bath knew what was expected, but the regulations themselves did not necessarily obscure other differences of class or fashion. Wood’s Bath, however, is marked by the “common”

41 Gesler, “Bath’s Reputation,” 23-24. Among Wood’s biographers, this inclination to identify him as a town planner rather than an architect is even more pronounced. Barbara Coates, for instance, claims that “[t]here is no doubt that [Wood’s] real genius lay in the conception of the city as a whole, more than in the actual composition of individual buildings”; similarly, R.S. Neale emphasizes the hand that Wood’s architectural innovations played in Bath’s tremendous economic development over the course of the long eighteenth century, and credits Wood with re-imagining the previously troubled city’s “social organization of space.” Taken together, these biographies suggest that if Smollett wanted to investigate the possibility that this considered social planning might compel more polite behaviour among the city’s citizens (and its significance for a contemporary theory of good governance), he couldn’t have chosen a location or an “artist” more strongly associated with the effort. Barbara A. Coates, The Two John Woods, 18th Century Architects, of Bath (dissertation for the Royal Institute of British Architects, 1946): 95 and R.S. Neale, Bath: A Social History, 1680-1850 (London: Routledge, 1981): 173-226, both qtd. in Varey, “An Architect’s Imagination,” 82-83.

42 For Borsay, Wood’s greater accomplishment rests with the way he articulated, through this “coherent” pattern of architecture, “the corporate and public character” of Nash’s “Rules.” Highlighting the way Wood “designed and built the north side of Queen Square to incorporate several houses under a single palatial façade,” Borsay argues that Wood “was introducing into Bath a form of architecture which was the material embodiment of the public sphere. For instance, Borsay explains, Wood’s designs emphasize spaces – from the “immediate exterior of the crescent,” to “the inside of a square” – meant to be “subject[ed] to the full glare of the public gaze, and in which social contact was expected and encouraged”; likewise, “all these forms of buildings represented a type of collective architecture, in which individual dwellings were subsumed beneath a larger structure.” Borsay, “Bath: An Enlightenment City?” , 8.
front provided for all buildings along Queen’s Street – and for what fellow architect John Gwynn, in 1766, called the “heap of confused, irregular buildings” around the reverse side.43

Indeed, it’s Wood’s “common idiom” that seems to trouble Bramble most – not just because his new organization of social space encourages and enables unprecedented mingling in the public sphere, but because this unifying front has made it so much more difficult to parse the irregularity of the parts being mingled together. As above, Wood’s achievement along Queen Street was a series of facades, and because he sublet the construction to any builder who agreed to follow his design, a diverse groups of tenants were given free rein over the patterns of the insides of the buildings; as a result, according to Simon Varey, “no two interiors [in Bath] are alike, and the backs of the houses are as jumbled as the fronts are ordered.”44 Bramble expounds on both the aesthetic and architectural failures of these houses at some length – but the possibility that a proliferation of “irregular” characters might be lurking behind Wood’s ordered facades seems to present a bigger problem than the fact of irregularity itself. In the Bath of “thirty years ago,” Bramble suggests, a “confused, irregular” set of revellers might have arrived in the city for the season, but the average travellers would have had much less difficulty identifying the low from high without the “common” façade Wood had now provided.45


44 Varey, “An Architect’s Imagination,” 89. Varey also notes that Wood’s “early interior were carelessly conceived and constructed,” and “though he did improve this side of his work later,” the “flimsy interior walls” that he built through the 1730s “fell down every three years.” In one story – which Smollett would have especially appreciated – Varey recounts Wood’s failed attempt to “install ‘water closets at Chandos building’” as a “fiasco that made the old Duke explode with rage and accuse the young architect of unforgivable incompetence”: apparently, “The problem was that the toilet had wooden pipes, thus accidentally confirming one writer’s scornful remark that Bath was a place where ‘the Company…have scarce Room to converse out of the Smell of their own Excrements.’” That remark is attributed to John Richardson, in his continuation of the second edition of Defoe’s *Tour* (1738); see Varey, “An Architect’s Imagination,” 87n32.

45 Put another way: when Bramble reminisces about the Bath of Beau Nash, he’s looking back at a city run by strict regulations, but also at one organized by more exclusive, firmer class boundaries. Indeed, 1769 – one of three years between *Humphry Clinker’s* publication date and the year of its protagonists’ letters – was an especially fraught year for class conflict in Bath. According to Peter Borsay, “[T]here is no denying the paradox that the expansion of the public sphere in Bath was driven by the pursuit of private interests; and that the ‘company’, whatever its corporate ideals, was riven by levels of inter-personal tension, and
Even in the moments when Bramble’s opinions of Bath seem somewhat out of step with his contemporaries’ enthusiasm for the city’s rapid rate of change, then, the subject of his complaints reflects Smollett’s investment in this ongoing conversation about the social organization of space, and his specific interest in the implications of its effects on individual character for the character of the nation. Once again, Smollett at once approves the emerging principles of environmental medicine and condemns their current application: though Bramble is nostalgic for Nash’s effort to improve the health and virtue of the city’s visitors through external rules and regulations, he is critical of Wood’s influence on the many British bodies pressed into the rising city – and he is worried, as a result, about what these environmental changes will mean for the character of the empire these bodies comprise. This is what Bramble means when he calls Wood’s Circus “a pretty bauble, contrived for shew,” and claims that it “looks like the Vespasian’s amphitheater turned outside in” (34): here, he aims both to celebrate the potential power of the architect to fire a rising empire, and to denigrate the work of this architect in particular. His observation about the Circus’s association with Roman Coliseum is not especially original – but in this case, the damning reference to the Flavian dynasty’s restoration of financial order and expansion of public works “turned outside in” is meant to foreshadow a public works project that will do the opposite, promoting ruin rather than reconstruction, and perverting classical values in a blind rush towards luxury and degradation. Vastly expanding the responsibility of the architect, the pattern of Bramble’s complaint makes “the artist who planned the Circus” responsible not just for the safety of the individuals who plan to visit it, but also for the rise and fall of the whole empire.

Where he introduces the empire as a possible casualty of Wood’s interventions, furthermore, Smollett both identifies the changes at Bath as a political project, and

sometimes open conflict. Occasionally the stresses developed into something deeper and more structural, as during the dispute over the election of a new master of ceremonies in 1769. The company split down the middle, there was a physical battle in the assembly rooms (the very sanctum of sociability), the mayor was compelled to read the Riot Act, and there were hints that behind the conflict lay divisions of a racial/ethnic (Irish/English) origin and even of social class. In all probability the 1769 incident was the beginning of a longer term trend which became evident towards the end of the eighteenth century, in which the delicate balance between public and private, which had allowed the fiction of the company to be sustained, was breaking down.” Borsay, “Bath: An Enlightenment City?”, 10-11.
highlights the (specifically Whig) politics implicit in Wood’s effort to facilitate greater urban migration and more mixing among social classes. In the method of his critique, however, Smollett also reveals a new political valence of the theory of environmental medicine that underpins Wood’s and Nash’s efforts to improve the health and virtue of the nation by directing the health and virtue of the individual travellers who pass through Bath. Previously, this chapter has argued that *Humphry Clinker* – and the figure of the hypochondriac Matthew Bramble in particular – both exposes Smollett’s interest in emerging theories of environmental medicine and endorses a corollary shift in thinking about who might be responsible for maintaining a body’s good health. When Smollett identifies his problems with Wood’s Bath by producing evidence of neglect, or people whose health and safety have been compromised by unmitigated environmental risk, as the following section will demonstrate, he thus leverages the premise of these new models of environmental medicine in order to make a political point: the danger at Bath isn’t in the air, he asserts, but rather in its architecture.

By insisting that the poorly built infrastructure has opened Bath’s visitors to new environmental risks, Smollett can hold the architect responsible for all kinds of harm done at Bath – and demonstrate how this new way of thinking about environmental risk might be used to register a serious complaint about a social project like Bath and a public figure like Wood. He does this over and over again: acknowledging, briefly, the rapid expansion that has put pressure on the aesthetic standards of the “wreck of street and squares” thrown up to accommodate all these new people (36), and then insisting that the new developments in Bath have also been built to low architectural standards, such that these buildings now threaten to let in far too much more.\(^{46}\) Lamenting that “the same artist who planned the Circus, has likewise projected a Crescent,” for instance, Bramble begins to imagine that would possibly come next for the misguided city: “When that is finished,” he sputters, “we shall probably have a Star; and those who are living thirty years hence, may, perhaps see all the signs of the Zodiac exhibited in architecture at

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\(^{46}\) “Contrived without judgment, executed with solidity, and stuck together with so little regard to plan and propriety, that the different lines of the new rows and building interfere with, and intersect one another in every different angle of conjunction” (36): the failures that Bramble identifies in these new houses are couched as aesthetic concerns, but often have much more to do with the rules of taste (judgment, propriety) that are meant to scaffold hierarchies of class.
The feeling of accumulation is deliberate, as Smollett piles up astrologically-inspired architectural possibilities to invoke both the press of bodies that inspired these faddish new designs and the speed with which the new buildings were created to house (or entertain) them, and to position the size of the city and speed of its transformation as new sources of environmental risk. To this end, Bramble observes, the houses around this zodiac-themed circuit “are built so slight, with the soft crumbling stone found in this neighbourhood, that I shall never sleep quietly in one of them, when it blowed (as the sailors say) a cap-full of wind” (36). Taken together, he insists, the poor placement of the buildings, the poor design of the public sphere, and the poor urban planning that governs both have exacerbated the environmental risks already present in the overcrowded city – figured here in the injury that a mere “cap-full of wind” might do to the bodies these hastily constructed buildings cannot protect.

Condensing this argument around a single term, Bramble’s most frequent worry addresses the “composition” of the city – by which he seems to mean both mixture (or “the act of combining various elements, parts, and ingredients”) and ordering, or the act of “putting things in their proper position.” Both connotations of the word would have been conventional in 1771, and it’s through their association that Bramble imagines that the placement of the city’s buildings, avenues, and arcades – or the composition of the city – will affect the composition of the bodies that make it up. Bramble worries, in

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48 This is not the only place that Bramble raises this particular complaint, either: everywhere else, Bramble complains about the “concrete,” by which he seems to refer to the mix of forces (atmospheric, infrastructural, social, personal) that shape his experience. Contrasting “frowzy” London with the “country comforts” of home, for instance, he complains about being forced to drink water drawn from the Thames, “impregnated with all the filth of London and Westminster” such that “[h]uman excrement is the least offensive part of the concrete.” Here, he imagines this “concrete…composed of all the drugs, minerals, and poisons, used in mechanics and manufacture, [and] enriched with the putrefying carcasses of beasts and men” (120). In London as in Bath, then, Bramble is concerned about the influence of these people on the air, and the air on his lungs, or how the health of the individual body is shaped by the environment in which he moves – particularly when that environment is literally made up of so many other people. This, too, would have been transparent to Smollett’s contemporaries as a political complaint. In light of Bramble’s previous comments on the “upstart[s] of fortune” who have hurried into Bath to “mingle with the princes and nobles of the land,” his anxiety about the city’s “composition” betrays a wider preoccupation with the increasingly diverse mixture of class and type that makes up its population: “such is the composition,” he declares, “of what is called the fashionable company at Bath[,] where a very inconsiderable proportion of genteel people are lost in a mob of impudent plebeians” (37). In this case, he means that the population of
other words, that the composition of the city will *literally* direct the composition of each body that passes through it, and it’s this connection that so often leads Bramble to his preoccupation with the decomposition and circulation of the bits and pieces of other people. “After a long conversation with [a] Doctor, about the construction of the pump and cistern” at Bath, for instance, Bramble is horrified to learn there is no guarantee that “the patients in the Pump-room don’t swallow the scourings of the bathers,” as he suspects, hypochondriacally, that “there is, or may be, some regurgitation from the bath into the cistern of the pump”; if this is true, the drinkers at Bath must “every day quaf[f]” a beverage “medicated with…the abominable discharges of various kinds, from twenty different diseased bodies, parboiling in the kettle below” (46). True to form, he takes “sweat…and dandruff” as matters of fact, less surprised by the diseases of the bodies below him than he is frustrated to discover that the “construction of the pump” has failed to manage the circulation of these “abominable discharges” through the system it controls; the problem here, according to Bramble, was never just the pump itself, but rather the design, action, and agents implicit in this passive phrase (about its “construction”). Put another way: though Bramble’s purpose is always to avoid “swallowing” the “strainings” and “scourings” of other people (46), the gerunds he uses to characterize these unfortunate “compositions,” and the prior actions they imply, do help to identify the source of the disease that worries Smollett most; the risk, for Smollett, is not in the air, but in the architecture, and therefore in the agent of the environment’s design. After all, the “strainings” and “scouring” that worry Bramble here are nouns – but what “strains” and “scours” the bodies in question? It is the movement of the water through the city itself: the warm waters in the bath scour the bodies inside before proceeding to the Pump-room for “quaffing”; just across town, as Bramble discovers later, the private baths on the Abbey-Green strain the rotten bones below.49
This “scouring” and “straining” are managed acts, such that the water that accomplishes these activities has been moved through the city in a deliberate way – and so the environmental influences that most concern Bramble seem to be well within the control of the architects, artists, and other agents responsible for the “construction of the pump and cistern” (along with the rest of the city).

Up to this point, then, the politics of the weather in Humphry Clinker reflect a significant shift in thinking about environmental influence since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Like Gordon and Johnson, Bramble begins the novel deeply worried about his vulnerability to environmental influence; unlike Gordon and Johnson, however, this “man without a skin” does not interpret this vulnerability as a sign of personal weakness. Instead, and in fact because he believes that daily meteorological conditions (like Bath’s “almost perpetual…rain”) present ubiquitous and inevitable risks, he argues these risks that could be mitigated by more shelter, sturdier walls, or other forms of architectural restraint against the free and easy circulation of vapours loaded with the effluvia of other bodies. By offering us a hypochondriac’s perspective on Bath, a city already associated with new experiments in social planning through urban planning, furthermore, Bramble’s extended remarks on the city’s failures position the book as part of a wider conversation about healing the nation through environmental influence – and so the particular concerns he raises about the project underway at Bath also posit an argument about which diseases of the body politic the city planner should be trying to cure. In this case, John Wood’s Bath was famous for the Palladian facades meant to create a “common idiom” for the city – but for Bramble, these false fronts also made possible a disturbing degree of circulation among the “irregular characters” that they conceal. Thrown up in haste to accommodate massive migration from country to town, Bramble proposes, these houses reflect the worst of the values motivating Bath’s growth: both ugly and weak, he declares, the “higgledy piggledy” structures behind these false fronts have been built to low standards (“built so slight, with the soft crumbling stone”), and now risk collapsing at the first gust from “a cap-full of wind” (36). Because he has put the bodies sleeping fitfully inside the decoction of living bodies in the Pump-room, we swallow the strainings of rotten bones and carcasses at the private bath” (46).
these buildings at such risk, Bramble suggests, Wood has seriously compromised the character of the nation – and to prove this point, hardly a letter Bramble sends from the city Wood has built omits a description of disintegrating bodies “strained,” “scoured,” and circulated by the design of this urban environment. In many ways, then, the revitalization project at Bath models an approach to managing environment health that could be quite “improving” – but Wood, according to Bramble, has simply had the wrong sort of influence. In particular, Wood’s Bath appears dangerous because it promotes unrestrained circulation, and so Bramble emphasizes the physical risks amplified by this circulation, the dangers of exposure to both the “cap-full of wind” and the “perpetual rain,” in order to make his case for the “arcades” and other architectural interventions to contain these risks across the city. The danger related to the weather might be inevitable, Smollett declares, but because it is inevitable, it could and should be contained with just a little “civil regulation” – and so wherever a body is left to fall to pieces in the rain in Humphry Clinker, that body should remind the reader that shelter, protection, intervention, and restraint are altogether vital conditions of enduring environmental health. Like Gordon and Johnson, in other words, Smollett still identifies the body bearing marks of the weather’s violence as a figure meant to inspire a certain kind of fear – but where these earlier eighteenth-century writers once worried that the body overwhelmed by the weather represented a possible failure of reason or ethics, Smollett now argues that these weather-beaten bodies reflect a wider failure of governance.

IV. Soldiers, sailors, and “an old…Scotch lieutenant”: Humphry Clinker’s weather-beaten bodies

For all of Bramble’s anxiety about the marks of weather’s violence as marks of poor planning and failed oversight, however, the term “weather-beaten” appears only twice in Humphry Clinker: once to describe the faces of old friends that Bramble meets in a coffeehouse in Bath (55), and once to introduce the Scotch Lieutenant Obadiah Lismahago (202). In both cases, the term works the same way as Smollett’s other references to the weather in action: the past tense form highlights the operation and outcome of the weather’s violence, condensing the association between the risks posed by the weather and the other structural forces operating on the body that Smollett has
developed over the course of the novel. Just as Bramble’s references to the bodies disintegrating in Bath’s perpetual rain are meant to direct Dr. Lewis’s attention to the flawed environmental design that has made these bodies so vulnerable, his detailed descriptions of the weather-beaten bodies of his friends compel his reader to consider the forces that have driven these bodies into contact with the storms that have so badly marked them.\(^5\) Consider, for instance, Bramble’s comments on the accumulated effects of exposure in the faces of old friends he finds in a coffeehouse:

We consisted of thirteen individuals; seven lamed by the gout, rheumatism, or palsy; three maimed by accident; and the rest either deaf or blind. One hobbled, another hopped, a third dragged his legs after him like a wounded snake, a fourth straddled betwixt a pair of long crutches, like the mummy of a felon hanging in chains; a fifth was bent into a horizontal position, like a mounted telescope, shoved in by a couple of chairmen; and a sixth was the bust of a man, set upright in a wheel machine, which the waiter moved from place to place. (55)

Here, the bodies Bramble surveys have been so “metamorphosed” that he must “consul[t] the subscription book” before he can recognize men who turn out to be his old friends – and even then, each man in the company must explicitly re-introduce himself to the others, because, as one declares to Bramble, “I know the looming of the vessel, though she has been hard strained since we parted; but I can’t heave up the name” (55). This confession comes from the rear-admiral Balderick, now an “old man, with a wooden leg and a weather-beaten face,” but the metaphorical ship to which he refers is Bramble’s own body, and so the figurative language he chooses to capture the changes wrought by their many years “separated, and so roughly treated by the storms of life” further amplifies the scene’s emphasis on de-humanizing transformation. Turning Bramble into a ship, Balderick calls attention to the other objects Bramble has invoked to describe his

\(^5\) In an age of imperial war, of course, the use of this term to describe the violence done to the bodies of former agents of the British Empire has particular political implications (as this section will explore in more detail below) – but where the phrase first appears, Smollett’s “weather-beaten” bodies are not making an especially radical point. The term itself is old, cropping up in sixteenth-century descriptions of worn stones, sailors, and soldiers alike, a commonplace to capture the coarsening, hardening, and otherwise defacing work of the weather on any object exposed to it. Historically, that is, the term is also a dramatic one, used not just highlight the permanent effects of the weather’s violence but also to conjure thoughts of the process (“beating”) that has produced those scars and crags – and so where the term turns up in Humphry Clinker to identify the consequences of unrestrained expansion and global circulation, Smollett seems to be drawing on both of these effects to advance his critique. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “weather-beaten, adj.”
friends’ “metamorpho[ses]”: one, for instance, appears as a corpse (“the mummy of a felon”); another as an animal (“like a wounded snake”); another a machine (“a mounted telescope”). Although some of these men are eventually given names (“the bust was what remained of colonel Cockril… and the telescope proved to be my college chum, sir Reginald Bently”), the objects with which they are initially associated suggests that something in the physical transformation each experienced has degraded his humanity – a claim that raises the stakes of Bramble’s observation that it is merely the “rough treat[ment] by the storms of life” that has caused this change, particularly in an age of intensifying imperial war. Here, references to the weather signal both literal and metaphorical risks to the health of the British body, each captured in the extent to which the rear-admiral Balderick’s face has been transformed by the weather at sea and the “storms of life” that sent him there. As the contorted bodies at the centre of the scene will not let the reader forget, however, both of these types of risk have real consequences for those unduly exposed to the elements. By lingering over his descriptions of these broken-down bodies, Smollett highlights the serious physical consequences of this unmitigated environmental risk – and yet by describing these bodies as objects, he also raises the possibility that this failure to predict and contain these environmental risks has produced some more fundamental kind of degradation, even a loss of humanity, in the character of the British subject left so unprotected.

If Balderick’s “weather-beaten” face is meant to register not just the real violence of real storms but also the real violence of the more broadly defined “storms of life,” the past-tense of the phrase – like the passive-voice “construction of the pump,” above – also reveals the source of the danger that concerns Smollett most: the “weather” does the beating, but the problem is with the force that has left these bodies vulnerable to its violence. It is not a coincidence that the most badly beaten bodies Bramble encounters belong to former imperial agents – and that the damages they have incurred, both visible and invisible, are explicitly attributed to the “honourable and distinguished parts” these men have performed “on the great theatre” of Britain’s on-going imperial war (56).

51 The “telescope” Bently, for instance, has been contorted by an “inflammation of the bowels” contracted during an ill-advised hunt through a river (55).
Although Bramble is impressed to discover that the “spirits and good humour of the company seemed to triumph over the wreck of their constitutions” (56), he also finds that each man feels his own work has been undervalued: “Balderick complained, that all the recompense he had received for his long and hard service, was the half-pay of a rear-admirable,” and Colonel Cockril “was mortified to see himself over-topped by upstart generals, some of whom he had once commanded, and…could ill put up with a moderate annuity, for which he had sold his commission” (56). In light of these revelations, the dehumanizing metaphors that Bramble initially employed to describe the contorted bodies of this company take on a more urgent political significance. Soldiers and sailors, these are the representatives that have carried out Britain’s struggle for new imperial territory abroad – and yet as their “honourable and distinguished” parts have been forgotten, their remaining “parts” (a bust, a set of withered legs) are left to circulate in “this stew-pan of idleness and insignificance” (56). In less figurative terms: Bramble’s complaint here is about an incongruity between the greatness of the sacrifice these sailors and soldiers have offered to the empire and the lack of recognition and security they experience in their old age – and to this end, the “weather-beaten” bodies of these formally “distinguished” imperial agents signal a serious mismanagement of the empire’s human resources.\footnote{As above, the marks left by the weather’s “beating” indicate the ways in which these bodies have been mismanaged in the pursuit of empire – and so once again, Smollett lingers over the weather’s capacity to transform the bodies it touches in order to mark broader failures of governance.} Each time that he returns to the figure of the weather-beaten body, Smollett reinforces this connection between marks of the weather’s violence and failures of governance in order to advance his critique of an imperial campaign growing too fast and too far abroad – and throughout the last two volumes of the novel, these associations condense with special pressure around the figure of the quirky diasporic Scot, Lieutenant Lismahago. Of all the “weather-beaten” bodies Bramble encounters, the most badly damaged belongs to

\footnote{For more on Smollett’s use of sailors’ diseased bodies to signal his criticism of the British imperial enterprise in general and the Royal Navy in particular, see Bewell, \textit{Romanticism and Colonial Disease}, especially Chapter Two: “‘Voices of Dead Complaint’: Colonial Military Disease Narratives,” 83-88 (on Smollett’s \textit{Roderick Random}).}
this soldier (202) – and because Lismahago is “beaten” both by the weather and by other forces explicitly associated with the growing British Empire, his case reveals a connection between Britain’s mismanagement of its local resources and its vulnerability to overwhelming external influence. A proud Scot, and metonymically associated with Scotland wherever he appears, Lismahago is deeply critical of England’s lack of support for its internal colonies – but even as he registers the negative effect the Act of Union has had on both the land in Scotland and the people who depend on it, his story is always pointing outwards, emphasizing the relationship between Scottish weakness and British growth. 53 From Lismahago’s perspective, the growing British Empire has come to depend on the human resources it is draining out of Scotland54 – and yet those safe in England have done little to sustain these bodies sent abroad to defend their imperial claims. In a long tirade intended to prove that “Scots were losers by the [Act of] Union,” for instance, Lismahago points out that among the many advantages Scotland represents to the British Empire, the British “gained…above a million useful subjects, constituting a never-failing nursery of seamen, soldiers, labourers, and mechanics – a most valuable acquisition to a trading country, exposed to foreign wars, and obliged to maintain a number of settlements in all the four quarters of the globe” (278). If being treated as a

53 Left to their own devices, however, both the land and people of Scotland seem to approach a “perfect paradise” of health. Nothing is perfect, of course; as always, Bramble is disappointed with the “weeping climate, owing to…the neighbourhood of high mountains, and a westerly situation, exposed to the vapours of the Atlantic ocean” – but even as he continues to dislike the rain, he cannot ignore the country’s “great many living monuments of longevity,” including “a venerable druid, who has lived near ninety years, without pain or sickness, among oaks of his own planting” (251). Compared to Bath, the Scotland Bramble surveys seems to have mastered the environmental arrangements necessary for good health – and when the land and its people are left alone, the country’s environmental health is sufficient to support long lives “among oaks of [their] own planting.” For another perspective on the environmental themes in Smollett’s work that emphasizes his interest in the “pure streams” of Scotland, see Van Renen, “Biogeography,” 395-494.

54 When pressed to defend Scotland’s seeming lack of cultivation, for instance, Lismahago reminds Bramble that “all the produce of our lands, and all the profits of our trade, are engrossed by the natives of South-Britain” (278). The real trouble in Scotland, Lismahago explains, is that the country is drained twice by its current trade relationship with England: first by the constant movement of its raw materials and its people to England, and then again by the movement of all its wealth from North to South, as Scots increasingly turn to England to purchase all their manufactured goods – and so as long as “North-Britain pays a balance of a million annually to England,” he declares, “they are no friends, either to England or to truth, who affect to depreciate the northern part of the united kingdom” (279). With this declaration, Lismahago means to counter Bramble’s suggestion that the Act of Union might have benefited Scotland to the same degree that it has enriched England, but his use of the word “depreciate” cuts two ways. Scotland’s contributions to the British Empire, he insists, have been both unfairly belittled and wildly undervalued – and as a result, the effects of this active underdevelopment, this weakening of spirit and Scotland’s value, are now being felt far beyond “the northern part of the united kingdom” (279).
“nursery” of bodies to be “exposed to foreign wars” were not bad enough, he continues, the pay these Scottish soldiers receive for risking life and limb is scandalously low; even Bramble, getting to know the cantankerous soldier, realizes that “Lismahago’s real reason for leaving Scotland was the impossibility of subsisting in it with any decency upon the wretched provision of a subaltern’s half-pay” (267). Indeed, most of Lismahago’s plot is motivated by his “wretched” poverty – and so where Bramble comments on how “hard” it is “that a gentleman who had served his country with honour, should be driven by necessity to spend his old age...in such a remote part of the world,” he draws an explicit parallel between Lismahago’s experience and the fate of the other “weather-beaten” men at Bath, equally underpaid for their “honourable” service to the empire. In each scene that Lismahago is treated as a synecdoche for all those of “his country in general” similarly “exposed to foreign wars,” however, the physical damage he experiences also registers the unique risks these weakened Scots now pose to the “number of settlements in all the four quarters of the globe” their bodies were meant to protect, and so reinforces the novel’s wider criticism of the short-sighted governance that has left these vital British resources – both domestic and imperial – so exposed to the worst of life’s storms.55

While in captivity among the Miamis of North America, Lismahago and his ensign (Murphy) are brutally tortured – and as the fact that both victims are Scottish becomes important to the scene’s dark comedy, Smollett seems to suggest it is their “subaltern” position at home that explains these soldiers’ vulnerability to further degradation in North America. To begin with, the significance of these Scottish bodies in pain is marked by the fact that the nationality of the tortured figures is the only change Smollett has made to a scene borrowed, otherwise whole cloth, from another text. In June of 1760, the British Magazine – one of the many mid-century periodicals under Smollett’s editorship – began

55 Unlike the other weather-beaten men in Bramble’s company at Bath, that is, Lismahago is identified with the whole of Scotland. Like the “uncultivated” country Bramble ultimately finds a source of healthy air and great potential, Lismahago, too, is rough around the edges but ultimately to Bramble’s taste – sometimes literally: he is likened to “a crab-apple in a hedge, which I have been tempted to eat for its flavour, even while I was disgusted by its austerity,” and where Bramble is most frustrated with the soldier’s eccentricities, it is because “he will not even acquiesce in a transient compliment made to his own individual in particular, or to his country in general” (203). At least in his acquaintance with the Bramble party, then, Lismahago is often treated as a representative for all of Scotland, and so the echoes between his situation and the other undervalued agents of the British Empire substantially expand the scope of Smollett’s complaint about mismanaged imperial resources.
a serialized segment called the “History of Canada.” It included this grisly description of
the torture of one Father Jogues, a French Catholic missionary in captivity among the
First Nations he’d been trying to convert: Jogues had “been tortured according to custom.
One hand had been crushed between two stones, and one finger torn off; they had
likewise chopped off two fingers of the other hand; the joints between his arms were
burnt to the bone, and in one of them was a dreadful gash or incision.”

Eleven years later, speaking of Lismahago, Bramble’s nephew reports that “a joint of one finger had
been cut, or rather sawed off with a rusty knife; one of his great toes was crushed into a
mash between stones, some of his teeth were drawn, or cut out with a crooked nail;
splintered reeds had been thrust up his nostrils and other tender parts; and the calves of
his leg had been blown up with mines of gunpowder dug into his flesh” (193). Whether
Smollett himself contributed to both pieces of writing is unclear, but even if Smollett is
not himself the author of the 1760 “History of Canada,” he does make at least one notable
political claim by reproducing this story with a twist. In the “History of Canada,” the
hero, Father Jogues, is French; in Humphry Clinker, the tortured captives are Scottish,
and their suffering is played for laughs. According to Tara Ghoshal Wallace, the
significance of this change turns on the complex position of other French figures in
British writing about their overseas empire during the Seven Years War. On the one
hand, Wallace explains, the success of the French amongst the First Nations was
threatening to British imperial prospects in North America, so many British narratives
attempted to explain and undermine that success by depicting the French as more
“savage” than the First Nations with whom they seemed to become such fast friends.
In the “History of Canada,” however, the French Father Jogues’s suffering appears heroic,

56 British Magazine (June 1760), 352 qtd. in Charlotte Sussman, “Lismahago’s Captivity: Transculturation
57 There is some external evidence that confirms his responsibility for “some pieces in the British
Magazine” while he was editor, and he almost certainly compiled the issues in which this “History”
appeared, but none of this is conclusive. Barbara Lane Fitzpatrick, “‘Some Pieces in the British Magazine’
and ‘A Small Part of the Translations of Voltaire’s Works’: Smollett Attributions,” Eighteenth-Century
58 Wallace, “About Savages.” Where the French turn up (very briefly) in Humphry Clinker, this negative
pattern holds: “having more zeal than discretion,” the French missionaries of North America are
condemned both for being “ignorant of [the] language [of]…the different nations among which [they] are
employed,” and for “talk[ing] of mysteries and revelations, which they could neither explain nor
authenticate” (196).
and he is treated as a model to English colonizers. When Smollett repurposes this scene to explore the risks of sending vulnerable Scottish bodies abroad to defend Britain’s imperial interests, then, he strips away both this heroic quality and the victims’ Francophone heritage: Lismahago’s story is a parody of Jogues’s, and ensign Murphy’s dying effort to recite a low folk tune, the Drimmendoo, is hardly brave. In Humphry Clinker, in other words, the French don’t look good, but nor do the British agents of empire look better by comparison – and it’s the latter that makes the novel’s more controversial claim.

This chapter is not the first to suggest that Smollett’s decision to reproduce this particular torture scene – in which the protagonist is penetrated, scarred, and nearly consumed whole – might be a comment on the nature of the threat that imperial expansion presents

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60 This reading of the Drimmendoo, an Irish folk song about a dying cow, follows Wallace’s and Van Renen’s interpretations of the scene: for Wallace, the fact that Murphy dies singing “not of past military exploits or of Christian salvation but the Drimmendoo, ‘Gaelic for ‘black cow with a white back’” makes his death a “gesture of defiance and mockery [that]…diminishes both the French Jesuits and the Amerindian warrior” (246); for Van Renen, likewise, “This Irish folk song, a popular cry of resistance among Jacobites, [is] hardly the tune to demonstrate ‘British pluck,’ [and] instead suggests the pathetic and disoriented lamentations of a colonial subject of Britain, forced to fight its imperial wars, trying desperately to reassert his Irish identity.” Wallace, “About Savages,” 246; Van Renen, “Biogeography,” 411.

61 Given that so much of the critical conversation about Lismahago’s place in Humphry Clinker has turned on the ubiquity of the images Smollett includes here, this observation alone participates in a significant shift in thinking about Smollett’s political project. Historically, literary critics have commented upon the similarities between these passages in order to confirm the “History” from the British Magazine among Smollett’s many sources for Humphry Clinker: Louis Martz insists on its centrality to the Lismahago sequence, while Thomas R. Preston emphasizes the similar importance of Cadwaller Colden’s 1727 History of the Five Nations as a possible source text for both descriptions, and for what he calls the “general storehouse of ‘Indian matter’ known to eighteenth-century England…extending from John Oldmixon’s [1708 edition of] The British Empire in North America to translations of alleged Indian speeches appearing in such journals as the Gentleman’s Magazine.” Linda Colley would agree with these points, and might add that these similarities merely exemplify the mid-century thirst for what she calls the “pornography of real or invented Indian violence” (qtd. in Wallace 244). More recently, however, Sussman has countered this approach, observing that “the multiplicity of possible sources [ultimately] points as much to the repetition of certain images in eighteenth-century accounts of Native Americans as it does to Smollett’s own extensive historical knowledge.” In light of this intervention, it is therefore possible to imagine an alternative line of approach to this dispute about where Smollett might have found this scene or whether he has included it only for its titillating effect. Why this scene, among the “general storehouse of ‘Indian’ matter”? Why this violence, of all the “pornography” available? See Preston, “Smollett Among the Indians”; Colley, Captives, 177; Wallace, “About Savages,” 244; Sussman, “Lismahago’s Captivity,” 599.
to the integrity of the British character. As Charlotte Sussman observes, Smollett might, by including a scene that turns on these specific bodily transformations, be trying to attribute the vulnerability in the British outposts of empire to this inclination to “take in” too much, too fast. If this borrowed scene is significant because the kind of torture it details supports Smollett’s wider case against expanding the empire too quickly, however, it also matters that it is “weather-beaten” Lismahago, of all characters, who experiences this torture. As above, the fact that his face bears the marks of the weather’s violence already positions Lismahago as a victim of poor governance, his health (and bodily integrity) already compromised by needless exposure – and in this case, the fact that the French bodies of the original text have been replaced by “weather-beaten” Scots only further affirms that this lack of support for internal colonies has needlessly exposed Britain’s outposts of empire to similar violence and invasion. Lismahago’s metonymic relationship to Scotland is key, in other words, because his “subaltern” position here draws together the two different failures of governance his story is meant to expose: on the one hand, Scotland’s 1707 union (or incorporation) with England, and on the other, the Seven Years War, through which the British Empire had so recently incorporated so many new subjects in North America. As the British Empire becomes so large that it cannot support even its internal colonies, Lismahago warns, its outermost boundaries will become weak, as the bodies meant to man these boundaries are increasingly vulnerable to the kind of penetration and corruption that he experiences among the Miamis. However, the solution, to the problem Smollett names by treating Lismahago as a casualty of poor imperial governance has other implications for Humphry Clinker’s politics of the weather. By describing Lismahago first as “weather-beaten” in one letter and in others as “rifled…scalped…broke…with the blow of a tomahawk” and “left…for dead on the field of battle” (195; 189), Smollett introduces a parallel between the weather and the “party of Indians” responsible for this physical harm. In a novel preoccupied with the risks to

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62 Wallace, too, has commented on Smollett’s preoccupation with being entered and eaten up, and explores the number of ways that Lismahago is penetrated to argue that his torture sequence illuminates a sexual element of the threat that especially worries Smollett. Wallace, “About Savages,” 244-5.

63 According to Sussman, Smollett’s version of this story focuses not on the threat of losing the battle to convert the First Nations, but rather on the implications of attempting to incorporate too much – and so he needs to cast the poor Scots as embarrassingly consumed in particular to make this point. Sussman, “Lismahago’s Captivity,” 597-618.
health and safety that exist everywhere in the air, the rhetorical gestures that identify the Miamis with the weather’s violence thus naturalize the relations of power that underpin British imperialism, and point up the specific failure of governance that has left these agents of empire so unduly exposed: just as the bodies at Bath might have been better protected from the perpetual rain by an arcade, this parallel suggests, so the bodies “exposed to foreign wars” might have been better protected by greater restraint on the increasingly global field of battle, and a more limited pursuit of the “number of settlements” that they are “obliged to maintain…in all the four quarters of the globe” (278).

Where Smollett casts the Miamis among those predictable but overwhelming environment risks in order to endorse their further subjugation and control, then, he merely adds his voice to a long and closely studied chorus of European colonialism’s discursive practices – but the kind of threat he imagines the Miamis represent also seems to endorse ever more wide-reaching forms of restraint and obedience to patriarchal authority. To this end, the parallel between the violence associated with the Miamis and the violence associated with the weather exposes the critical role that all of his descriptions of bad weather play in expanding the scope of British control over its overseas empire – and here, too, Smollett seems to propose a solution that turns on avoiding risk, rather than battering it into submission. Like the wind and rain that so preoccupied Bramble at Bath, for instance, the Miamis are strongly associated with disfiguring threats to the British body: “the women and children…have the privilege of torturing all prisoners in their passage,” and they are so brutal in this endeavour that “by the time they arrived at the place of the sachem’s residence,” Lismahago’s companion, Murphy, “was rendered altogether unfit for the purposes of marriage” (193); having established which of their captives to kill, furthermore, “the warriors and the matrons…made a hearty meal upon the muscular flesh which they pared from the victim, and…an old lady, with a sharp knife, scooped out one of his eyes, and put a burning coal in the socket” (193).64 By this point in the novel, Smollett’s fascination with damaged,

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64 For more on Smollett’s emphasis on special violence of women and the effects of naturalizing this behaviour, see Weed, “Sentimental Misogyny”; and Markidou, “Gender and Space.”
weak, or broken bodies should not come as a surprise – and yet here, perhaps because Smollett seems to lift these images from what Thomas R. Preston identifies as “the general storehouse of ‘Indian matter’ known to eighteenth-century England,” the harm done to these bodies does not appear to be open to the same scepticism with which Smollett invites readers to greet Bramble’s anxious descriptions of the bodies falling apart at Bath.\textsuperscript{65} As in the case of those bodies under the weather at Bath, though, these detailed descriptions of the similarly “beaten” bodies of British imperial agents abroad operate as a call to action: to reduce circulation, to constrain the growth of empire, and to protect these bodies from undue “exposure” to these wars required to maintain these colonies “in the four corners of the globe.” This call is implicit in Smollett’s decision to reproduce, of all the pieces of what Linda Colley has calls the eighteenth-century “pornography of real or invented Indian violence,” scenes that turn on unrestrained consumption;\textsuperscript{66} this call is implicit, likewise, in Smollett’s decision to replace the French Father Jogues with two Scottish travellers, at least one of whom is already marked as a casualty of mismanaged resources, and the product of a “nursery” meant to support a war effort Smollett has already dismissed with contempt. In this moment, too, by casting the Miamis who torture Lismahago as an environmental condition as predictable and even inevitable as the weather, Bramble does not endorse their subjugation – but rather endorses a different approach to the expansion of empire that would keep these vulnerable bodies at home, better sheltered, and not “exposed” to the environmental risks endemic to “foreign wars.”\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} Preston, “Smollett Among the Indians,” 231-241; see also Sussman, “Lismahago’s Captivity,” 599.
\textsuperscript{66} Colley, Captives, 177; see also Wallace, “About Savages,” 244.
\textsuperscript{67} Taken together, Lismahago’s story is all about the risks that come with an empire growing too large – and as long as the outposts of empire continue to be governed by bodies drained away from Britain’s already “depreciated” internal colonies, Smollett argues, those outposts remain vulnerable to further invasion, penetration, and corruption by external forces. This is not to suggest, however, that Smollett is advocating for more assertive intervention to subjugate these forces; the parallel he observes between the violence of the Miamis and the violence of the weather does not claim that the British should be able to control the indigenous people of North America any more than they could prevent a storm. Instead, and in the same way that Bramble, at Bath, vehemently insisted that the “artist who designed the Circus” has a responsibility to build a city that will protect its visitors from predictable environmental risk, Smollett here implies that the violence done by the Miamis could have been prevented if only the circulation of British bodies around the globe had been more restrained.
If anything, then, Smollett’s vision of good governance is paternalistic – in favour of any intervention that will keep British bodies out of harm’s way, even at the expense of perfect liberty, and justified by all these images of British bodies, piling up through the pages of *Humphry Clinker*, that cannot seem to take care of themselves. This argument for paternalistic intervention in the name of protecting British bodies from further decay is crystallized at the end of Lismahago’s story. After months withering in financial desperation, about to leave again for North America, Lismahago is saved from a second trip overseas by his marriage to Bramble’s sister, Tabitha. Despite the “tergiversation” (flightiness) of his bride (343), Lismahago is greatly improved by the marriage: his mood improves, he laughs where he only used to crank about Scotland’s disadvantages, and altogether, this sere old man is “smoothed out like a raisin in a plum-porridge” (347).

Given that so much of the novel’s description of Lismahago has focused on his withered quality – his “weather-beaten” face (202), his personality like a “crab-apple in a hedge” (203) – and the similarity between this physical deterioration and the “draining” effect of the Union on Scotland’s economy, it is striking that his happiness should be physically marked by terms that suggest rehydration, “smooth[ing]” and “swell[ing]” what once was wrinkled. Something, Smollett suggests, is capable of reversing the effects of both the weather’s damage and the Miamis’ torture on this injured British body – but what? The greatest source of change in Lismahago’s life, of course, is the marriage itself, or the “Act of Union” by which Lismahago is integrated into Bramble’s family and the poverty he experienced as a wandering Scot (and widower) is effectively resolved. This change of condition is certainly enough to explain the new ease with which he “cracks jokes, laughs and banters, with the most facetious familiarity” (347) – but Lismahago has also been identified as the text’s representative for all of Scotland, and in this light, his integration into Bramble’s family might also be a call to more fully integrate Scotland into the British Empire. Rather than draining Scotland by “continual circulation, like that of the blood in the body,” towards “England…the heart” (278), Smollett proposes, perhaps the health of both Scotland and the whole body of the empire might be improved together if only their fortunes were imagined to be wed.68

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68 On this point, I diverge from Sussman, who argues that Lismahago’s marriage to Tabitha – and in particular his wedding gift to her, the “fur cloak of American sables” – figures the captain as a trader,
images of damaged bodies in order to identify failures of governance, he now lingers over this example of a suddenly healthy body to point up not only a particular solution to a particular problem – marriage, for Lismahago; closer integration between Scotland and England, for the empire as a whole – but in fact a new approach to the environmental medicine that has so fascinated (and disappointed) Smollett from the start. In a book where weather-beaten bodies so often appear to illuminate failures of environmental design and the dangers of excessive circulation, Lismahago’s transformation illustrates the potential impact of good governance on the vulnerable British body. Although the best governance might have kept these bodies safe from harm in the first place, Smollett implies, the body that can cast off the marks of the weather’s force is a body now safe from environmental risk – and in this case, that safety is only acquired when Lismahago has replaced a lifestyle previously based on unprotected circulation throughout the British Empire with a place in a growing and boisterous family under Bramble’s authority. Most importantly, he has entered a legal union – and so his example comes to demonstrate the greater safety and improved health available to the vulnerable British subject if only he is willing to accept some restraint upon his liberty.

In fact, Lismahago has never identified himself as an advocate for liberty – and despite his frustrated sense that “the Scots were losers by the union” (277), he has also never identified other forms of union as a similar sort of loss. Rather, Lismahago frequently appears as an advocate for restraint and regulation, especially in the field of commerce. Returning, for instance, to the frustrating subject of the economic inequality draining his native Scotland, he cries, “Woe be to that nation, where the multitude is at liberty to follow their own inclinations! Commerce is undoubtedly a blessing, while restrained within its channels, but a glut of wealth brings along with it a glut of evils,” including indicating the qualities of “captivation” he has absorbed during his time among the Miamis. As Lismahago has come to represent the vulnerabilities of the imperial subject to the possibility of being overwhelmed by the “others” of the increasingly unwieldy empire, I argue, so this marriage comes to represent Bramble’s triumph over this vulnerability, and the triumph of Smollett’s argument for domestic self-sufficiency. It matters, in other words, that Bramble’s party retains its “originality” and “instinctive” qualities (382) – the words are repeated half a dozen times to describe Tabitha’s “tergiversation” as the wedding approaches (382) – even as the party grows stronger with the incorporation of the diasporic Scotsman, because this emphasis on Lismahago’s third and final transformation among the Bramble party thus renders the marriage a persuasive metaphor for the benefits of more complete responsibility and support for Britain’s internal colonies. Sussman, “Lismahago’s Captivity,” 603-604.
“false taste, false appetite…profusion, venality, contempt of order”; indeed, he concludes, it is only with “proper regulations” that “commerce may produce every national benefit, without the allay of such concomitant evils” (280). According to Lismahago, perfect “liberty” and the unfettered pursuit of “inclination” are likely only to produce “evil” – and it does not seem to be a coincidence that he envisions “channels,” an architectural intervention to redirect the flow of water, as one preferred mechanism of restraint. Elsewhere, Lismahago has already encouraged his listeners to imagine Britain’s economic circulation as a hydraulic system that leaves some parts of the union flooded and others dry, and so here, it is not hard to understand the vehemence of his enthusiasm for any protection – architectural or economic – that might have prevented the many crises of his life caused by this unrestrained circulation of wealth and aggressive pursuit of imperial territory. As the most weather-beaten man in the book, the most exposed to the worst storms of this imperial order, Lismahago, of all characters, is best positioned to illustrate both the costs of (ostensibly) perfect liberty and the charms of some restraint – and best positioned, too, to advocate for “order…[and] regulation” as the channels necessary to health, safety, and happiness.

V. Weather-tightening: A “reformation without doors, as well as within”

Lismahago is not alone, either, in his sense that life might be improved by a bit of “regulation” and “restraint.” The second half of Humphry Clinker is all about the imposition of new order – and the success of this intervention is always marked, as in Lismahago’s case, by the improved health of the bodies previously left to fall to pieces out of doors. If the first half of Smollett’s novel witnessed the accumulation of weather-beaten men, the images that accumulate at the same rate in the novel’s last volume are focused on “weather-tightening,” or the architectural and economic interventions necessary to secure both houses and hopes against life’s tumultuous storms. In the letters that detail Bramble’s visit with his old friend Dennison, for instance, Smollett presents a positive example, meant to demonstrate just how well a bit of restraint can rebuff an external threat. Dennison’s is a well-managed and self-sufficient household, and the evidence of his savvy domestic economy begins when “[i]n one week, [his] house was made weather-tight…thoroughly cleansed…[and] well ventilated,” with “blazing fires of
wood in every chimney from the kitchen to the garrets,” and ends with his proud
declaration that these “improvements…now yiel[d] me clear twelve hundred pounds a
year, [and] All this time my wife and I have enjoyed uninterrupted health” (327-328).
Compared to the catastrophes of Lismahago’s life, of course, Dennison’s “twelve
thousand pounds a year” might seem to be the most meaningful marker of his success –
but for Bramble, Dennison’s real triumph is his “uninterrupted health,” and his real
achievement in the careful way that he has managed environmental risk in order to secure
it. From his commitment to “weather-tightening” and “ventilation” down to his efforts to
circulate both warm and cool air throughout his house, Dennison shares Bramble’s
interest in the principles of environmental medicine – but unlike the myopic “artist who
designed the Circus” at Bath, Dennison has applied these principles in order to keep the
weather out, thoughtfully directing the movement of air through the house and restraining
all other forms of circulation. Rewarded by his “uninterrupted health,” Dennison’s
domestic economy here appears as Smollett’s most straightforward illustration of good
governance – and though it matters that the example Smollett includes to make this point
is a country gentleman, explicitly uninterested in aspirations to the gentry, Smollett
insists the most important mechanism of Dennison’s success is this “weather-tightening.”
To this end, Dennison’s weather-tightening merely reflects – metonymically – his
broader commitment to modest living. Where Dennison “take[s] measures to defend
myself from…attacks” by the neighbouring gentry, for instance, choosing instead to
surround himself with “few individuals of moderate fortune, who gladly adopted my stile
of living,” he illustrates Smollett’s ever-present argument against “luxury and
dissipation…the rocks upon which all the small estates in the country are wrecked” (327).
In order to persuade his readers that a similarly “modest…stile” might be to everyone’s
benefit, Smollett emphasizes the health and integrity of the body possible under these
more constrained conditions – and so suggests a parallel between the “weather-
tightening” Dennison has applied to his home and the “measures” he has taken to defend
his way of living against “attacks” from his more profligate neighbours.69 In this

69 Up to this point, Smollett’s contemporary critics roundly agree that Smollett stands against “luxury and
dissipation” (327), and most further agree that he is especially critical of the uneven circulation of money
that makes its excess possible, often figuring this uneven circulation as a hydraulic system (see Duhaime,
Jacobsen, McMaster, as in notes 17 and 20 above). By focusing, however, on his theory of environmental
example, that is, the “weather” Dennison “tightens” his home against includes both the real weather out of doors and the neighbouring gentry, such that the latter appear here as much a danger to the health of the British body as the Miamis of North America posed to Lismahago.70

By identifying the risks posed by the weather with both the risks posed by the Miamis and the risks posed by Dennison’s neighbours, Smollett invites his readers to consider the similarities between these environmental forces – and aside from their shared capacity to penetrate (or invade) any body that does not have the shelter of a weather-tightened house, the most important quality these forces share is that each is produced as a threat to integrity of the British character by the growth of empire. Both the threat of corruption implicit in the Miamis’ torture and the gentry’s “attack” refer to risks introduced by the expansion of British trade, and so the “marks” this corruption would leave on the British body refer – as in Lismahago’s case – to the local consequences of this increasingly global campaign. This anxiety about the local effects of global influences is even more pronounced where Bramble encounters Dennison’s opposite. In his friend Baynard, Bramble witnesses a failure of domestic economy explicitly caused by an unrestrained pursuit of foreign fashion, and so the scene illustrates both the corrupting influence of stuff and attitudes that do not belong in Britain (a critique previously associated with the Miamis’ penetrative torture, which also does not belong “in” the British body), and the role of weather-tightening to protect local conditions from further exposure to these global forces. If the upshot of Dennison’s story, in other words, was that a little more restraint can rebuff any number of environmental risks at once, the upshot of Baynard’s plot is just the opposite: too little restraint opens Baynard to an avalanche of environmental risk, and the damage done by this unrestrained pursuit of foreign fashion

medicine – its failures, in the first half of the book, and now on its successes – we also now discover the mechanism by which he imagines luxury corrupts: it, too, is environmental.
70 Dwelling on the parallel here between the Miamis and the gentry as threats to the health and safety of the British body, we also discover that the forces Smollett’s best examples are trying to keep out (of their homes and bodies) are increasingly global. This is why weather appears in so much of Smollett’s writing about dangers to the integrity of the British character. Over the period of time this dissertation has considered (1700 to 1770), even the most local meteorological phenomena have been reconceived as global forces – or, as Smollett imagines it, as daily and inevitable reminders of the global systems of trade and fields of battle in which England is engaged, and a powerful external influence with vivid local consequences.
and the luxuries of global trade is meant to point up, once again, a serious failure of governance. In this case, however, the blame for this failure is split: Bramble is disgusted with his friend’s wife for failing to govern her own passion for foreign fashion, but he is more disappointed in his friend’s failure to rein in his wife’s profligate spending. The story begins, for instance, with the revelation that Baynard has married for money (“to discharge...a debt of ten thousand pounds...by means of a prudent marriage”), and promptly proposed a retired life together in the country – but when his new bride, Miss Harriet Thomson, refused to be “buried” so far from London society, Baynard immediately capitulated to her demand for a house in the city (286-287). From that point forward, Bramble explains, the meagre estate Baynard had hoped to cultivate was lost in “a vortex of extravagance and dissipation” (288): between the house in London, the “astonish[ing]” equipage with which Harriet occasionally visits the country, and the taste for further “oceans of extravagance” she discovers while travelling through Italy and France, Baynard’s wife leaves him “thus blasted in all his prospects” (289-290). Bramble is appalled by the situation – and for him, this individual tale of downward mobility exemplifies the pattern he sees both repeated in households across the country and writ large in the economic impulses of the expanding British Empire. When Bramble observes that Baynard’s wife has “blasted...all his prospects,” then, he invokes both of its eighteenth-century connotations: as a result of this unrestrained spending, Harriet has both ruined the view and the property on his estate, and blighted – like a hard wind herself – his expectations of any improvement in his financial future.

If Bramble’s distaste for the Baynard family’s lack of restraint was not enough to dissuade readers from pursuing a similar path, the whole natural world of this story – trees, wind, and soil – also seems to endorse his complaint. By this point in the novel, of

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71 Unsurprisingly, Bramble ascribes many of the excesses he observes in Baynard’s wife to the poor personal qualities he has elsewhere associated with “fashionable life in town”: “as ignorant as a newborn babe,” Baynard’s wife is also “naturally indolent[,]” without “taste enough to relish any rational enjoyment,” and “ru[led],” worst of all, by “vanity” (286). Ignorant, indolent, insipid, vain: these are the same characteristics that Bramble thoroughly condemned in the architecture at Bath – and up to this point, Bramble might be telling Baynard’s story merely to illustrate the debilitating effects of these urban disorders when they take hold within an individual household.

72 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “prospect, n.,” 1b, 7b. For further critical perspectives on Smollett’s treatment of women as a threat to the economic health of the nation, see Weed, “Sentimental Misogyny”; and Markidou, “Gender and Space.”
course, any evidence of increased environmental risk would mark the “artist’s” intervention as misguided – and as a direct result of the changes that Harriet has made to the Baynard estate, a destructive east wind now blows hard across formerly productive land (292). The Baynards might not be responsible for adding to the book’s population of weather-beaten bodies, but Harriet has altered this landscape enough that it can no longer sustain either her British visitors or her own small family – and as these bodies deteriorate because the land they live on has been “blasted,” Smollett thus makes another case for what weather-tightening could do to improve the prospects, both physical and financial, of the whole nation. To this end, Bramble’s frustration now focuses on Harriet’s use of the estate’s physical space, and on the negative effects that this myopic environmental design has on the bodies of her visitors. Like the Circus at Bath, he observes, the Baynards’ parlour, furniture, and floors without carpets are fashionable, but also inconvenient or even dangerous to “inhabit,” or “walk…along”; even the food she serves reproduces the problem, sacrificing the satisfaction and comfort of her guests for pretend luxury. Altogether, Bramble declares, his hostess’s “parcel of kickshaws, contrived by a French cook,” includes not “one substantial article adapted to the satisfaction of an English appetite” – and though it matters that the judicious appetite he imagines here is English, and that the “kickshaws” are French, it seems to matter more, for Bramble, that the food is unsatisfying and insufficient. Of all the problems Bramble identifies in Baynard’s domestic situation, this failure of self-sufficiency is the most pronounced characteristic of crisis, and the clearest indication of the kind of restraint that Smollett aligns with good governance.

For eighteenth-century readers, the east wind would have represented both a known source of bad weather, poor harvest, and unfortunate omens in general – and the weight of this folk knowledge is suggested here in Bramble’s observation that “Mr. Baynard’s ancestors had been at great pains to exclude” the east wind from their property (292). Where Bramble lingers over the particular changes that Baynard’s wife has made so that the east wind can now blow, then, he also points up the ways in which the pursuit of a Grecian garden has encouraged this woman to abandon the knowledge of her husband’s ancestors, and so exacerbated a predictable cause of harm. For more on the east wind’s bad reputation in English folklore, see Janković, “Gruff Borealis, Deadly Calms.” Simply put, Smollett recommends living within one’s means, but here, the “means” in question refer to the produce of the land that Harriet has “blasted” – an observation that recalls Lismahago’s observation about Scotland’s “depreciat[ed]” potential, and so affirms Smollett’s wider argument that there may be as great a failure in draining the potential of the British resources already available as in trying to take in too much. Both activities, as he demonstrates here, bring the British “prospects” to the same sorry low: dependence, the shadow of which appears everywhere in this inset tale of economic failure.
finds more evidence that Baynard’s wife’s inclination to swap the domestic strengths of the estate for new foreign features has had this overwhelmingly negative effect: not only has she “pulled up the trees” that used to bear “the best fruit that England could produce,” but she has “pulled down the walls of the garden,” and these two changes together now “let in the easterly wind, which Mr. Baynard’s ancestors had been at great pains to exclude” (292); as a result, the estate has become barren, a “dry” and “naked circus…of sand” that neither reflects an English taste nor “produce[s]” enough to satisfy an English appetite (285-286). The parallelism here – pulled up, pulled down – reiterates the two-fold nature of Bramble’s concern: while the trees Harriet has removed represent the hidden costs of these faddish choices at their best, the missing garden walls (and the east wind that now blows across the estate) realize the much more costly consequences of fashionable landscaping at its worst. Not only has Baynard lost the potential for self-sufficiency that the produce-bearing trees might have offered in the absence of his wife’s interventions, but with the addition of the “naked circus” and the east wind, “the ground which formerly payed him one hundred and fifty pounds a year, now cost him two hundred pounds a year to keep” (292). Worse, because Baynard now keeps not a “single cow to afford milk for his tea,” nor food for “his own mutton,” “every article of housekeeping, even the most inconsiderable,” must be “brought from the next market town, at the distance of five miles, and thither they sent a courier every morning to fetch hot rolls for breakfast” (292).

At every turn in his friend’s home, in other words, Bramble discovers a new environmental risk, or new evidence of Baynard’s failure to effectively govern his wife’s spending in pursuit of foreign fashion, and new proof that the consequences of being thus overwhelmed by outside influence are dire indeed: already, the house is cold and inhospitable because it is overwhelmed with the fussy marks of foreign fashion (“all without is Grecian, and all within Gothic”) (286); the food served within is “disgusting” because it is French, fashionable but unsatisfying to a properly English appetite; and the land, most importantly, is unproductive and expensive to maintain, not least because the oaks and walls that Baynard’s ancestors have put up to block the east wind have been removed. As a whole, then, the anecdote is a call to resist the impulse to follow foreign
trends, and an illustration of the dire consequences of becoming dependent on external intervention to sustain a domestic economy. Here, the “foreign” is reflected in the Greek, Roman, Italian, and French influence on Baynard’s wife’s taste in architecture, food, and clothes – but it is also, ultimately, in the family’s dependence on the hot rolls of the next market town, a condition that encapsulates both a crisis of domestic economy and an insupportable dependence on external help. In this way, Baynard’s example makes a connection between the crisis of an individual household economy and the worst trends Bramble has observed in English cities, and highlights the growing scourge of foreign influence behind this expansion that weakens both single households and those crowded cities. By emphasizing the problem of foreign commodities and capital moving to England’s urban centres from both continental Europe and the profitable outposts of the British Empire (his wife’s fortune, as it happens, “came by an uncle, who died in the East-Indies” [280]), Baynard’s example captures what Bramble identifies as the unproductive, unsustainable, and generally debilitating effects of Britain’s expanding participation in an increasingly interdependent global economy.

Predictably, the consequence of this unrestrained spending and poor environmental design is illness: Baynard’s wife falls “dangerously ill of a pleuritic fever,” and dies. If the action of this anecdote was meant to illustrate the sometimes-fatal consequences of a life lived with too little restraint, however, its conclusion imagines not just the kind of regulation that might have prevented the Baynards’ fall, but also the kind of paternalistic intervention that Smollett deems necessary to reverse the damage that has already been done. In the days following his wife’s death, Baynard is so distracted by grief that he “vested [Bramble] with full authority of his household” (341), and his friend immediately begins work to reverse the changes Baynard’s late wife had made to his estate. Identifying this project as a “reformation without doors, as well as within” (343), Bramble’s changes affirm the relationship between external and internal conditions that has structured his view of good health up to this point. First, having “set a person at work to take account of every thing in the country-house, including horses, carriages, and harnesses,” he undertakes to pay off and “disband that legion of supernumerary domestics,” including “a chambermaid, a valet de chamber, a butler, a French cook, a
master gardener, two footmen and a coachman” (342); next, Bramble “order[s] the gardener to turn the rivulet into its old channel,” to root out and destroy the shrubbery, and to restore the “pleasure ground…to its original use of corn-field and pasture,” and, later, to both “rebuil[d] the walls of the garden at the back of the house,” and “plan[t] clumps of firs, intermingled with beech and chestnut, at the east end, which is now quite exposed to the surly blasts that come from that quarter” (343). Restraint is the common theme here: Bramble’s decision to fire the household staff enforces an economic restraint or upper limit on his friend’s household spending, while his decision to replant the trees Baynard’s wife had pulled up sets out a physical boundary around the estate itself.

As Bramble has already observed, however, the health, comfort, and satisfaction of the people who live on this estate depend on the health and sustainability of the landscape, and so this effort to protect both the land and the household inhabitants from becoming “quite exposed” also reads as a sort of weather-tightening, an effort to mitigate the worst effects of these “surly blasts” of east wind. As if to confirm this point, Bramble concludes his project to improve his friend’s prospects by making “[Baynard] acquainted with Dennison” (343) – and given that Dennison has already been celebrated for his ability to keep a house “weather-tight,” this re-introduction of his positive example further positions Bramble’s intervention as part of the same pattern of good governance and sustainable domestic economy. As a result, the scene ends on a hyperbolic high note: Baynard “declares he never saw the theory of true pleasure reduced to practice before,” and he and Bramble agree that they could not “find such a number of individuals assembled under one roof, more happy than we are at present” (343). Thus confirmed as a triumph of paternalistic intervention, Bramble’s effort to tighten down his friend’s unrestrained spending ultimately has the same effect on the “blasted” English country estate that Lismahago’s marriage has had on his weather-beaten body. In Lismahago’s plot, what once was drained and dried out like a crab apple is “now swelled out and smoothed like a raisin in a plum-porridge” – while in Baynard’s case, what once was “quite exposed to…surly blasts” has been made “weather-tight,” protected by a new crop of firs, beech, and chestnut trees. In both cases, the change that improves the environmental conditions in question has come with imposing “a very little…regulation,”
or a limit on the total freedom that had cast Lismahago into the path of danger and rendered Baynard’s estate incapable of supporting the British body in good health. As a counterpoint to all of the earlier scenes in which weather-beaten bodies appear as evidence of poor governance, these moments in which the weather’s violence is mitigated and its effects reversed thus illustrate its opposite. As the action at the centre of each scene, all this weather-tightening is positioned as central to Smollett’s vision of good governance – and with it, Smollett demonstrates the kind of restraint he imagines to be necessary for good health, or the “theory” of environmental medicine, as well as “true pleasure,” reduced to its best practice.

VI. Conclusion

From start to finish, *Humphry Clinker* is about Bramble’s effort to get well. Fortunately, he succeeds: though Bramble opens the book by demanding that his physician “send [him] another prescription” to cure what ails him (5), he finishes his story by announcing that he has “laid in a considerable stock of health,” and now “intend[s] to renounce all sedentary amusements, particularly that of writing long letters” to his doctor (351). Because Bramble does manage to achieve the good health that he has set out to find, it seems reasonable to assume that Smollett endorses the measures his protagonist takes to bring about this change – and to this end, Bramble’s greatest discovery seems to be that a “change of company [is] as necessary as a change of air, to promote a vigorous circulation of the spirits, which is the very essence and criterion of good health” (339). From a man who once viewed the “very air we breathe” as an inevitable source of infection, “loaded with contagion” and impossible to avoid even in sleep (47), this is no small declaration. Whether this means that Bramble now believes “a change of air” is impossible (because air is the same everywhere), or that Bramble has discovered that the degree of danger air poses depends on the behaviour and protection of the bodies that must breathe it, the consequence is the same: what this book ultimately traces is not a change in the weather from place to place, but rather a change in thinking about the weather and the risks it represents. By tracking this shift in Bramble’s thinking over the course of his journey towards good health, we uncover both the operations of emerging theories of environmental influence that position the weather as a persistent source of
danger, and the wide range of political failures that this new vision of the weather – as an inevitable but predictable risk – can be used to illuminate. By reading the politics of the weather in Smollett’s novel in conversation with the other changes in thinking about the weather and the dangers of environmental influence that have emerged over the period of time that this dissertation has traced, furthermore, we might also come to see Smollett’s argument as an attempt to bring “home” to England an approach to writing about extreme conditions – to promote restraint, to make liberty less important than safety – that has been refined through writing about the colonies. Made possible by decades of scepticism about the politics of the colonial weather report, that is, Bramble’s characteristically anxious approach to anticipating the weather’s harm also reveals the many ways in which Britain’s rapacious imperial politics have compromised the safety of the English bodies at home, and to recommend that those subjects now accept the same limits on their liberties that the weather’s extremes have helped to justify in the outposts of empire. In this view, *Humphry Clinker* appears to be both a book about Bramble’s effort to get well, and a book about the environmental illness he’s trying to avoid – and to this end, Bramble might be quite right to fear what the weather carries home, as the air everywhere in this book is also “loaded” with a profound anxiety about colonial influence that also operates as a mechanism of local control, and with the undeniable evidence that the reader’s local environment, and all its effects on British bodies, is now inevitably shaped by global forces.

This change in thinking about the kind of harm that the weather brings home for Smollett’s readers is mapped especially clearly in Bramble’s own shift in thinking about the weather-beaten bodies that litter the novel. As above, Bramble begins the novel as a “man without a skin” (48), excessively “sensible” and deeply concerned about the pervasive “risque of infection” (47), and even as he sets out in search of an environmental cure at Bath, the many bodies he finds there falling to pieces in the wind and rain only confirm his worst fears about the harm posed by the weather. While at Bath, however, Bramble’s thinking begins to change: exploring a city that his contemporaries would have recognized as strongly associated with new efforts to improve both the physical and moral condition of the body politic through careful environmental design, Bramble
realizes that the risk he sees in the weather is one that could have been mitigated by a
different use of space – and so he comes to identify the weather-beaten bodies left out in
the rain by the absence of, say, arcades as evidence of a failure of governance, rather than
an inevitable danger. To the extent that Smollett’s descriptions of the variously beaten
and broken bodies Bramble finds under the weather at Bath point to a single common
cause, moreover, a lack of restraint emerges as a persistent problem for the health of both
the body and body politic – and as Bramble grows closer to two men unable to survive on
the land drained and blasted by this poor governance, Smollett expands the terms of this
critique to illustrate the consequence of Britain’s lack of restraint both for the empire (in
Lismahago) and the domestic economy (in Baynard). Where Bramble considers the
changes that might have prevented these disasters, he consistently emphasizes “civil
regulation” and “restraint” (128), declaring over and over again that “all regulation” need
not be “inconsistent with liberty,” and that freedom, particularly freedom from
environmental influence, need not mean that “every man ought to live in his own way,
without restraint” (128). To illustrate his case against this total freedom, the limitations
Bramble proposes take many forms: a row of trees to block the east wind; a marriage to
remove the wandering soldier from further circulation; an arcade to shield Bath’s
revellers from the rain; a more restrained approach to imperial acquisition and war; a
house weather-tight against both rural storms and gentrifying neighbours. Moving back
and forth between images related to keeping the weather at bay and forces related to
keeping bodies in one place, however, Smollett consistently takes a strong position
against circulation – of wind, of rain, of money, of people – and persistently argues that,
in all of these examples, greater restraint could help protect the British body from further
harm. For Smollett, then, the same restraints that protect the body from the rain also
prevent circulation, but the damage done by the wind and the rain is here made to seem
so dire that the limited circulation seems a small price to pay for good health.

In light of this already significant change in his thinking about environmental risk, each
aspect of Bramble’s closing claim – about what “a change of company” can do to
complement “a change of air” – both confirms and celebrates the hypochondriac’s new
plan to keep himself safe. Having considered the damage done to weather-beaten bodies
at such length, Bramble seems to have realized that he cannot escape the danger present in the air – but because this risk is so inevitable (“perpetual,” like the rain), he has also discovered that the weather’s threat can be mitigated by a different approach to managing the bodies under it. To this end, Bramble’s enthusiasm for “a change of company” does recommend some circulation, but only within a limited sphere: by the novel’s last letters, Bramble is looking forward to “taking the heath” with Lismahago and to further friendship with Baynard, but in both cases, he maintains, the pairs will aim not to “revisit either Bath or London” (351). This small (or deliberately constrained) social circle, Bramble suggests, will provide just enough circulation to maintain his good health – and in his express commitment to avoid the crowded urban centres in Bath and London, Bramble also confirms the book’s preferred theory of environmental influence. (It was in Bath, after all, that Bramble discovered environmental medicine run amok, as efforts to improve circulation of both people and money amplified his risk of exposure to the worst of the rain, wind, and effluvia everywhere in the urban air.) To avoid Bath, in Bramble’s view, is thus already to seek out a “change of air” (339) – but as the examples he has found in Lismahago and Baynard make clear, the problem with the Bath has much less to do with the air there than with the way these beaten bodies have been exposed to it.

Where Bramble identifies Lismahago and Baynard as the two friends with whom he hopes to enjoy “all weathers” to come, then, Smollett also reminds the reader of the likely consequences awaiting those who choose not to heed the book’s warning about the dangers of unmitigated exposure. By invoking Lismahago’s story, Smollett recalls the costs of rapacious imperial consumption he has already made visible in the body of the Scottish soldier, whose physical vulnerability and isolated position in the empire’s undersupported North American outposts makes the whole British body politic equally vulnerable to penetration and corruption; by invoking Baynard’s story, likewise, Smollett reiterates the consequences that the similarly rapacious pursuit of foreign fashion and goods could have for the British character and domestic economy, and recalls the scenes in which he has already figured the destructive influence of the neighbouring gentry in the “surly blasts” of the east wind allowed to lay waste to Bramble’s land. In Bramble’s intervention on each man’s behalf, then, Smollett demonstrates what kind of perspective and authority can resolve these problems – and in both cases, weather (and especially the
damage of exposure) is used to mark both failures of governance and their successful resolution. In particular, the reversal of the weather’s effects – on Lismahago’s face and on the potential of Baynard’s estate to produce food able to sustain the British body – is used to celebrate and identify good governance as such, and in these images of the haggard face “swelled” with marital joy or the “blasted” landscape penned in, Smollett strongly identifies the kind of governance that ultimately solves the problem with restraint. Between the novel’s first letters and its last, then, the weather has changed enough that Bramble’s conclusion seems now inevitable. By lingering, with Bramble, over the weather-beaten bodies left exposed to the novel’s many storms, Smollett’s reader thus also comes to appreciate one particular approach to governance that could keep these bodies safe – and so learns to recognize, in Bramble’s closing call for a “change of company,” a broader call to limit circulation to very local travel, or a reminder that the worst effects of the weather can be mitigated if the British body travels no further than “the heath” of Scotland, “changing” air with no more than a few friends at a time.
Coda

As a contribution to a wider pattern of change in thinking about the weather unfolding throughout the eighteenth century, however, Smollett’s weather-beaten bodies have other implications. Over the course of the century this dissertation has considered, the weather in British literature has become increasingly identified with overwhelming force, imagined to present a risk dangerous enough to the integrity of the British character to justify state intervention that otherwise seemed to contradict the boundless liberty Britain purported to export to its colonies around the world. As both a product of the change mapped across this dissertation’s previous chapters and a dramatic illustration of its implications, then, the politics of the weather in *Humphry Clinker* resonate with many aspects of the small changes that have made this view of the weather’s risk possible, prominent, and then nearly impossible to imagine otherwise. To begin with, the ease with which Smollett can identify exposure itself as evidence of poor governance affirms that writing about the weather, for many eighteenth-century readers, was already a political project. Unlike Johnson, however, who viewed any claim that the weather above might affect the world of politics below as an excuse for bad behaviour, Smollett suggests that the risk associated with the weather itself does political work. Smollett had good reason to believe that this was true. In the sixty-odd years that had passed between Defoe’s report on the Great Storm of 1703 and the publication of Smollett’s last novel, reports on the weather had become both more stable and more suspicious, as the expansion of the British Empire offered nearly everyone a vested interest in rumours about the especially bad weather awaiting travellers to the colonies. Particularly after the fall of Quebec, a turn in the Seven Years War that inaugurated a new period of especially rapid growth in British imperial responsibilities, extreme weather became a useful figure for external influence of all kinds, and even reports on local weather reflect a pervasive anxiety about encroaching threats to the British character (both real and imagined). Where Smollett imagines the weather as an overwhelming, even paralyzing, force, then, he is adapting an approach to meteorological description that would have been familiar to his readers by this point, and one that appears especially often in cases concerned with imperial conflict.
As in the pamphlet war surrounding the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly, for instance, Smollett finds it productive to linger over risks related to the weather, to dwell on its capacity to damage life and limb, and to emphasize the pressure the weather exerts on its observers to stay still, behave conservatively, and otherwise not to act. During the Hudson’s Bay Company case, however, most of the conflict about the weather was focused on misinformation and the absence of reliable records, and so the view of what might constitute “good governance” under these conditions was more closely split than it appears to be in *Humphry Clinker*. On either side of dispute, however, reports on the weather were identified as mere rumours, wholly unreliable records of the conditions up for debate, and open to enough scepticism that for fifty years afterwards, writers with wildly different interests in the contested territory could raise similar questions about how much these reports had been amplified in order to stake out their political claims. As this case suggests, the true condition of colonial weather was frequently less important to eighteenth-century readers than the political action towards the colonies recommended by its representation – and to this end, even less sceptical interpretations of the colonial weather report could productively explore the ends served by a report on especially extreme or dangerous conditions.

In Frances Brooke’s *The History of Emily Montague*, for instance, both rumours about Canada’s very bad weather and reports on Canada’s occasionally good weather abound, but even these contradictory reports appear to serve the same end: compared to Canada’s extremes of heat and cold, England’s smiling spring appears more temperate, and a more appealing site of return for Britons abroad. By emphasizing the intensity of Canada’s weather, however, Brooke makes more than just the English weather look good; compared to the potentially overwhelming force of the cold, Brooke finds, British political action abroad also appears less overwhelming, less intrusive, and more liberating. At a moment when the pressure to assimilate new colonial subjects to British laws and the English language had complicated the imperial enterprise in North America, rumours about the colonies’ overpowering weather thus made it possible for British writers to describe their intervention as liberating, an action meant to free new British subjects from this other irresistible, even tyrannical, influence, and the lesser of two
potentially violent and “changeable” forces. This is the debate Smollett has entered – already playing out through literary scenes, as in Brooke’s *Emily Montague*, in which weather reports are explicitly identified as part of a wider conversation about the colonies’ place in the British Empire, and received, as a result, with scepticism, to be interpreted as political objects. Most importantly, the “politics” that these exaggerated reports on colonial weather seem to endorse are frequently aligned with passivity and inaction – in large part because, as in cases like the two summarized here, rumours about the weather’s force can so easily be bent to justify a British right to govern with a heavy hand, enabling any intervention that might liberate colonial subjects from the ostensibly more overwhelming or more violent effects of their local weather. By the time that *Humphry Clinker* appeared in 1771, both this pattern and this scepticism towards reports of extreme weather would already have been familiar to the novel’s first readers – and so where Smollett, too, lingers over weather-beaten bodies and presents a narrator overwhelmed by the potential risk everywhere in the air, he is taking up a language refined by almost a century of writing about the weather, exaggerated danger, and whose interests would be served by the restricted action that dire weather warnings seem to recommend.

During the seven decades this dissertation has considered, then, writing about overwhelming meteorological conditions had become an effective way to protect imperial interests, either by emphasizing the bad weather to discourage competition, or by insisting upon its incredible force in order to justify other British intervention to preserve a relatively greater liberty. For Smollett, writing in the midst of these changes, this pervasive anxiety about environmental influence seems well-suited to his ambivalent imperialism – compressing, in the figure of a weather-beaten British body, both a real worry that the growing British Empire might be overwhelmed or otherwise transformed by its imperial responsibilities, and yet making a claim for the British right to intervene to manage this environmental risk. In this view, any risk of environmental influence both stands in for poor governance and authorizes more assertive intervention to preserve the vulnerable British body from this danger – and so despite Smollett’s frequent declamations against the further growth of empire, the many ways in which *Humphry*
Clinker’s detailed descriptions of bad weather bolster the novel’s argument for greater civic regulation do affirm a British right to rule and reorganize the world to protect imperial resources from this potentially overwhelming threat. As a reflection of nearly a century of change in thinking about the relationship between environmental influence and human agency, the movement and meaning of the weather-beaten bodies that populate Smollett’s last novel also demonstrate how literary weather has been shaped by the pressures of massive eighteenth-century imperial expansion, and, finally, open new avenues of research on the role that emerging theories of environmental influence – and anxiety about overwhelming sensation in general – might play in consolidating British imperial identity over the same period of time.¹

Taking a longer view of this relationship between the British imperial identity and the ways of writing about the weather that coalesced together over the long eighteenth century, however, the practical consequences of these changes have become impossible to ignore. The weather itself is not (and never has been) a neutral third term in the chain of reciprocal influences surveyed here, unaffected by the modes of representation and concepts of the British imperial character it has helped to shape – and as contemporary climate studies have now confirmed, these pressures, taken together, have profoundly changed both the present and future condition of the weather and the conditions under which the increasingly extreme weather events projected for our current climate crisis will be experienced around the world. With this in mind, one purpose of this Coda is to acknowledge the environmental and political legacies of the shifts this dissertation has traced, and to more clearly articulate the connection between the literary weather that helped to define, protect, and ultimately expand eighteenth-century British imperial enterprise and the uneven effects of contemporary climate change. Furthermore, if we accept the conclusions of the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and admit that both the rising intensity of extreme weather events and the patterns of global underdevelopment that will exacerbate their risks in fact have their origins in the imperial activities and arguments picking up steam over the course of the period studied here, these revelations also compel

¹ In Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France, for instance, Lynn Festa has
us to investigate what this research in eighteenth-century science, empire, and environmental thought might have to offer to our present debate about the politics of the weather. To this end, the conclusion below also aims to illustrate how the method this dissertation has developed to expose the anxieties and investments at work in even ostensibly matter-of-fact descriptions of the weather might help to draw an eighteenth-century sort of scepticism into contemporary debate about which dimensions of our current ways of writing about the weather are still open to interpretation – and to interrogate the increasingly apocalyptic view of both the climate crisis and our critical capacity to respond that is emerging in the field of eighteenth century studies in particular.

When it comes to the meteorological matters of fact at the centre of contemporary conversations about climate change, of course, the strangest claim this dissertation makes about the weather might also be its least controversial. To suggest that the way we talk and think about the weather changes the weather itself might seem to posit a pathetic fallacy, or to confuse the intimate acts of the human mind with the natural facts of the outside world – and yet it would be stranger still and more contentious to deny the mounting evidence that the present climate crisis has in fact been caused and exacerbated by human behaviour. According to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the “evidence for human influence on the climate system has grown” even in the last seven years (5), so much that the hundreds of scientists who have contributed to this report now declare, in terms reserved only for outcomes with an assessed likelihood of 95-100%, that:

Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have increased since the pre-industrial era, driven largely by economic and population growth, and are now higher than ever. This has led to atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide...unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years. Their effects, together with those of other anthropogenic drivers, have been detected throughout the climate system and are extremely likely to have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. (4)

In addition to the contributions we have made to these greenhouse gases, the report argues, “anthropogenic influences” have “very likely contributed to Arctic sea-ice loss,”
“likely contributed to the retreat of glaciers,” and “very likely made a substantial contribution” to increases in both the heat content in the upper ocean and the global mean sea level – and these are just the changes captured within the last 50 years of data (5). Likewise, the suggestion that these anthropogenic influences on the global climate are responsible for more frequent and more intense local weather events is no longer the subject of hot debate. In fact, “changes in extreme weather…events” are marked as the first of the “[i]mpacts of climate change” the IPCC report considers (6) – and though the level of agreement is somewhat more conservative on this point (as the report notes that just “some of these changes have been linked to human influences”), the authors nonetheless assert that “it is very likely that human influence has contributed to the observed global scale changes in the frequency and intensity of daily temperature extremes since the mid-20th century,” and “likely that human influence has more than doubled the probability of occurrence of heat waves in some locations” (7). Most importantly, the report argues – with “very high confidence” – that the increase in the number and intensity of these extreme weather events presents a serious problem: this section concludes with the observation that “[i]mpacts from recent climate-related extremes, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires, reveal significant vulnerability and exposure…to current climate variability” – and this is true not only for “some” plant and animal ecosystems, but “many human systems,” too. Altogether, the report is clear: human systems are almost certainly responsible for the gases that are warming the world – but the same human systems that have caused the crisis are also highly vulnerable to the extreme weather conditions intensified by current patterns of global warming.

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2 Emphasis in original. The IPCC report also include a footnote to explain that for each finding, the reports’ “level of confidence is expressed using five qualifiers: very low, low, medium, high and very high, and typeset in italics.” To indicate the assessed likelihood of an outcome or result, the following terms are used: “virtually certain 99–100% probability, very likely 90–100%, likely 66–100%, about as likely as not 33–66%, unlikely 0–33%, very unlikely 0–10%, exceptionally unlikely 0–1%,” and “[a]dditional terms (extremely likely 95–100%…) may also be used when appropriate.” When the report refers to an “extremely likely” possibility, then, it uses a term it reserves for all findings just short of “virtual certainty].” IPCC, 2014, “Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Summary Report for Policymakers,” Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)] (Geneva: IPCC, 2015), 2n1. All parenthetical citations in this section refer to this text.
This is a human-made catastrophe in more ways than one, in other words, because these spaces of special vulnerability to climate change have been shaped by global political forces – and by the history of European imperialism and colonialism in particular. Where the report predicts that climate change could increase the incidence of disease, for instance, the authors note that this is especially likely “in developing countries with low income” (15); likewise, where the report predicts that climate change will increase risks from “landslides, air pollution, drought, water scarcity…and storm surges,” the authors note further that “[t]hese risks are amplified for those lacking essential infrastructure and services” (15). In this view, there are a number of common characteristics to unite the “people, assets, economies and ecosystems” currently and likely to continue to be hit hardest by the effects of climate change – but first among them is a long history of economic underdevelopment, and the inequitable distribution of global wealth that makes each crisis more catastrophic for those populations without the resources to plan for or prepare to mitigate their exposure. For the most part, the report argues, it will be these “developing countries with low income” that “experience higher exposure to extreme weather events” – and if climate change “can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts,” it will do so by “amplifying well-documented drivers of these conflicts such as poverty and economic shocks” (16). Already, the effects of climate change are disproportionately felt in the developing world, a condition shaped by the legacies of colonialism – and so the IPCC further warns international policymakers that the conflict already entrenched by this colonial history will be deepened and further complicated by climate change. Put another way: given what we now know about the role of human systems, including colonialism, in shaping the climate systems of the planet, and about the role of contemporary geopolitics in shaping the everyday experience of increasingly extreme weather, weather itself has become an indisputably political force.

This pattern of related changes has also put pressure on the forms we have to describe the relationship between the world of human action and the world of natural facts – and yet the extent to which we are willing to adapt the forms we currently have to reflect this growing consensus on the anthropogenic origins of climate change remains a highly contested and explicitly political matter. Sometimes, it’s a banal or seemingly trivial
modification to a reporting mechanism that exposes the pressure that the climate crisis has placed on the forms available to describe it. In January 2013, for instance, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology briefly added a new colour to the top of its temperature scale to accommodate predicted temperatures well above any others on record. At the time, the records the heat wave broke had been set in 1972 and early 1973— but by the following year, “Special Climate Statement 48: One of southeast Australia’s most significant heat waves” reported high temperatures that broke the 2013 records in Adelaide and in Canberra, and included a note to explain that although “the peak period of [this] heat wave occurred at the same time as below-normal temperatures” in the north, such that “nationally averaged temperatures fell well short of those experienced in January 2013,” this heat wave was especially “notable for its duration,” and many cities, including Victoria, experienced the hottest three- and four-day periods on record.

Significantly, however, neither the modified maps that predicted these exceptionally high temperatures nor the Special Climate Statement comments on the likelihood that these heat waves might be caused or amplified by human behavior. Although the Bureau also released a report on the “State of the Climate (2014)” that does make a case for the connection between these record-breaking temperatures and overall increases in global greenhouse gas levels, the Australian weather maps themselves reflect only the Bureau’s attempt to adjust the existing forms used to report meteorological data to fit a changing natural reality— or an effort, in other words, to represent and communicate a possible extreme temperature scenario using a scale and numbers recorded by meteorological instruments identified as otherwise functioning normally.

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3 In “Special Climate Statement 43: Extreme Heat in January 2013,” the Australian Bureau of Meteorology reports that the heat wave that prompted this change set records “in every State and territory, and the nationally averaged daily temperature rose to levels never previously observed, and did this for an extended period” (1). “Special Climate Statement 43: Extreme Heat in January,” Australian Bureau of Meteorology (February 2013): 1-23.

4 Damian Carrington, “Australia Adds New Colour to Temperature Map as Heat Soars,” The Guardian (8 January 2013); “Special Climate Statement 48: One of Southeast Australia’s Most Significant Heat Waves,” Australian Bureau of Meteorology (August 2014): 9, 1. In the intervening year, it is worth noting that the Bureau of Meteorology also published three other Special Climate Statements with the following titles: “Extreme Rainfall and Flooding in Coastal Queensland and New South Wales” (February 2013); “A Prolonged Autumn Heat Wave for Southeast Australia” (March 2013); and “Australia's Warmest September on Record” (September 2013). Since the January 2014 report, as above, the Bureau’s Special Climate Statements have included “An Exceptionally Prolonged Autumn Warm Spell over Much of Australia” (May 2014), “Australia’s Warmest Spring on Record” (December 2014), and “An Exceptional Autumn Hot Spell in Northern and Central Australia” (March 2014).
In Australia, then, the state – here, a public institution – has been forced to admit that the weather is changing, but remains reluctant to make the same claims about the human hand in causing that change that appear in the IPCC report (above). In the United States, however, representatives of the state – here, elected officials – are even less willing to admit that the weather is changing, and in the present struggle to control the terms used to comment on any possible evidence of climate change, we also witness the state looking for a way to assign responsibility for responding to the crisis itself. In April 2015, for instance, *Scientific American* reported that Wisconsin State Treasurer Matt Adamczyk (R) had introduced a restriction to “prevent 10 staff members at the [Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL)] from communicating about climate change, including about its potential impacts on 77,000 acres of state timberland.” As a result of the restriction, passed by a 2-1 vote, employees are now “required to notify the Board’s three elected commissioners before answering email inquiries about global warming, and a reference on the Board’s website to the effects of climbing temperatures on invasive forest species was recently deleted.” Of the many strange things about this intervention, perhaps most striking is the difference between the wide range of the ban and the much more limited scope of the muzzled Board’s outreach. As both the 2-1 vote and the small number of staff affected by the ban should suggest, the BCPL is a small organization, mostly an oversight board – but, as *Scientific American* reports, it also uses income raised from interest on its assets for “public education projects,” and occasionally “offers loans to Wisconsin communities for economic development and infrastructure projects, like upgrades to wastewater treatment systems.” In this case, then, the problem seems to be that climate change has cropped up where the state hoped it would not. As the staff members behind the now-deleted comments about “the effects of climbing temperatures on invasive forest species” have discovered, the Board can no longer go about either its oversight or its education projects without mentioning the effects of the climate on the public land it is meant to manage – and yet the Republicans who introduced the ban insist their intervention is not ideologically motivated, because climate policy, Adamczyk

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5 Evan Lehmann, “Wisconsin Agency Bans Talk of Climate Change,” *Scientific American* (10 April 2015). All parenthetical citations in this paragraph refer to this article.
explains, “has nothing to do with my job” as State Treasurer. On the other side of the aisle, predictably, Wisconsin Democrats insist that the State Treasurer’s action is the real problem: quoted in the same article, “Doug La Follette, the Democratic Secretary of State and a member of the Land Board, said that the ban ‘politicizes climate science’” – which is a fair accusation, but also one that presumes that the science and the situation at hand were not already political.

This problem with the terms available to describe – and assign responsibility for – the growing climate crisis has been a battleground in American politics for years. As early as 2011, according to a report produced by the Florida Centre for Investigative Reporting, employees of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) received orders from the Office of General Counsel not to use the terms “climate change,” “global warming,” or “sustainability” in “any official communications, emails, or reports.” In one case, a former field and administrative assistant recalls being asked to describe “sea-level rise” as “nuisance flooding,” and other DEP reports produced between 2011 and 2013 reveal a similar pattern of euphemistic substitution. Unlike the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, however, Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection is a large organization: with an annual budget of $1.4 billion and a workforce of 3200, the Department’s reports, public policy, and educational efforts are meant to have a far-reaching impact – but without the language necessary to trace relationships of cause and effect through recent data on climate change, the Department’s public outreach has been limited, according to its former employees, to speculation and tentative

6 More specifically, Adamczyk insists that he “introduced the ban to keep state employees on task,” which implies that the facts – or maybe fiction – of climate change also has “nothing to do” with the tasks the members of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands have been hired to complete. Lehmann, “Wisconsin.”
7 Tristram Korten, “In Florida, Officials Ban Term ‘Climate Change,’” Miami Herald (8 March 2015). Unless stated otherwise, all parenthetical citations in this paragraph refer to this article, which is a reprint of a text originally published by the Florida Centre for Investigative Reporting (8 March 2015).
8 For instance, in the 2009-2010 Florida Oceans and Coastal Council’s Annual Research plan, published a year before the ban, “climate change” appears 15 times, including once in the title of a section on “Research Priorities – Climate Change.” In the 2014-2015 edition of the report, “climate change” is mentioned only in the titles of past reports or conferences, and phrases like “climate drivers” and “climate-driven changes” appear instead. Other reports reflect more stringent self-censorship: in one case, volunteers with the Coral Reef Conservation Program recall a November 2014 DEP presentation in which “there was absolutely no mention of...the effect of climate change on coral reefs,” and the DEP staff, when asked about the omission, explained that they were “not allowed to show the words, or show any slides that depicted anything related to climate change.” Korten, “Florida.”
suggestion. In this case, the political motivation for the policy change appears both more explicit and more obscure than it did in Wisconsin. On the one hand, as the Miami Herald reports, the policy came into effect “after Gov. Rick Scott took office in 2011 and appointed Herschel Vinyard Jr. as the DEP’s director,” and seemed to be a predictable extension of the new Governor’s previous position on climate science: “Scott, who won a second term in November [2014], has repeatedly said he is not convinced that climate change is caused by human activity, despite scientific evidence to the contrary.” This is a far cry from the Wisconsin State Treasurer’s claims that his (similar) actions were “not ideologically motivated”: here, the policy change at the Department of Environmental Protection is explicitly aligned with the stated position of the newly elected Governor, and marks a dramatic turn away from the work of Scott’s Democratic predecessor, Charlie Crist – who, as the Herald further reports, “had been proactive on climate change, forming a statewide task force and convening a national summit in Miami in 2007.” On the other hand, both the Florida Department and Governor Scott have gone much further than Wisconsin’s Adamczyk to obscure their relationship to the policy: when asked to comment on the ban on the phrase “climate change,” both the Department’s press secretary and the Governor’s spokesperson insist that “there’s no policy on this,” or that no action has been taken at all. Unimpressed by the irony in the Governor’s reply (refusing to talk about refusing to talk), the popular response to this obfuscating protocol has been somewhat more predictable. Wherever these bans have cropped up, commentators from both mass media and scientific sources insist by that by not talking about either the likely causes or effects of climate change, the state representatives involved in this case have both allowed these effects to continue and arguably made them worse. This is especially true in Florida – which, as the Weather Channel’s version of this story points out, “is particularly vulnerable to inland flooding due to rising water levels caused by climate change.”

Especially for those who live in southeast Florida in 2015, then, with an eye on flooding patterns that anticipate much

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9 Cheryl Santa Maria, “Florida Governor Bans Use of Phrase ‘Climate Change’,” The Weather Network (10 March 2015). A 2014 report by the National Climate Assessment mentioned in The Weather Network’s article explains why: for low-lying coastal areas like southeast Florida, “just inches of sea level rise will impair the capacity of stormwater drainage systems to empty into the oceans,” and “drainage problems are already being experienced in many locations during seasonal high tides, heavy rains, and storm surge events.”
more than mere “nuisance,” one truth is entirely, if unhappily, self-evident: even if there is relatively little debate about whether the rain is heavy on any given day, the way we talk about the possible cause or likely effects of that pattern of heavy rain is an increasingly political decision, and the way we talk about the weather is, albeit by a chain of events that the Department of Environmental Protection is no longer allowed to describe, certainly changing the weather itself – whether we like it or not.

From its ambiguous origins to its present impact, then, the history of this climate crisis has been driven by the priorities of human politics – and yet as the increasingly dangerous practical consequences of climate change now seem to dwarf the political disputes that have cropped up to control it, we have run up against the limits of the language available to explain just whose job it is to manage the risks this crisis will bring. For academic researchers interested in the effects of climate change, these debates about the language available to describe our role in and responsibility for managing increasingly extreme meteorological conditions are coalescing around the concept of the Anthropocene, and specifically around the imaginative limits this concept has exposed – and yet here, too, there is something about the view of ourselves, stuck together under the weather our collective actions have called down, that has constrained and confused any forward-looking sense of human power to act upon the problem. To begin with, as Chakrabarty explains, whether our aim is to locate the Anthropocene relative to our own current sense of history or just to imagine and describe the collective action of the human species that has brought the planet to this point, engaging with this new stratigraphic definition seems to require us to integrate scales of action and ontological modes – or visions of the human – that we have previously identified as “somewhat in tension with one another,” if not altogether “contradictory”: the operations of a species, and the actions of individuals.¹⁰ Echoing the ethical problem that the IPCC report observes in the

¹⁰ Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History,” 213. For researchers in the humanities, Chakrabarty explains, the “universalist-Enlightenment view of the human” imagines a subject “potentially the same everywhere…with the capacity to bear and exercise rights” – and though the “postcolonial-postmodern” sense of the human has added nuance to this view, positing a subject that might be “the same but endowed everywhere with…differences of class, sexuality, gender, history and so on,” the presence of agency, rights, and freedom remain a persistent and powerful aspect of humanistic definition of the human. According to the Anthropocene proposal, however, the human origins of climate change are conceived as “constitutively one,” the operation of “a species, a collectivity whose commitment to fossil-fuel based,
uneven effects of climate change, Chakrabarty also notes that the most significant point of tension between these “contradictory” visions of the human rests with the problem of responsibility. One significant risk that comes with insisting we imagine the climate crisis’ anthropogenic origins as a “species” action, he points out, is that this practice diminishes and obscures the uneven histories of global development that have produced contemporary patterns of climate change:

One could object, for instance, that all the anthropogenic factors contributing to global warming – the burning of fossil fuels, industrialization of animal stock, the clearing of tropical and other forests, and so on – are after all part of a larger story: the unfolding of capitalism in the West and the imperial or quasi-imperial domination by the West of the rest of the world…If this is broadly true, then does not the talk of species or mankind simply serve to hide the reality of capitalist production and the logic of imperial…domination that it fosters? Why should one include the poor of the world – whose carbon footprint is small anyway – by use of such all-inclusive terms as species or mankind when the blame for the current crisis should be squarely laid at the door of [the] rich?11

Unfortunately, the answer to this problem is simpler than the problem itself: the present climate crisis might not have been caused by the collectively agreed-upon actions of a species acting – impossibly – in concert, but the costs and consequences of the crisis will be surely visited on the whole species just the same. And yet the pressure remains: if we are to meet the challenge the Anthropocene offers to researchers across the sciences and humanities, we must find a way of thinking about anthropogenic climate change that can encompass both a view of the human species acting as a force and a view of human subjects acting on one another all at once. So far, the most prominent lines of critical inquiry on this subject have been ontological and political: on the one hand, as Chakrabarty points out, the recognition that we have “becom[e] a geophysical force on the planet” has forced us to “develo[p] a form of collective existence that has no ontological dimension,” while on the other hand, theorists like Latour have “complained for a long time” about the “culture/nature distinction that has allowed humans to look on their relationship to ‘nature’ through the prism of the subject/object relationship,” and so

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“called for a new idea of politics that brings together...both humans and nonhumans.”

Although policymakers from Wisconsin to Florida have so far struggled to assign or acknowledge responsibility for events set in motion by non-human objects, that is, Latour imagines that this concept (causation without agency), implicit in the question of what constitutes the “common” ownership of the world we create in partnership with the non-human, must nonetheless make its way to the centre of our political thought.

Conceived slightly differently, however, these issues with agency and ontology also expose the grammatical forms under pressure from the Anthropocene proposal. For instance, one grammatical distinction between subjects and objects turns on the way subjects behave within sentences: they can act. By the same token, in the world those sentences are meant to describe, subjects can be held accountable, not merely responsible, for their actions in a way that objects cannot. In this view, one of the biggest problems with “species” thinking – or assigning responsibility for the climate crisis to the actions of the human species – is that it obscures agency, and so obscures the questions of subjectivity that otherwise distinguish rich from poor, freedom from oppression, and politics from predestination. As a grammatical problem, the Anthropocene proposal thus acts a test case – not just for the language available to describe the increasingly severe meteorological conditions of the future, but also for the forms available to describe relationships of cause and effect when the agent in question has – as Chakrabarty puts it – “no ontological dimension.” In light of this revelation, the obfuscation about the bans on the rhetoric of climate change in Wisconsin and Florida no longer seems so strange: even if we wanted to debate the anthropogenic origins of contemporary “climate-drivers,” one definitive property of the Anthropocene seems to be that we don’t quite have the words – or, more specifically, the verb forms, the conjugational flexibility – to talk about what is happening.

True to form, the humanists have responded to the representational dimension of this crisis with work that aims to bring the Anthropocene into focus, and into language, by

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bringing it first into history; perhaps what we can now do best, this project suggests, is begin by undoing what we’ve already done – if only we knew where to start. Among efforts to identify the particular human historical contexts relevant to understanding the inscriptions we have left in the geological records, however, the dates of special interest vary. Following Crutzen, some date the beginning of the “present, in many ways human-dominated geological epoch,” to the invention of the steam engine in 1784, while others reach back to the beginning of deforestation leading to agriculture; some reach forward, to the 1945 opening of the Atomic Age, while others, as in the March 2015 issue of Nature, name a 1610 annihilation in the name of colonial conquest as a turning point in the earth’s carbon history, a moment in which development went spinning off in one specific direction towards our current crisis.

Among those more interested in historicizing the Anthropocene as a concept, the dates of origin are equally varied, if bounded slightly more tightly by the ostensibly “modern” separation of nature and culture. Noah Heringman, for instance, argues that scholarly interest in “epoch-making environmental impacts” might reach back beyond Vladimir Vernadsky (of the 1920s) and Antonio Stoppani of the 1870s, back even to the environmental consciousness the Comte du Buffon demonstrates in his 1778 Epochs of Nature. Heringman’s intervention is meant to bring the opposing poles of Anthropocene historicism together, to suggest that our awareness of the possibility of an Anthropocene emerged at the same moment that, as Crutzen argues, we initiated the Anthropocene itself – but, as Klein might point out, Heringman, as a Romanticist, also has a somewhat proprietary interest in this argument.

Klein’s observation – both that there is a particular “profit…to be gained” by adopting “lurid, mournful, or pious tones” to describe climate change, and a buck to be made at every point upon the long chronological trajectory imagined for the Anthropocene – is bleak, and perhaps a bit tongue-in-cheek, but he makes a striking observation about the ways in which scholars in the humanities have, with surprising frequency, yoked the Anthropocene proposal to the future of the field. Recall, for instance, Baucom’s call for a

“new method…adequate to the situation of our time,” Aravamudan’s search for a new “archive [of] things” available for analysis, or Ferguson’s sense of the Anthropocene as “a problem,” or a concept that has exposed a problem with “all of the usual ways that we have of conceiving of our actions”; these are professional as well as philosophical questions, fuelled by some understandable anxiety.\(^\text{15}\) In the midst of the aforementioned bans – tacit and otherwise – on the phrase “climate change” alone, the stakes of any explicit conversation about the anthropogenic origins of the present crisis are unnervingly high: as in each of the publications briefly surveyed here, writing at any length about what we have done to spark and fuel climate change casts light on the seemingly intractable problems of global inequity with roots in a long history of conquest and conflict, on the limits of our existing critical and epistemological tools to respond, and on the instability of our sense of self either as individuals or as a species – and so for historians, philosophers, and literary critics, writing about the Anthropocene seems, too, to have reinvigorated a wider debate about how and whether our research could be at all relevant to any contemporary work to meet the myriad challenges of this crisis. For scholars of the long eighteenth century, this pressure seems to be felt especially acutely – because this period was named as a possible origin for the Anthropocene in the articles that coined the term, or perhaps because the “climate drivers” initiated in this period are in fact somewhat ephemeral: less recognizable than the massive production of coal that powered the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, but rather airy notions of epistemological shifts as difficult to identify as concrete evidence for the commodity value of the humanities themselves. Whatever the reason, most of the conversations about the Anthropocene emerging in eighteenth century studies have thus far been coloured by an apocalyptic gloom: beginning with the sense that we are, both as a field of work and as a planet, facing “the end of the world,” a growing number of panels, papers, and special issues on the eighteenth century and the Anthropocene characterize the search for a new method as futile, as a cheapening effort to rifle through the forms of the past with only our present needs and priorities in mind, or a cynical project intended, as Klein suggests above, more to find a supplement to an embattled funding stream than to find a new

\(^{15}\) Baucom, “History 4\(°\),” 123; Aravamudan, “The Catachronism of Climate Change,” 6-30; Ferguson, “Climate Change and Us,” 32-38.
approach to any ecological or humanitarian crisis.\textsuperscript{16} Putting a fine point on it, for instance, Jonathan Kramnick calls “the Anthropocene...‘ours’ in a double sense: as scholars of the eighteenth century writing literary history at a moment when the ‘end of history’ has become an ontological rather than a methodological postulate.”\textsuperscript{17} Although climate change sceptics are rarer now, these suspicions about the proprietary interests involved in calling climate to the fore have been surprisingly tenacious – and so writing about the weather, once again, seems more often intended to inspire inaction or resignation than anything else, and the future is rumoured to be as inhospitable a place for research in the long eighteenth century as Canada was once offered to the British imagination.

In this dissertation, I have endeavoured both to resist this apocalyptic inclination, and to strike a balance between the approaches to the past that characterize Anthropocene historicism so far. To counter the sense, growing within eighteenth century studies, that both research in a historical field and the planet might be reaching the end of days, this dissertation has made a number of assumptions: first and foremost, it has presumed that research on the past does have something to offer the present, that there is something there contemporary researchers could use to solve problems born of old ways of thinking – and it has presumed, with some considered optimism, that there is something in our present problems left to be solved, and something in our present situation worth saving. Motivated by these assumptions, the balance this dissertation has aimed to strike is meant to recall the poles of the contemporary debate about what the Anthropocene proposal might mean for the humanities as a whole. First, this dissertation has turned to the eighteenth century to uncover the forms – the modes of expression, structures of thought

\textsuperscript{16} In addition to the recent articles collected in notes 13 and 15 above, see “Roundtable: How We Practice Now?”, panel coordinated for the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Conference: Revolutions in Eighteenth-Century Sociability, London, ON (18 October 2014); “Anthropocene Historicism,” panel coordinated for the American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA (26-29 March 2015); “Ecology, Economics, and the Eighteenth Century Anthropocene,” panel coordinated for the 46\textsuperscript{th} Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Los Angeles, CA (19 March 2015); “The Eighteenth Century and the End of the World,” panel coordinated for the 46\textsuperscript{th} Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Los Angeles, CA (20 March 2015).

\textsuperscript{17} Jonathan Kramnick, Call for Papers for “The Eighteenth Century and the End of the World,” panel coordinated for the 46\textsuperscript{th} Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Los Angeles, CA (20 March 2015).
and feeling – that foreshadow the present, hoping to find in these glimpses of the familiar something that could illuminate the assumptions and processes that carved the grooves that contemporary patterns of thought still follow – and yet this project has also looked to the eighteenth century for its radical difference from the present, hoping to find in its strangeness a way of looking at the world that could cast an entirely unexpected light on our current situation. Both approaches have been fruitful, and often surprising, as this dissertation has ultimately discovered the eighteenth-century perspectives with the greatest potential to resonate with or reshape the pressing questions of the present couched in some of the most conservative positions on the changes in the weather surveyed here. So far, for instance, this dissertation has traced a shift in eighteenth-century thinking about what it means to be subject to overwhelming influence that has moved from Swift’s gleeful take on this condition as an annihilation of species difference to Smollett’s sense of a call to action in the weather, naturalizing a British right to rule – but in every chapter along the way, a theme has emerged that should unsettle any argument that there is simply nothing we can do to slow the catastrophe already underway. From Defoe’s journalistic experiments in The Storm to Brooke’s sentimental Emily Montague, increasingly matter-of-fact descriptions of extreme weather become most transparently political as they are leveraged to encourage passivity, obedience, or restraint – and so there must be, as these case studies have demonstrated, some space in which the contemporary weather-watcher, too, might learn to both recognize that the weather is very bad and getting worse, and yet sharpen our sensitivity to the interests served by any argument that ends with an abdication to climate science’s statistical sublime. As this is, after all, a story about changeable conditions, this dissertation thus suggests that both climate change naysayers and nihilists might have something to learn from the eighteenth-century view – best illustrated here in Johnson’s Rasselas – of the limited but nonetheless real scope of human power: to admit, first of all, that the risks that the weather offers are real, to acknowledge the change we’ve made in the weather so far, and to resist the inclination, however tempting, to “deprecate the clouds lest sorrow should overwhelm us,” and so “refuse to enslave [our] reason” – our sense of our own
responsibility to act, to think, to strive for change – “to the most variable of all variations, the changes in the weather.”

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