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“The Cow Chace” and “A Monody”: Major John Andre’s and Anna Seward’s Prophetic Poems

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Bull’s Ferry

On 21 July 1780, Patriot General “Mad” Anthony Wayne, with George Washington’s sanction, led an attack against the Loyalist Refugee Blockhouse commanding Bull’s Ferry on the Hudson River, near Bergen Neck, New Jersey, to seize that fortification as well as cattle and any other adventitious supplies.¹ Wayne’s two thousand dragoons and Pennsylvanian continentals failed to wrest the Blockhouse from the deserter Thomas Ward’s seventy defenders—twenty black men among them—despite the four six-pound field-pieces they ranged against the stockade at sixty yards, bombarding the Blockhouse with fifty cannonballs between eleven in the morning and a quarter past noon. The Patriot William Irvine, however, managed to drive away a herd of cows and plunder additional animals from adjoining farms. Tory forces, locally called “the woodcutters,” since they supplied New York City

1. Robert S. Allen credits the epithet attached to Wayne (1745–96) to his “personal courage and tactical boldness.” See *His Majesty’s Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774–1815* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1992), 82. Details of the attack derive from Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613–1863* (U of North Carolina, 1999), 152; Robert B. Roberts, *New York’s Forts in the American Revolution* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1980), 328; O.J. Victor, *The Life, Time and Services of General Anthony Wayne* (New York: Beadle & Adams, 1845), 111–12. Roberts claims the Loyalists manning the Blockhouse may have numbered as many as two hundred.

with fuel and lumber, kept up a galling fire from the cover of trees. Sixty-four of Wayne's troops fell, killed or wounded.

In New York, the British intelligence officer Major John Andre—long-time friend of the poet Anna Seward (1742–1809)—commemorated Wayne's exploit in "The Cow Chace," a satirical ballad. Andre (1750–80) had almost met his poem's protagonist at the Battle of Brandywine in 1777.² "The Cow Chace" appeared in three parts in James Rivington's *Long Island Royal Gazette*. Andre's ballad conforms to kind. Iambic tetrametres alternate with iambic trimetres. The Patriots—randy, cowardly, bibulous hicks—attacking, the Loyalists (distressed and decent men of feeling) give their opponents "a lickin'." Appetite for sex with a stray "nymph" overrides the *miles gloriosus* Wayne's commitment to his men and mission. In the final—seventeenth—stanza of the first part, Andre invokes a muse ironically, by the figure of preterition refusing to let her speak of drunken Rebels' abundant urination. It is worth posing the question, "Who—or what—is the muse of ballad?" A muse presides over form, but true ballads are folkish.

The Revolutionary War stimulated both sides to easily circulated, easily remembered, facetious or affecting ballads. Sentiment and ridicule equally stir partisan emotion. The Patriot spy Nathan Hale, executed by the British in 1776, inspired an instance featuring sincere use of the pathetic fallacy:

The breezes went steadily through the tall pines,
A saying "oh! hu—ush!" a saying "oh! hu—ush!"
As stilly stole by a bold legion of horse,
For Hale in the bush, for Hale in the bush.³

But Andre's obvious point of departure is "Chevy Chase," collected in Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* of 1765 and widely known in colonial America. Cheviot Chase names a hunting-ground on the marches of Scotland and England. Quoting Philip Sidney's praise of the ballad from his 1595 "Apology for Poetry," Percy alleges "The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase" invites the completest reader-

2. See Robert McConnell Hatch, *Major John André: A Spy in Gallant's Clothing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), 76.

3. Quoted in Moses Coit Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763–1783*, vol.2 (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1963), 184.

ship possible, unifying “the most simple readers” with the “most refined.”⁴ He assigns the verse to the reign of Henry VI; it may refract the Scottish victory at Otterburn, Northumbria (1388). Nobler in tenor than Wayne's cattle-thievery, a deer-hunt in defiance of the Scottish “lord of the soil” Earl Douglas escalates into battle. In 1711, Joseph Addison equals “Chevy Chase” to Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁵ Although *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* notes “[t]he commonest ballad theme is tragic love of a sensational and violent turn,”⁶ no such topic features in “Chevy Chase.” Andre's “The Cow Chace,” however, introduces this motif in a bawdy but telling way.

As in “Chevy Chase,” the action of “The Cow Chace” transpires on disputed borders—the so-called “Neutral Ground” between Rebels and Tories; the frontier between human and non-human as well as superhuman; the zone separating and unifying male and female; even the occluded front between settlers of any political allegiance and indigenous peoples. Andre adds obscenity and uncanny prophecy, as though the ballad, obliged generically to clairvoyance, resisted entire travesty. Philip Gould identifies the peculiarity of “The Cow Chace,” without providing a rationale for it, beyond Andre's metropolitan “impatience” with his “literary mode.” Gould observes how the poem becomes “abruptly sentimental, shifting again to satirical irony, invoking druid forms out of nowhere, subsequently abandoning them, and finally concluding in slapstick farce.” Gould complains, “These erratic movements interfere with tone.”⁷ The work's prophetic task, illuminated by its breadth of allusion and connotative implication, can clarify what Gould registers as merely capricious—including the episode “out of nowhere” (Wayne's preternatural amour), which Gould decides, debatably, to deem druidical. But he astutely aphorizes, “‘The Cow Chace’ ... should read as a satiric work not only about America but as one composed *in* America.”⁸

4. I use Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1858).

5. See *Spectator* 74. I use *Selections from Addison's Papers Contributed to The Spectator*, ed. Thomas Arnold (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 383–84.

6. This reference work is edited by Alex Preminger et al. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974). See 63.

7. See Philip Gould, *Writing the Rebellion: Loyalists and the Literature of Politics in British America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 102.

8. Gould, *Writing the Rebellion*, 103.

The final canto of Andre's "Cow Chace" appeared in print on 22 September 1780, when three Patriot militia-men, John Paulding, Isaac Van Wart and David Williams, apprehended Andre in civilian clothes near Tarrytown along the Hudson, papers issued by the defecting Benedict Arnold concealed in one of his stockings.⁹ Tried as a spy, the writer was hanged on October second. George Washington regretted the outcome: "when he signed the death warrant his hand shook uncontrollably."¹⁰ Andre's last publication echoes not just "Chevy Chase"—a point Gould emphasizes—but also Pope's "Rape of the Lock," Swift's "Description of a City Shower" and his "Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms," and Shakespearean drama (notably *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*). In tension with Andre's farcical partisanism, enfranchised by his liberality and diversity of reference, another voice, story or truth moves—just as Pope's 1714 "Rape of the Lock" may develop half-dismissively a surmise of Rosicrucian androgyny. Pope, enchanted (perhaps) by the moving toy-shop of his own wit, hurries past the intuitive promise embodied in Belinda and her world.¹¹ So the gifted, fated Andre may premonitorily express a Keatsian theophany at once classical and indigenous-American in import—a visitation of negative capability. "The Cow Chace" relinquishes "sides" in the conventional sense and reorganizes the conventional (or rebellious) opposition of "independence" with "dependence." Construing such evidences of rhetorical lability as hapless "slippage," Gould personalizes their origin in Andre's autophilia as a "self-proclaimed wit and impresario."¹²

9. I rely on the text available at AmericanRevolution.org (accessed on 12 July 2015).

10. Hatch, *Major John André* 276.

11. Manhood emerged as an obvious topic for satire during the violent Revolution. Tyler's *Literary History* (160) offers a punning epigram he attributes to a female author resident in Middlesex, Virginia:

Each lady cries—"No neuter gender!"
But, when a number of such creatures,
With woman's hearts and manly features,
Their country's generous schemes perplex,
I own—I hate this "Middle-sex!"

Andre's allusion to Pope's mock-epic is largely structural in character. He coerces from the ballad stanza a concision marked by parallelism, as though he aimed to re-frame the form, moulding it to the binary insistences, unions and separations, of Pope's heroic couplet.

12. See 102.

Something Keatsian in general tinctures Andre, quite apart from his abbreviated life. Inclined to Whiggishness, John Keats still chose—or perhaps rather his muse chose—magnanimously to imagine the fallen titans, victims of irreversible divine rebellion, in “Hyperion.”¹³ Snobbish, stylish Andre grants to Wayne, the ludicrous foe, an accession of insight, as vatic in tendency as Andre’s forecast of his own end—one aspect of “The Cow Chace” on which historians have chorally commented. That prophecy colours the ballad’s conclusion. The speaker “trembles ... Lest this same warrior-drover, Wayne/Should ever catch the poet” (282–84).¹⁴ Seward learned of her protégé’s execution in the London *General Evening Post* of 14 November: the heroic couplets of “A Monody on the Death of Major Andre” project a kindred tenacious prophetic power. This English elegist, “the Swan of Lichfield,” had heard of—but never yet read—“The Cow Chace” when she composed her “Monody.” A footnote to that furious memorial claims the “satiric poem ... stimulated [American] barbarity toward [Andre].”¹⁵

A Hamadryad

Andre’s choice of literary kind (the ballad) destines the conjunction of high with low, as Percy’s 1765 approval of “Chevy Chase”’s universal audience implies. A mock-heroic modulation implies a further union or tension. Andre refreshes it with the possibility that burlesque itself may continue to smile even as its hold fails in the inclusive, even mystical intuition of Hermes Trismegistus’s precept, “As above, so below.”¹⁶ Degradation and exaltation, ridicule and praise, designate aspects of one thing: whence the “erratic tone” Gould hears. The whole of “The Cow Chace” tends to this revelation, but most intensely

13. Keats worked on this fragment 1818–19. The Titans are imagined as admirable and deplorable.

14. Andre’s ballad mentions Tappan, where he would soon be hanged (14). He mocks his fatal contact, Benedict Arnold: “Canada immortaliz’d/The vender of the pill” (87–88). Arnold, the turncoat for whom Andre endangered himself, had withdrawn defeated from Québec—“Canada”—in December 1775. Arnold was a druggist in peacetime, hence the pharmaceutical allusion.

15. See Joshua Hett Smith, *An Authentic Narrative of the Causes Which Led to the Death of Major John Andre* ... (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1808), 315.

16. Sterne’s unlucky Tristram Shandy was supposed to be called “Trismegistus”; the novel bearing his name mixes mysticism with humour, like Andre’s “The Cow Chace.”

Wayne's imagined encounter "out of nowhere" with a wandering female *numen* (no druid) in the Neutral Ground—"a district more than fifty-five miles in extent" neither securely Rebel nor Tory.¹⁷ If (with weird, chthonic wit) the doomed Andre envisages an occult act of natural and supernatural conciliation, the enraged Anna Seward—inspired by (and as inspired as) Thomas Gray's Bard—contrastingly passes a curse on Washington's "ruthless head" that distressed its object to the point he at last dispatched an officer to Seward, to appease the poet and extenuate his role in the death sentence of Andre. Andre's verse, meanwhile, even seems to predict Wayne's last victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794—and in anticipation to revolt against that triumph over the self-styled United Indian Nations under Little Turtle, in the Ohio River Valley.

"The Cow Chace," Andre's title, emphasizes the topic of animal life—creaturely life. True ballads often recount raids with objectives as ignoble as "Mad" Anthony Wayne's. Homer portrays Odysseus planning to rustle cattle even *after* his emphatic restoration to rule in Ithaca.¹⁸ "Chevy Chase" announces a more exalted venatorial quest, in pursuit of "the fattiste hartes in all Cheviat" (1.2.7). The first stanzas of Andre's ballad add to the droll theme of cows a fascination with the future as portent and posterity. Wayne cannot escape association with shit and cattle. Why? The name Bull's Ferry is coincidence, though piquant.¹⁹ In reflexive or tactical condescension, Andre would deride Wayne for having been, before assuming military office, a tanner by trade. In New York, British skits sent up Rebel leaders' "mechanical" professions. Wayne's impersonator carried "a huge currying knife, and a leathern apron buckled round his neck" extended "down to his feet."²⁰ Now Wayne, with Washington's warrant to do so, wishes to *steal* livestock: but his Pennsylvania tannery already necessitated intimacy with cows—flayed cows—and shit.²¹ Tanning demands immersion of

17. Smith, *An Authentic Narrative*, 42.

18. Odysseus assures Penelope, "but as for my flocks, which the overbearing suitors have ruined,/many I shall restore by raiding" (Book XXIII [356–57]). See *The Odyssey of Homer*, translated by Richmond Lattimore (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

19. A family of that name settled there.

20. Victor, *The Life, Time and Services*, 116.

21. Guerilla sympathizers with the Crown in New Jersey, intriguingly, went under the name of "Cowboys"; their opposites adopted the name "Skinners" (Smith, *An Authentic Narrative*, 41).

hides in a concoction of dung and tree-bark. Therefore, militant Wayne must deal in a confiscatory key with his animal familiars of serener times. Andre makes the inevitable pun when he says Wayne gets “a tanning” from Loyalist Refugee forces who repel the Patriots. The (falsifying) opposition of Yahoo with Houyhnhnm (splitting in two Aristotle's binomial definition of man, *Animal rationale*); the instrumental use of body-products; the emphasis on excrement; the continuity of the human with the non-human sphere, in short the world of Jonathan Swift—these factors ring the periphery of Andre's poem, and move into the centre.

The balladeer opens by predicting cattle in future will recollect the tumult of their Rebel abduction. Andre here adapts what Addison found most “wonderfully beautiful” in “Chevy Chase.” “What can be greater,” asked Addison, “than either the thought or the expression” of these sublime lines, “The child may rue that is unborn/The hunting of that day”?²² Andre begins,

To drive the kine one summer's morn
The Tanner took his way;
The calf shall rue, that is unborn,
The jumbling of the day. (1–4)

Patriots compel pregnant cows to run. This image of pre-natal outrage—infringement on alembics of genesis and original growth—brings with it a savour of profanation, even while it functions, all the same, as an ingenious, if uncomfortable, joke. Straight epic features scrutiny of entrails, and Apollo's herd moos on the spit in Homer. In Andre's poem, female biology is front and centre. He echoes the *Macbeth*-like formulas of “Chevy Chase”; Lord Percy vaunts, “I would never yielded be/ To man of woman born.”²³ A further contagion of the pejorative sours Andre's picture. In present-day Britain, the insult “cow” still attaches to women. The cow implies both elemental nurturance and slovenly stupidity.

Andre consolidates the likeness of cows with human beings, by punning on aspects of their and our existence. He links our process of

22. Addison, *Selections*, 384.

23. “Chevy Chase” emphasizes the parturition of its male warriors: “ye were on your mothers born” (1.13.53); “Bolder bairn was never born” (1.14.58); and, twice, “no man of woman born” (1.20.84; 2.34.144).

ratiocination to the physical habits of cattle when he uses the verb “ruminate” (9). He reflects on the resources of his own low “mock” method when he puns further, on the characteristic cry of a cow—its “low” (7). The preoccupation with genealogy that marks epic—and Tory politics—informs Andre’s depiction of cows passing the story of Wayne’s epic debacle from generation to generation, “descending” (5). Such descent is ancestral. Yet it also marks “low” comedy, the *bathos* Pope’s Scriblerus Club analyzed in its 1728 treatise on the art of sinking. Calves descend at birth. There accrues an implication, equivocal, that Wayne’s deeds approach those of a Swiftian baby-killer, provoker of malign miscarriages—forecloser on the free abundance of futurity, even in the invocation of posterity.

Such a mistake (that is what it is) conceivably conspires in the predicament of Andre, the young, executed poet himself, and even in the ultimate destiny of “Mad” Anthony Wayne, as victor over an aboriginal confederacy at Fallen Timbers in the Ohio River Country. “The Cow Chace” questions the pertinence of oppositions (us versus them—even more, us versus it). The image Andre supplies to resolve the problem is intercourse, but his ballad testifies to a fateful *coitus interruptus*. Anachronism may corrupt such claims. But enduring seven weeks’ siege inside Fort St. John’s in 1775, Andre saw error at the heart of the war: “Englishmen fighting against Englishmen, French against French, and Indians of the same tribe fighting each other.”²⁴ Although Andre brought with him to America all the prejudices of his time and hardly escaped them, he mingled with and was observant of the Native people whom he met, responding as visual artist especially to the brilliant polychrome impression their accoutrements made: vermilion, blue, black, yellow.²⁵

In “The Cow Chace,” Wayne refrains more than the rest of his forces from plunder and pillage and fighting. At the poem’s midpoint, a farmer’s wife pleads with one of his fellow-officers, General Henry Lee, to leave her animals and family alone: a cameo of the real effects of war and ravage (169–72).²⁶ Andre officially reproached his own forces

24. Hatch, *Major John André*, 45.

25. Hatch, *Major John André*, 35–36.

26. “Light-Horse Harry” Lee was Washington’s cavalry chief. In October 1780, after Andre’s arrest, Lee and John Graves Simcoe, Andre’s comrade (later Governor of Upper Canada), expressed in correspondence the conviction that Andre would be

with parallel cruel and risky marauding. He had seen “dressing at the fires of a licentious regiment the greatest profusion of [purloined] meat and poultry.” He deplored the stealing, as well as the unfair distribution of loot. Besides, he perceived that, in a phrase relevant to “The Cow Chace,” the practice was “*pregnant* with ... evils,” especially the danger of wayward soldiers being captured and imprisoned by the patrolling foe.²⁷

Immediately after Lee dismisses “[t]he tears of woman and of child” (171) in the “courage wild” of his robbery (169), Lee’s colleague Wayne witnesses what Gould characterizes misleadingly as the apparition of “druid forms.” Truncated—un-consummated—it is “jumbled,” like the pre-existence of the cattle in the first stanza. Wayne’s “sympathizing heart” demands “relief” such as neither warfare nor beefsteaks can supply (173–74). In other words, lust seizes him:

For now a prey to female charms,
His soul took more delight in
A lovely hamadryad’s arms,
Than cow-driving or fighting. (177–80)

A hamadryad is a Graeco-Roman tree-nymph. Andre puns on an epic proposition in his praise of this wood-sprite’s “arms,” echoing the trumpet-blast of Virgil’s *Aeneid*: “*arma virumque cano*” (“arms and the man I sing”).²⁸ Female biology ruled the outset of “The Cow Chace,” with the striking vision of bovine womb-life. Now a woman who is also a tree enters the plot. Andre gives the reader a sense of who or what—naturalistically and otherwise—this hamadryad is:

A nymph the Refugees had drove
Far from her native tree,
Just happen’d to be on the move,
When up came Wayne and Lee. (181–84)

Lee denies a needy family exemption from the exigencies of armed piracy; Andre confronts Wayne with a different opportunity. On the

freed in an exchange of prisoners. See Mary Beacock Fryer and Christopher Dracott, *John Graves Simcoe, 1752–1806: A Biography* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1998), 56.

27. See Hatch, *Major John Andre*, 137. Filing a paper on theft from civilians, Andre suggested General Henry Clinton set up a commissary of captured cattle, to discourage abuses (138).

28. “Now awful beauty puts on all its arms”: Pope, “The Rape of the Lock,” 1.139.

plane of fact, the hamadryad assumes the lineaments of a loose camp-follower, a woman of easy virtue errant in the Neutral Ground. The verb “drive” connects this banished wanderer to Wayne’s enterprise as a cow-drover. Loyalist Refugees have ostracized her.

Why is she a hamadryad? Tory “woodcutters” have taken up positions among the trees, and erect *abatis* in them. If the Patriots are, from the British poet’s partisan perspective, in the “wrong,” another species of wrongness has chopped down the tree in which the nymph had her residence, even her being. Or not her being, it would appear: in Andre’s revisionist mythology, a hamadryad can survive the execution of the plant with which her fate might otherwise be ineluctably bound. The killing of the tree does not result, yet, in the extinction of the tree’s indwelling spirit. But, like all the personnel on this battlefield, the hamadryad is a “refugee.” Patriots and Loyalists, not to say Native people (for whom the hamadryad may be, in part, a displaced, a fugitive emblem), are reduced to this status—and, in some cases, their favoured conception of colony or state arose in response to it. That the hamadryad is “on the move” faintly associates her, despite her expulsion from Tory lines, with the advance of Birnam Wood that presages Macbeth’s destruction (183).²⁹ Cases of drastic impiety, such as Erysichthon’s in Ovid, shadow the circumstances.³⁰ Then Wayne’s behaviour with the hamadryad will have some momentous import, in the small, though heterogeneous, compass of the ballad. The hamadryad has hopes of her suitor:

She, in mad Anthony’s fierce eye,
The hero saw portray’d,
And all in tears she took him by
The bridle of his jade. (185–88)

The hamadryad uses picturesque language characteristic of the period: martial glory glamourizes Wayne’s gaze. On the one hand, she is an

29. Malcolm has his men camouflage themselves with tree-boughs; a messenger reports to Macbeth, “I look’d toward Birnam, and anon, methought,/ The wood began to move.” He repeats he saw “a moving grove”—fulfilling the witches’ prophetic warning (*Macbeth*, V.v.32–34).

30. In book eight of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, this Thessalian downs an enormous oak sacred to Ceres, who punishes him by evoking in him insatiable hunger. See Publii Ovidii Nasonis *Metamorphoseon*, ed. Daniel Chrispinus Helvetius [New York: J. Eastburn & Co., 1817].

unsettled, endangered woman looking for sex and, with it, a semblance of safety.³¹ On the other, she is an autochthonous daemon granted a neoclassical allocation by her British chronicler, denied by his side and seeking restitution or recognition from the other, in Gould's perplexed "nowhere": the Neutral Ground of America.³² She has waylaid a Rebel eminence. That she commandeers his horse is notable, if her case is brought into correlation with Tam O'Shanter's. That hapless creature, soon to be conceived of Robert Burns's imagination, depends on his nag Meg to bring him with instinctive strength out of the peril presented by a diabolical revel; and she forfeits her tail in his service. For a man such as Wayne or Tam, a horse at once incarnates routine transport and a spirit-animal of sorts, sagely following nature. The end of "The Cow Chace" relates how Wayne "lost ... /His horse that carried all his prog," or provisions (273–80).

The hamadryad further claims that hers are "No human lamentations;/The trees you see them cutting yonder/Are all my near relations" (190–92). Andre has created the mock-machinery of a mock-epic. Yet the following stanza discloses the stakes, as glimpsed on a mythological plane:

And I, forlorn! implore thy aid,
To free the sacred grove;
So shall thy prowess be repaid
With an immortal's love. (193–96)

Andre makes Wayne espouse "Freedom's cause" early in his ballad (30). Here, however, the pervasive question of *liberty* arises in connection with forestland—a "sacred grove." In Andre's time the concept lived: even in ours it survives. Some members of the Six Nations, for example, still regard the white pine as holy.³³ Andre had met some of them

31. "Jade" is a contemptuous name for a horse—like "cow," sometimes applied insultingly to women. There may lurk a pun ("bridle"/ "bridal").

32. Recall that Gould alleges Andre invokes a hamadryad "out of nowhere" (*Writing the Rebellion*, 102). But Gould's "nowhere" has a geographical analogue in the "district more than fifty-five miles in extent" which Smith designates the Neutral Ground. Neither Patriot nor Loyalist forces controlled this tract (see *An Authentic Narrative*, 42).

33. The Six Nations are comprised in the ancient Iroquois League or *Hodeno-saunee*, People of the Longhouse. The Richelieu River, along which the indefensible Fort St. Johns stood, was called by Champlain around 1609 "River of the Iroquois." The death of a sachem was likened to the death of a giant pine (see Dean R. Snow,

in the course of his service. Epic precedent guides Aeneas by a golden bough into the underworld. The pines of Mount Ida, sacred to the mother of Jupiter, become first Aeneas's Mediterranean fleet, then a school of helpful sea-nymphs, the chief of whom, Cymodocea, assists the Trojan leader in his Italian campaign.³⁴

What does it mean to “free the sacred grove”? That imperative has little to do with either independence or empire: or (if it does) those desiderata must submit to revision. Andre's quotient of negative capability allows the incarnate complaint of divine nature to occur to a Rebel commander, not to one of his own. Since Wayne won at the too-appropriately named Fallen Timbers—conquering groves to generate revenue from the sale of Native land to settlers, offsetting otherwise crushing U.S. war-debt and allaying civil unrest—his deafness to the plea, or rather distraction from the plea, amplifies the tragic register time has imparted to Andre's ballad.³⁵ Andre may have been executed,

The Iroquois [Oxford: Blackwell, 1996], 184). The office of Pine-Tree Chief accommodated men of ability who earned rather than inherited their eminence. The white pine was, and is, deemed the Great Tree of Peace. Ted Williams alleges in *Big Medicine from Six Nations* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2007) that a despondent person may be uplifted merely by leaning against the trunk of a white pine. He adds that even contemplation of a white pine *symbol* will strengthen the trees everywhere. In 1990, the 78-day stand-off between the Mohawks of Kanesatake and the Canadian army centred around a grove the residents of Kanesatake called the Pines. The federal government ultimately intervened to prevent the expansion of a golf course onto reserve lands.

34. See Vergil's *Aeneid* 10.9: “*Nos sumus, Idaeae sacro de vertice pinus, / nunc pelagi nymphae, classis tua*,” “We, pines from the holy height of Ida, now deep-sea nymphs, are your fleet” (My translation from P. Vergili Maronis *Aeneis*, ed. Otto Ribbeck [Leipzig: Teubner, 1886].)

35. R. Douglas Hurt calls Fallen Timbers “little more than a hard-fought skirmish,” in which forty-four U.S. soldiers and forty Native (or “Indian”) fighters died. Yet its repercussions went deep, and lasted. See *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720–1830* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), 135. The British—garrisoned, in contravention of the Treaty of Paris, at nearby Fort Miamis—declined to assist the regrouping United Indian Nations forces. Upper Canada's Governor John Graves Simcoe, hungry to best his old foe Wayne, in vain craved permission to sweep south to Pittsburgh, to cut off Wayne's American Legion with a mixed provincial and Indigenous force amounting to six thousand fighters. Simcoe was once a close friend and colleague of John Andre. In 1780, he had proposed a plan to Lieutenant-Colonel William Crosbie of rescuing the imprisoned Major with a force of Queen's Rangers (see D.B. Read, *The Life and Times of General John Graves Simcoe* [Toronto: George Virtue, 1890], 86).

but read prophetically he perceives that Wayne will, in time, perpetrate execution of his own from which he might have stayed his hand.

The wrong presents itself, on a literary and interpretative level, as a sundering of the profane from the sacred. Andre chooses to dramatize the error as a case of coupling, and uncoupling. A hamadryad has practical meaning for a tanner: bark is as important as shit for the curing of leather. On the higher plane of Blakean clairvoyance, *Fallen Timbers* is exactly what the visionary hamadryad, as insightful (despite her apparent impertinence) as any sibyl, decries. We learn that the hamadryad's former allegiance was to the King's bodyguard, informally shortened to "the bodies":

Now some, to prove she was a goddess
Said this enchanting fair
Had late retired from the bodies
In all the pomp of war. (197–200)

To translate this elevated language: the bodyguard drummed the woman out for turpitude. She embodied what cannot, what should not, be assimilated. To the extent that she is a hamadryad—a principle of indigenous fertility—her turpitude only results from Genesis's command to be fruitful. The balladeer adds that when the hamadryad was expelled, no less than "Cunningham himself convey'd/ The lady through the street" (203–4). William Cunningham, eerily, was the cold-hearted British Provost Marshal who had (with General William Howe's assent) ensured the hanging of the Rebel spy Nathan Hale, five years before Andre's execution; he reputedly added arsenic to American prisoners' food to shorten the period and cost of their detention.³⁶

The ardent Wayne leads the willing hamadryad aside to the precincts of one Yan van Poop's. This scatological parody-Dutch name evokes the *Ur*-colonists of New York. But if low and high are to be joined with the honours of war and the blessings of peace and plenty, Andre sees in *Netherlanders* a genius for that juncture, as Philip Larkin

36. Hatch sketches Cunningham's vindictiveness (*Major John André*, 129). The astonishing Andre picks the perfect villain to connive, on the British side, in denial of proper respect to telluric powers; Cunningham's precedent in hanging Hale was soon to be thrown up to those who argued for clemency in the case of the captive Andre.

also did, inventing characters such as Dirk Dogstoerd and Old Prijk for his poem “The Card-Players.”³⁷ Andre’s ballad continues:

So Roman Antony, they say,
Disgrac’d the imperial banner,
And for a gypsy lost a day,
Like Anthony the tanner. (209–12)

Shakespeare’s play entertains a vision of Eros disallowed by manly Rome. Andre alludes to the beginning of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Philo complains to Demetrius their besotted General “is become the bellows and the fan/ To cool a gipsy’s lust.”³⁸ The “gypsy” offered eighteenth-century British writers the archetype of perpetual vagabondage between nature and culture, loaded (as in William Cowper) with the assumed attributes, foul and fair, of the wild: “houseless rovers of the sylvan world.”³⁹ In October 1794, William Mayne visiting Fort Miamis reported, “some knowing ones say [Native people and “gypsies”] were in days heretofore the same people,” assimilating the diasporic Roma to American indigenes.⁴⁰

Andre’s muse will not permit “Mad” Anthony Wayne the consummation of his desire for his serpent of old Nile—or (rather) hamadryad of the Neutral Ground. Instead, there nickers and clops into view the crass phantasmagoria of his side’s plunder (sheep, horses, goats, heifers, asses, poultry). General Lee—“sublime,” “mighty”—“drove the terror-smitten cows” (225, 226, 227). As in the abortive conclusion of a dream, Wayne cannot assimilate the esoteric embassy of this hamadryad, who has pressed her case in the guise of a loose woman. Instead his own brigand-like army, its two divisions coalescing, flows past with booty, in phrases that echo (and punningly name) Jonathan Swift:

As when two kennels in the street,
Swell’d with recent rain,
In gushing streams together meet,
And seek the neighbouring drain;

37. See *The Collected Poems of Philip Larkin*, ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: Marvell, 1988), 177.

38. Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, I.i.9–10.

39. *The Task*, “Book 1: The Sofa,” 588.

40. John Graves Simcoe, *The Correspondence of John Graves Simcoe*, ed. E.A. Cruikshank, vol. 3 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1925), 74.

So met these dung-born tribes in one,
As swift in their career. (241–46)

Andre evokes Swift's 1710 "Description of a City Shower," at the climax of which a drenched London—stronghold of culture, beholden at last to nature—floods with dead cats and turnip tops.⁴¹ Adjusting Swift to his own context, Andre calls the Patriots children of shit. But the polyphonic (or "erratic") ethos of "The Cow Chace" implies all good breeds from shit—men, women, animals and trees, "sacred" when sensed truly: "order from confusion sprung." As Shakespeare's Antony remarks, "Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike/Feeds beast as man" (I.i.35–36); "the nobleness of life," therefore, amounts to an embrace. Rebellion and reaction are empty posturings. "Description of a City Shower" supplies, besides, the sanguine image of a truce struck in mutual awe of omnipotent nature: "triumphant Tories and desponding Whigs/Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs" (41–42). Patriot and Loyalist entirely aside, in the person of the hamadryad the forest would speak. Andre supplants this failed ambassadress a few stanzas later with the figure of one Parson Caldwell, "a frantic priest," chaplain to Washington's army, male parody of the Cumaean Sibyl, breast "labouring" as if he had "taken an emetic" (257–60); a British soldier had controversially shot this Presbyterian minister's wife Hannah dead, in June 1780. Growing "prophetic," the frenzied Caldwell can only console the Rebels that they will "great achievements think on" (266).

Kindred Spirits

Learning the author of "The Cow Chace," her friend, was hanged on Washington's orders, Anna Seward (1742–1809) produced "A Monody on the Death of Major John Andre." When Walter Scott oversaw the publication of Seward's literary remains, he included as appendix to "A Monody" a selection of Andre's early correspondence with Seward. It dated back to when Andre frequented "the dear blue region" of Seward's Lichfield drawing-room, wooing Seward's younger foster-sister Honora Sneyd (1751–80). Andre's letters—of Werther-like

41. "Now from all parts the swelling kennels flow;/And bear their trophies with them as they go" ("Description of a City Shower," 53–54).

sensitivity, and un-Werther-like sociability—include passages that reverberate revealingly with “The Cow Chace.”

The idea of the hamadryad makes a preliminary appearance in a rebuke to Christian divines who would mutilate trees: “I sympathize in your resentment against the canonical dons who stumpify those good green people, beneath whose friendly shade so many of your happiest hours have glided away—their verdant arms will again extend, and invite you to their shelter.”⁴² Therefore “The Cow Chace”’s serio-comic nymph has an ancestor in Andre in the articulation of a commonplace of sensibility: Rousseau-like arboreal appreciation.⁴³ The plea of the New Jersey hamadryad, which (as in Erasmus Darwin’s “Botanic Garden”) envisages itself both pragmatically and erotically, is anticipated by this expression of sorrow for cropped trees on cathedral grounds. In Andre’s letter, the tension between a Christian and a neo-pagan dispensation plays itself out: canonical dons versus Ovidian groves. His youthful willingness to impute aesthetic susceptibility to animals enjoying a sunny day foreshadows Andre’s peculiar feeling for the harassed beasts of “The Cow Chace”: “The very brute creation seems sensible of these beauties;—There is a species of mild cheerfulness in the face of a lamb ... and a demure contented look of an ox.”⁴⁴

And, although the lowly tanner Wayne gets a flaying in “The Cow Chace,” the younger Andre, who has likely just read Laurence Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey*, salutes the intrinsic worth of those occupying what he conceives of as a humbler station in life. So he praises a “higler,” an itinerant dealer in poultry and dairy products, who offers prompt help when he thinks Andre’s carriage has broken down. Andre records “a face full of honest anxiety, pity, good-nature, and every sweet affection under Heaven ... My benevolence will be the warmer while I live, for the treasured remembrance of this higler’s countenance.”⁴⁵ All these epistolary precedents support the argument that Andre the

42. The “dons” are associates of Lichfield Cathedral, in the Bishop’s Palace of which Seward lived. Letter of 3 October 1769 (see *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward*, edited by Walter Scott, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: James Ballantyne & Co., 1810], 93–94).

43. Andre quotes Rousseau in this letter: “there are moments worth ages.” He proceeds to ask, “Shall not those moments return?” (Letter of 1 November 1769 [*The Poetical Works*, 101].)

44. *Ibid.*, from a letter of 19 October 1769 (98).

45. *Ibid.*, from a letter of 1 November 1769 (103).

artist perceived with conscious clarity how the same topic may participate simultaneously in risible *bathos* and supreme *pathos*.

Seward's "A Monody" answers to generic expectation. A single tragic voice sings. The poet sums in persona and poem all her diverse losses, gaining from them resources for a curse with which she managed to unsettle Washington's sleep, even postwar. Seward invokes a Vestal flame at the end of her poem. In "A Monody"'s final line (458), it will kindle "Andre's hallow'd pyre." This poetic fire may have been ignited reminiscently by a passage in a letter of Andre's, in which Seward, sitting by her own "blazing hearth," appears under the courtly pseudonym of "Julia": "The purity, the warmth, the kindly influence of fire, to all for whom it is kindled, is a good emblem of the friendship of such amiable minds as Julia's and her Honora's."⁴⁶ Wayne could not, in "The Cow Chace," accomplish with an indigenous *numen* a marriage at once sacred and profane. Seward's Vestal reference commemorates more decorously the unhappy chastity of an interrupted courtship. In respect of each other, Andre and Honora Sneyd remain for Seward exemplary and perpetual virgins. They celebrate an endless, averted marriage ceremony in the poet's mind. Claudia Thomas Kairoff observes how "when André courted Honora, Seward apparently took the lead, encouraging him and writing to him and chaperoning their meetings ... Seward clung to the fiction of André's tragic love."⁴⁷ Andre and Honora's courtship thus began and—in "A Monody"—ended (or persisted) as a kind of artwork issuing from Seward's hand.

Writing to Seward, Andre once proposed the use of Honora's miniature as an amulet ameliorating the deadening influence of the family business he had to take up: "when an impertinent consciousness whispers ... I am not of the right stuff for a merchant, I draw my Honora's picture from my bosom, and the sight of that dear talisman so inspirits my industry, that no toil appears oppressive."⁴⁸ Seward elegiacally transforms that miniature into a Sterne-like pledge of fidelity. Though, in truth, in 1775, General Richard Montgomery restrained his troops from seizing spoils, Seward has her Patriots at fallen Fort St. John's wish to wrest this token from Andre—rather as Yorick in

46. Ibid., from a letter of 19 October, 1769 (96).

47. See Kairoff, *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2012), 206, 207.

48. *Poetical Works*, from a letter of 1 November, 1760 (104).

Sterne imagines the King of France engrossing to state coffers his miniature of Eliza.⁴⁹ The monodist herself reports inspirational consultation of a *second* miniature of Honora (Andre evidently painted a pair of these).

If “Chevy Chase” stands especially behind Andre’s ballad, Thomas Gray’s 1751 “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” and his 1757 “The Bard,” as well as Alexander Pope’s “Eloisa to Abelard” and Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, complicate Seward’s “Monody.” Seward’s lines marry Gray’s modest mourner to the heroic beloved of Abelard:

Oh! When such pairs their *kindred spirit* find,
When sense and virtue deck each spotless mind,
Hard is the doom that shall the union break. (101–3)

In Gray’s masculinist “Elegy,” a “kindred Spirit” may inquire after a sensitive fellow’s grievous fate (95–96). Catalyzed by Gray, Seward would reunite the shades of the long-alienated couple Sneyd and Andre. Both died in 1780. Marrying in 1773 a bridegroom of whom Seward disapproved (Richard Lovell Edgeworth), Honora had already perished so far as Seward was concerned, even before tuberculosis killed her a few months before Andre’s execution. Andre had died as ignominiously as prematurely, by what Seward calls a “feloncord” (403). Washington’s edict followed the Continental Congress’s 1775 ruling that a spy be deprived of a firing squad’s dignity. Andre underwent a “low” death despite his “high” achievements, and still loftier possibilities. Seward’s elevated language raises him anew.

She links the lost Honora and the hanged writer with the unfortunate Eloisa and Abelard. The phrase “spotless mind” assures the identification. Pope’s Eloisa writes (207–9): “How happy is the blameless Vestal’s lot! / The world forgetting, by the world forgot. / Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!”⁵⁰ But in this case, who enjoys or suffers the “Vestal’s lot”? Seward tends this fire. A cherishing of the hearth—patriotic, English hearth—signifies not the religious duty of oblivion

49. “[H]ad I died that night ... the whole world could not have suspended the effects of the *Droits d’aubaine* ... all must have gone to the King of France—even the little picture which I have so long worn, and so often have told thee, Eliza, I would carry with me into my grave, would have been torn from my neck” (Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998], 3).

50. I rely on Alexander Pope, *The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

but the task of perpetual recollection. The influence of Gray's "The Bard" imparts impassioned, oracular impetus to Seward's understanding of her role. Her Vestal flame rages also as a "Prophet's fire" (21). The mind's fastness is not to be violated with impunity any more than primitive Snowdonia. The injury inflicted by the political death of John Andre only supports that claim. Infringed and incensed, a seer's intellect acquires strange power of speech: it can curse. Seward weaves General Washington's winding-sheet. "The Bard" models how even headlong self-destruction can advantage vatic self-creation: but Seward's monodist, safe in low-lying, staid Lichfield, survives her losses and converts them into an execration of Welsh intensity. The poet climactically addresses Washington, that "cool determin'd murderer of the brave": "With horror thou shalt meet the fate thou gave,/Nor Pity gild the darkness of thy grave!" (417–18).

Seward's "Monody," concluding thus with a blast of hatred, opens with the "deep curses of the great and brave"—audible all the way across the Atlantic (5). The writer eventually aligns herself with that resonant capacity of malediction, by blighting with corrosive words Washington's fame and future. "The Cow Chace" is profound: but part of its depth is the open, humane—and unconventional—profession of *bathos*. Like Andre, who has his "Mad" Anthony promise his troops the imminent ravishment of Loyalist wives and daughters (48) and who mocks General Lee for the pusillanimous theft of a farmwife's cattle (before the hamadryad alters the tenor of his ballad), Seward involves women's destinies in the waging of war. "A Monody" imagines Andre's address not only to the alluring Honora—but also to his sisters, and to his mother.⁵¹ The former figures "twine" their souls' "soft feeling" with their brother's (163–64). This sensuous—braiding and knotting—affinity of sensibility emphasizes intimate space, intimate extension. Its major emblem becomes Honora's miniature. Seward's sentimental Andre, as he capitulates at Fort St. John's, places this "beauteous semblance of the fair" in his mouth and gulps it lest a Rebel confiscate it—Seward's fiction, not historical reality (280). But first, one of Andre's sisters is made to suggest the doomed Euryalus of Vergil's *Aeneid*.

Fusing Gray's idea of a male "kindred Spirit" to the plight of Eloisa, Seward opens "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" to a female

51. Andre's speech in "Monody" lasts many lines (117–218).

pathos: analogously, she modifies another, more venerable representation of masculine friendship, Vergil's. Nisus and Euryalus are young Trojan soldiers who mount a night raid in the ninth book of *Aeneid*. The plan miscarries; both men die. As for Andre's sister Louisa, her terrors "bend [her] sweet head, like yon lucid flow'r,/That shrinks and fades beneath the summer's show'r" (179–80). Vergil compares early-slain Euryalus to just such a bloom: his body lolls "as a rosy blossom slashed by the ploughshare languishes dying—or poppies droop weary heads, weighed with raindrops."⁵² Like Andre, Nisus and Euryalus fought on an actual field of battle; Seward implies that women fall as casualties of war, even at remote distances, through the affective losses they sustain. Conflating the sexes in mutual calamity, Seward proceeds a few lines later explicitly to compare Andre himself to Vergil's "fair Euryalus" once he "launches on the waves" of the Hudson (329–34). He will die, as Euryalus died; in her grief, Andre's sister Louisa resembles that hero.

If, despite his satire, Andre experimentally reverses the poles of his customary sympathy (making the object of his mockery, Wayne, the recipient of the hamadryad's important solicitation), then Seward effects an astonishing upset when she associates Andre not only with a faithful *wife*—but also with an ancient *republican* cause. Fearing the depredations of his Patriot captors, Andre resolves to place Honora's miniature in his mouth, determined to swallow it: "One way remains!—Fate whispers to my soul/Intrepid Portia and her burning coal!" (273–74). Plutarch reports in his *Life of Brutus* that Portia, the conspirator's wife—Roman in her will to elective suicide—deliberately choked herself by filling her mouth with coals. Shakespeare dramatizes the incident when he has Brutus explain Portia's reasoning to Cassius. She is grieved "that young Octavius with Mark Antony/Have made themselves so strong; for with her death/That tidings came ... And, her attendants absent, she swallow'd fire" (IV.iii.152–55). Her horror at the ascendancy of the triumvirate over the vindicators of the republic suffices to make this exemplary spouse renounce her life. Andre resembles therefore allusively a woman dead set against tyranny:

52. My translation. See *Aeneid* 9.435–37: "*Purpureus veluti cum flos succisus aratro/Languescit moriens lassove papavera collo/Demisere caput pluvia cum forte gravantur.*"

whereas Washington becomes a vengeful *imperial* figure, all the more disappointing because liberal sentiment had once inclined to support his cause: "Oh Washington! I thought thee great and good,/Nor knew the Nero-thirst of guiltless blood!" (389–90).

Seward names Washington's error: "Persisting vengeance o'er a fallen foe." Such intransigence, she assures us, "cowards only know" (427–28). To magnify the pettiness, she proceeds to circumscribe Washington's range of choice to the style of Andre's death. By approving the gallows not a firing squad, and evenvenoming "with disgrace the darts of death," the General moves forever beyond the possibility of pardon. He merits an unnerving curse: "infamy, with livid hand, shall shed/Eternal mildew on thy ruthless head!" (419–20). An intimation of "The Bard" hovers witheringly: "Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!" (1). What the Thirteen Colonies have declared their independence from—a monarch—only returns in absolute and historically retrograde form.

Seward's writing hand is the "livid" instrument of immortal accusation. The "blazing hearth" warmly recollected in Andre's letter of 1769, transmuted into a Vestal flame, turns into a retaliatory—Virgilian, Allecto-like—stimulus to "inspire/ A kindling army with resistless fire" (408). Seward in her prosaic mode accepted Washington's troubled effort to correct the record. Writing from St. Anne's Hotel, Buxton, in August 1798, she informed Sarah Ponsonby that the papers Washington had delivered into her hands by an officer "entirely acquitted the General."⁵³ Washington, the poet even declared, "had laboured to save" Honora's suitor. She learned that captive Andre had comported himself in his usual "high-souled" way. But Seward's muse and Andre's, impervious to merely political arguments, pursued their inflexible ends. Unlike Andre, Seward enjoyed a protracted opportunity to revise. She never changed a word.

53. See *The Swan of Lichfield being a Selection from the Correspondence of Anna Seward*, edited by Hesketh Pearson (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1936), 230. In 1798, Seward reports reading Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." She notes, "Supernatural horrors are the taste of the times"—but reviewing the plot observes, "Enormous punishments are decreed to a trifling crime" (233).