

“Insect Poetics: Or, How James Grainger’s Fraught Personifications Presage Enlightenments Not Taken”

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Abstract: Tracking the insectophilia of James Grainger’s *The Sugar-Cane*, this article charts two modes of personification in the eighteenth century: metropolitan personification, which focused on animating affects and worked to connect diversity into systems, and colonial personification (or insect poetics), which focused on partiality and worked to disconnect systems, casting partitioning as the prelude to organization. While the metropolitan mode of personification is entirely in keeping with Enlightenment thought, Grainger’s insect poetics develops from within it yet is neither part of the Enlightenment nor of modernity that followed on it. This untimely insect poetics is apposite to our own time.

I. ⁱ

Since the recuperation to the canon of Scottish-born poet and physician James Grainger’s work, scholars have concentrated on Book 4 of his West Indian neogeorgic *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) as the portion of his *oeuvre* with the most contemporary relevance. Here Grainger finally turns from discussions of what seem entirely prosaic topics like the care of West-Indian soil (Book 1), threats to the cane crop (Book 2), and the conversion of raw material to commodities (Book 3) to take up a problem that if it strikes readers as equally unpoetic is at least of interest to twenty-first-century audiences. Here in Book 4 the poem focuses on the African-born slave population that cultivated the sugar crop, a topic relevant to scholars working to track the lives of those subjected within an emerging modernity.

While twenty-first century readers have turned critical attention to the poem’s fourth book, Grainger and a number of his eighteenth-century readers took more interest in its second. Writing from St. Christopher (St. Kitts) to correspondents in the high-culture London literary coterie in which he formerly circulated, Grainger repeatedly suggested that this second book was the poem’s centerpiece. In a letter to Thomas Percy he wrote that the “second book . . . I must tell you it is my favorite one of the whole” (Nichols 279).ⁱⁱ Eighteenth-century metropolitan reviewers by and large confirmed Grainger’s high estimation of his second book, excerpting large portions of it along with

their reviews (Gilmore).ⁱⁱⁱ Grainger may well have particularly esteemed his second book because of its account of massing tropical insects and other overwhelming West Indian phenomena like hurricanes. In charging the poem with description after description of such phenomena, he intensified the georgic mode's formal challenge of exploiting the tension between the high and the low so as to reveal the high in the low.^{iv} It was in his second book's rills on plantations' teeming insect life that he might most fully exercise his poetic power by using aesthetic form and figure to show that low West Indian topics could incite pathos in readers, in so doing integrating these themes into a metropolitan culture structured by sensibility.^v Hoping to burnish the poem and his reputation, Grainger revised the second book of the poem more substantively than any other. Between the 1762 manuscript draft of the poem he sent to London and the edition of the poem published in 1764 (the only edition Grainger saw through from start to finish before his death in 1766), he made a series of revisions to Book Two, most of which intensified the threat posed by West Indian natural phenomena in order to crystallize the book's structuring problem: if, and how, British aesthetics and other cultural forms (natural history and agriculture, most obviously) might prove adequate to West Indian phenomena. [FIGURE 1]^{vi}

Grainger aims to neutralize the power of the West Indian phenomena he describes through the deft deployment of personification, which was the key literary figure eighteenth-century poets used to manage the base and staggeringly diverse topics typical of neogeorgic poetry (Wasserman, Chapin, Keenleyside). The newly-named trope *personification* worked to reveal, and to in so doing catalyze in readers, a feeling or spirit that suffused the various themes and scenes of the neogeorgic. Commodity exchange, back country farming, and colonial entrepôts, Scots shepherds, clouds, American vegetables, cows, birds, soil, Persian traders, and medicine could be justifiably brought together when personification revealed a similar affect moving through each.

In the georgic and neogeorgic tradition in which Grainger poem participates, the insects with which he fills his second book are key vectors for personification's inspiriting affect and synthesizing operation. For instance, in James Thomson's massively popular *Seasons* (1730), from which Grainger draws liberally, insects function as figures for the animating process that poetic personification triggered. Thomson implores the muse to "let the little noisy summer-race/ Live in her lay and flutter through her song:/ Not mean though simple – to the sun allied,/ From him they draw their animating fire" ("Summer" 237-240). Here, insects are the delicate, nearly imperceptible forces that give rhythm and life to the diverse scenes that constitute the season and the poetry through which it is rendered. That the smallest and lowest expresses such figural power neatly articulates the ideal of eighteenth-century British aesthetic theory, namely that figure and the form that follows on it were expressions of nature that might be found equally in the artistry of the natural world and in that of the poet.^{vii}

Like Thomson, Grainger allies insects with personification's power of animating a scene by passing a feeling through it. Thus, he begins Book Two's insecteria by invoking "The insect tribe/ That, fluttering, spread their pinions to the sun" (156-157). And yet, his insects aren't simply figures for poetry. He insists that the tropical insects he invokes must die and spends much of Book Two detailing methods of insecticide. That Book Two of *The Sugar-Cane* oscillates between insectophilia and insecticide implicates the poem in two irreconcilable modes of conceiving personification and, with it, the relation of poetic content (descriptions of tropical bugs, hurricanes, earthquakes, and so on) to figural and formal processes. The first, which is the dominant form of personification in Grainger's poem and in eighteenth-century neogeorgics more generally, and which I call *metropolitan personification*, casts personification's animating power as an affective operation, and it uses this operation to join the diversity that it collocates into a single system. The second, which I call *colonial*

personification, casts personification's animating power as a disaffecting operation on the small and the particulate and, instead of working toward connection, it tends toward division.

In exploring the tension between these two modes of personification in Grainger's poem, I aim to advance the larger argument that such static in colonial aesthetic production allows us to posit a split within the metropolitan Enlightenment's colonial project. This split allows us to pose other routes that opened up within the Enlightenment, routes we might glimpse in both Grainger's production of a colonial poetics and in the unspent figural charge that remains in his insectaria. Producing *outré* aesthetics and with them new trajectories for Enlightenment thought and organization was never Grainger's goal. Yet precisely because the other Enlightenment trajectories shadowed forth in Grainger's aesthetics have not been visible and were, consequently, routes not taken, they remain in potential and might be useful trajectories for theory to travel now as it explores relations to the Enlightenment that reorient us in the present by allowing us to stay within its line as we build alternatives to the subjugations on which the metropolitan Enlightenment depended.

II.

Heather Keenleyside shows that in eighteenth-century English metropolitan writing personification vested animacy in what was not animate or not sufficiently animate. In fact, eighteenth-century personification was so intensely focused on animation that it is worth conceptualizing the trope in eighteenth-century writings through the term *animation* instead of the term *person*, which the modern episteme made equivalent to the term *human*, an equivalence that weakens critics' ability to see clearly how the trope functioned in the eighteenth-century. For eighteenth-century writers, animation connoted wind (from its Greek root) as well as breath, life, and soul (from the Latin): it was less a property of bodies as we now tend to think about animacy than a force that moved across and through bodies. To explain how personification so conceived

operates, Keenleyside analyzes James Thomson's *The Seasons*. Thomson collocates sheep and bovine "peoples," "nameless" microbial "nations," plant and avian "races," along with various sorts of human "peoples." The personification at work in the poem is not in giving terms that are now usually given to human collectivities ("race," "nation," "tribe," and "people") to cows, sheep, birds, and microbes. Rather Thomson's personification consists in his effort to pass an animating force across these diverse kinds of life in order to join this diversity into the rhythm and affect proper to a given season.

If personification in eighteenth-century neogeorgics collocates diversity into a single system composed of the various kinds of the natural historical table, it also animates this system, as we have already seen in Thomson's association of insects with the work of animating the plurality of things that his poem gathers and organizes. On this point, consider Keenleyside's analysis of *The Seasons*' opening account of the love that connects life forms across species lines:

At the start of Spring, "the Soul of Love is sent abroad"; it moves "Warm thro' the vital Air, and on the Earth/Harmonious seizes" (582-84). This love first seizes on the hearts of birds, who are bound by this "soft Infusion" into pairs and then to the offspring they produce This "kindly care" proceeds to seize on the hearts of bulls, of sea creatures, and finally of human beings, who are likewise moved by "th' infusive Force of Spring." (864)

As this movement of an animating emotion, love, makes clear, the system that is gathered by personification is not entirely mechanistic (as later critics would claim of eighteenth-century personification) as personification moves a feeling between and through the things it gathers into a system, for instance, that of the season designated as Spring.

Grainger's friend, the literary critic Henry Holmes, Lord Kames, offered an account of personification that indicates the extent to which the trope was used for systemization and socialization in the eighteenth century (1762). Kames proposes that personification holds the "first place" among figures because it exercises and trains passion and emotion, in so doing contributing to what Kames thought to be the great good of "connect[ing] individuals the more intimately in the

social life” and thereby increasing their compulsion toward “union” (III 54; 363). In training emotion as well as motion, personification contributes toward socializing human audiences and also makes visible the human and the more than human social worlds on which they feel and act. That this socialization contributes to systemization becomes clear late in Kames’s account of personification when he proposes that almost everything that is conventionally called a personification, including the examples he gave at the start of his own chapter on the trope – for instance, the phrase “angry ocean” – might not only be personifications because their operation is not that of amplifying or dissipating the animacy of the sea or of training the affect and imagination of the reader who perceives this sea but of leading readers or auditors to “tacitly compare the ocean in a storm, to a man in wrath” (III 70). Kames goes on to suggest that whether a poet, reader, or auditor experiences and names a trope as a personification or an analogy (which he categorizes as a mode of “correspondence”) is determined by the poet’s or reader’s temperament at the time of his or her judgment. In proposing that personification can slip into correspondence, Kames suggests that the pedagogy of the passions and emotions (by his account this is the work of personification) and the pedagogy of producing relations of correspondence between different structures and sets (the work of analogy) are so closely linked as to be conjoined operations that can be activated by the same string of words, sounds, or images. Training readers’ affects is the other side of, and passes into, training them to recognize and order the relations among the things that it enumerates.

The systematizing and affective work of personification was also bound up in conceptions of colonial exchange. This is evident early in “Summer” when Thomson pivots from a scene focused on sheep “people” and shepherds to a scene focused on how the raw materials of colonial hinterlands are refined and improved by virtue of British labor, culture, and aesthetics:

A simple scene [of sheep shearing]! yet hence Britannia sees
Her solid grandeur rise: hence she commands
The exalted stores of every brighter clime,
The treasures of the sun without his rage:

Hence fervent all with culture, toil, and arts,
Wide glows her land: her dreadful thunder hence
Rides o'er the waves sublime, and now, even now
Impending hangs o'er Gallia's humbled coast;
Hence rules the circling deep, and awes the world. (423-31)

Here Thomson casts shepherds' sheering of sheep as a prelude to, and incarnation in microcosm of, British imperialism. If sheep sheering evokes the traditionally British economic sector of woolen textiles, imperialism offers a new and more lucrative economic engine: the connection of the regions of the globe that the poem references (earlier moments in "Summer" name a range of American colonies, African nations, and Persian locations) allows the "stores of every brighter clime" to be collected and then converted into "treasure," a process that mitigates the climatic threats (extreme heat that speeds spoilage) of hinterlands and that turns the sun's "rage" into a desirable "fervency" expressed "culture," industry, and art. The socializing affect of Thomson's metropolitan personification as well as his system-building analogies work together to evoke, and pass a commercial feeling onto, the global frame of imperial exchange, whether that of mercantilism (the official position of the British state midcentury) or that of capitalism (whose foundations were already laid in the seventeenth century and whose architecture would be articulated by Adam Smith later in the century).^{viii} The implication of eighteenth-century metropolitan personification in commercial exchange is perhaps nowhere more clearly evident than in the titles of the other great neogeorgic poems of the period that use personification similarly, nearly all of which name or gesture toward commodities, whether John Dyer's *The Fleece*, John Philips's *Cyder*, or Christopher Smart's *The Hop Garden*.

Grainger begins his own poem by drawing on this metropolitan mode of personification in order to integrate St. Kitts into a globalized British culture bound together by sensibility. Soon after Book I opens, "the soul of vegetation wakes ... to burst on day," diffusing "gladness" through the scene (1 51-2). The colony's glad "red brick-mould" is "impregnated, with every power / of

vegetation”, which also animates the arts of agriculture, which can (here in the form of a well-mixed compost) “To plastic gladness warm” even the coldest terrains (1 88; 84-5; 152). First germinating soil and art, this vegetable gladness passes to the climate when rains amplify gladness into the “laughter” of swelling streams that, in turn, work “to glad / The thirsty plains” (1 354; 365). Roaring across the island, these streams change the terrain’s “green face ... to sordid brown” (365), a disfigurement that is a prelude to the moment when “the Canes put on / Glad Nature’s liveliest robe, the vivid green” (374-5), which in turn transmits gladness to beings, presumably human, for whom “a grateful freshness every sense pervades / While beats the heart with unaccustomed joy” (366-7). This animating vegetable gladness spreads “amorous dalliance” through the mountain woods and then to the “all-jocund” “Negro-train” that “disperse ... o’er the long-hoed land” (1 387; 396-399). As Book I moves to its close, this gladness has become a verb (*to glad*) that collates affect and action (1 561).

At several points, Grainger reminds readers that the happy glow of vegetable soul and the plasticizing power it catalyzes is linked to gold. In Book I, he counsels the Creole to plant his cane crop when the “lemon, orange, and lime ... glow” with “vegetable gold,” and a bit later he describes the cane fields as “waving gold.” Linking vegetable soul to gladness, glow, and then gold, Grainger implies that gladness and glowingness are the affects of colonial exchange and the plantation-based capitalism emerging from it. Pushing this point just a bit farther, we might note that in Grainger’s association of the cane with the treasure that allows for future claims on economic goods, the key locus of animation shifts from the socializing processes evident in all of nature and managed by personification to specie (even if Britain still used silver specie and even if a decade later Smith would argue against treating treasure as the equivalent to money, it seems probable that this is exactly how *gold* signifies here). In short, Grainger brings personification’s and colonial exchange’s affective and social tendencies into close relation.

However, in Grainger's poem personification and exchange do not always perform the entirely connective affective and social operation we saw in Thomson and that is dominant in his own poetry. We first see this as Book 1 moves to its close and Grainger repeatedly emphasizes that plants make good fences. Grainger implies that vegetable soul's production of divisions, that is to say, fences, in this set of connections does not diminish the gladness that he names as the affect and connective force of personification and of the colonial exchange that binds the metropole to the colony, ensuring productivity, specie, and ever more ebullience. Quite to the contrary, he emphasizes that these living fences suffuse the scene with fragrances and visible beauties that exceed the fencings they perform, giving pleasure to all and thus amplifying what Grainger presents as the universal and always intensifying gladness of the colonial exchanges that connect colonies to metropolises and by which these far flung regions can be incorporated into British empire. If gladness and gold are correlates for Grainger, and if gold, like vegetable gladness, sometimes produces divisions (and precisely property divisions, or enclosures, in the example Grainger gives) he imagines that these divisions will only produce more gold, more bounty, more beauty, and more gladness. In short, while Grainger introduces specie and divisions it affects into the poem, he suggests that both only intensify a larger connective and socializing effect.

III.

If in Book 1 personification's affective and connective operations begin to produce subtle divisions that Grainger suggests work to amplify the connectivity and gladness of empire, in Book 2 personification becomes a more intensely divisive operation, producing partitionings that lead to mixings of kinds that destabilize, instead of lubricating, colonial economic exchange. Even as Grainger's poem recirculates metropolitan personification in order to produce the affective and aesthetic charge that links the colony and the metropole in scientific, literary, and commercial

enterprise, in Book 2 he inadvertently begins changing the operation of personification, allowing us to track a shift in the way the figure operates.

This second mode of personification first emerges when Grainger introduces insects early in Book 2. After an account of the problems posed by the “monkey nation” and “the whisker’d vermine-race,” he begins his more than one-hundred line account of the “insect tribe” that “fluttering, spread their pinions to the sun, / Recal the muse” (2 3; 35; 62; 156-160). Here, and in the lines that follow, Grainger associates insects with aesthetics, and it is this aesthetic charge as much as insecticide that preoccupies him in Book 2. The conventional association of pinions and poetic pens (Milton, Pope, Wheatley) as well as the alliance of aesthetics and insects in the georgic mode indicate that insects and poetics were closely associated in the eighteenth century. Thus, the line isn’t simply an invocation of the muse who will now sing of insects (i.e. “I summon the muse to recall to the reader tropical insects”) but also implies that insects and their gorgeous ornamentation compel human observers to bring to mind (“Recal”) the poetic muse.^{ix}

Yet in Grainger’s poem the association of insects and poetics takes a darker turn. This is particularly apparent in Grainger’s complaint that, while previous to the tropical insects’ descent on the cane crop “graceful wood-nymphs” used the canes’ broad blades to “compos[e] / The greenest garlands to adorn [their] brows,” the insects have now caused “unseemly stains [to] succeed” on these same leaves (2 207-211). On the one hand, these lines suggest that plantation phenomena, particularly the colony’s proliferating insects, intrude on the work of figuration that is so positively valued and so tightly linked to colonial exchange in Book 1 of Grainger’s poem. After all, the nymphs that (like dyads and *genus loci*) were among the animating agents of Greek *physis* are figures for the process of personification: in the plantation colony, these nymphs are undecorated and without work because insect stainings turn their materials “unseemly.”^x Here it would seem that

insects, instead of functioning as figures for rhetoric, destroy the conditions of possibility for poetic rhetoric, indicating that art and culture are compromised in the colony.

On the other hand, in the colony neoclassical nature deities and the neoclassical designs they weave from commodity crops are replaced by insects, including “the yellow fly,” “the greasy fly,” and “the blast” that Grainger names in Book 2’s advertisement. Ethno-entomologist Keith Kevan suspects that the yellow fly is likely a neotropical grasshopper.^{xi} As is the case with many insects, grasshoppers are (and were since the sixteenth century (OED)) called nymphs when undergoing metamorphosis. Neoclassical nymphs are replaced by insect nymphs in Grainger’s punning account of the effects of giving poetic numbers to the plantation colony. These insect nymphs mark and shape the crops’ leaves differently than their neoclassical predecessors did: instead of using commodity crops to make graceful decorations, they use them to make marks that are a prelude to their incubation in, and infestation of, the crop. Grainger’s play on these two kinds of nymphs is less indicative of an expectation that plantation realities produce a flat literalism that incapacitates poetry and personification. After all, if Grainger complains about the difficulties of writing poetry in and about the tropics, he also insists that such efforts are possible and necessary. The challenge that Grainger raises in Book 2 is that the colony’s material conditions shift poetic practice and he works to produce a poetic practice that is adequate to these material conditions, an adequacy that would be evident if he were to manage these material conditions and integrate them into the good feeling of metropolitan commerce, including poetic commerce.

As with the metropolitan mode of personification, the colonial mode of personification effected by insect nymphs emphasizes plurality and not individual specimen or acts. While it is possible to attend to the single insect, what is notable about insects is their multiplicity. In metropolitan neogeorgics like Thomson’s, and in Book 1 of Grainger’s, insects – like other kinds – are ordered and ordering despite their multiplicity. Because of Virgilian precedent, bees are the

insects most often referenced in neogeorgics and they are frequently in hives and cells that emphasize structure and enumeration (indeed, the sounds of movements and insects were linked to the production of calendars and seasons in the Greek tradition).^{xii} In Book 2 of *The Sugar-Cane*, as well as in Book 4's investigation of parasites common in the colonies' slave populations, insects are myriad, swarming, and uncountable. They complicate Grainger's announced goal of folding tropical phenomena into his "serious numbers" (2 260; 4 260; 2 254; 3 451; 2 3). As earlier in the poem, Grainger's object is to organize insect and other colonial phenomena by giving them a positive and socializing affective charge, an object that is evident in his proliferate personifications and in his repeated references to counting and ordering. Yet Grainger also indicates that these insects are so numerous and diverse as to pass beyond his powers of poetic and natural historical enumeration. The plurality of these insects is partly linked to the fact that in the colonies there were always many insects, as natural historians in the Americas had documented for over a hundred years from Rochefort (1658) to Merian (1705) to Sloane (1707) to Catesby (1731). This plurality is also due to the fact that any insect is a multiplicity, as is evident in the name of their class, *insect*, which names them as beings that are cut into sections and thus more than one even when individual.^{xiii}

Grainger's emphasis on insects' proliferating stainings and on their deformations of the planter's organization of the colony contributes to the emergence of a new sort of personification. In this emerging sort of personification, ornamentation and other seemingly epiphenomenal effects have the effect of fragmenting and otherwise deforming species and also individual bodies. This colonial personification's emphasis on fragmentation and the seemingly negative of flat affects that follow on it challenges metropolitan personification's work of moving affect across species, classes, and locations to gather different kinds into a rhythm, affect, and system that lubricates exchange. The threat that insect deformations pose to metropolitan aesthetics and system making is evident in Grainger's complaint that these insects, like the hurricanes and earthquakes he describes immediately

after them (and which the superimposition of these topics in the manuscript edition suggests were closely associated for him), upend the muse's organizing power so that black becomes white, land becomes sea, solids run to fluid, human roads dissolve into tropical rivers, and commodity crops turn to waste, literally, to feces (2 391-424). It might seem that Grainger implies that insect poetics *invert* the ordinary qualities of structures, sets and systems and the calculations of proportion borne from this organization or, worse still, that they *collapse* all structure and system. However, the problem that emerges in Grainger's second book is not precisely that insects and other tropical phenomena invert dualities, nor that they amalgamate differences, producing an untaxonomizable morass from which neither system nor the kinds they organize might emerge. Instead, they give rise to a different way of conceiving the material and aesthetic processes of animation and, with it, the organization of systems.

It's worth starting by charting the difference in the way organization operates across these two modes of personification, which is especially evident in Book Two's repurposing of Thomson's famous trope of the "microscopic eye."^{xiv} In *The Seasons* the microscopic eye reveals a joyful scene in which "Full nature swarms with life; one wondrous mass / of animals, or atoms organized, / Waiting the vital breath when Parent-Heaven / Shall bid his spirit blow" ("Summer" 288-293). In the sugar colony, these "microscopic arts" reveal "small eggs ... Dire fraught with reptile life" that

too soon

.....

burst their filmy jail, and crawl abroad,

Bugs of uncommon shape; thrice hideous show!

.....

Vain every joint a gemmy embryo bears,

Alternate rang'd; from these no filial young

Shall grateful spring, to bless the planter's eye. –
With bugs confederate, in destructive league,
The ants' republic joins; a villain crew. (212-228)

In Thomson's poem, the microscopic and imagined submicroscopic eye reveal an organization that implies the parallel and symmetrical relation of animals and atoms, as well as of the world visible to the unaided eye and that made visible to the microscopic eye. This metropolitan poetry emphasizes the set of correspondences that was to be revealed by the poet and the scientist through the conjoined workings of affect and reason. Grainger's microscope reveals an equally wondrous organization, but one where the movements of partialized entities cross into and disrupt larger ones such that the microscopic world, instead of mirroring the humanly visible world, impinges on it and changes its organization. Not only does this crossing over of the microscopic into the macroscopic refuse the set of correspondences revealed by Thomson's lens and that, as we have seen, is the other side of metropolitan personification. Grainger's tropical microscopy reveals an organization that develops from combining the elements arrayed on the scene. In one sense, the tropical microscopist's mode of conceiving knowledge is in keeping with that which critics have taught us to expect of the Enlightenment -- or, in Foucault's term, the Classical episteme, which linked knowledge to the enumeration and arrangement (or taxonomizing) of the elements of the visible world. This enumeration and arrangement included identifying and categorizing the microscopically visible world often associated with insects, as the insectophilic experiments and writings of Robert Hooke and Antonie Leeuwenhoek make clear.^{xv} Yet the elements it makes visible are not arranged into slots and cells that can then be combined by those "skill'd in chemia" whom Grainger calls for (3 342). Rather, they are combining in spontaneous arrangements on which organization follows (3 323; 3 342; 4 126). In metropolitan personification, enumeration and taxonomy precede and are reinforced by the combinatory effects that follow on its affective charge. In Grainger's insect

personification, combinings precede the production of structure as when ants, and a host of other unnamed or vaguely named insects “confederate” to produce a “league” that assaults the plantation poet’s and natural historian’s order of things (2 228).

If the organization of system shifts across these two accounts of the microscopic eye, so does the source of the animacy that moves through the system. Thomson equivocates in naming the source of the microscopic scene’s animating affect. It is, on the one hand, an expression of the love that manifests in nature’s swarming fullness of life. On the other hand, the “blow[ing]” (or animation) of this swarming life waits on heaven’s bidding. Here animacy is in the system and also determined by an extrasystemic force, either God or the poet and his figurations. Grainger, who is equally focused on animation in his microscopic scene, shows no such equivocation in naming its source: insect eggs and “reptile life” wait for no external bidding before “burst[ing]” from their casings to cross over from the micro- to the macroscopic, a passage that impinges on the existing order of things and the poet’s efforts to reveal it. The thesis that small insects could pass into and transform the visible world was not original to Grainger. Just over forty years earlier, Richard Bradley offered the proto-microbial thesis that small insects invisible to the naked eye caused many animal diseases. This thesis circulates in Thomson’s account of insects travelling on Russian winds, even if Thomson doesn’t take up the way Bradley’s thesis complicated natural historians’ taxonomies and poetic riffs on them. Grainger’s expectation that microscopic insects crossed over into and re-patterned the visible world is evident in his attention to insects’ transformations of the way the colony presents itself to human senses. Insect masses cause the cane’s golden greenness to become dry and withered (as he puts it, “First pallid, sickly, dry, and withered show”) and its taste to run from sweet to sour, or as he, in typically scatological idiom, puts it, “to pungent sour, / Foe to the bowels, soon its nectar turns” (2 210; 223-224). The good feeling that animates metropolitan personification here turns to desiccated feelings (as is evident when gladness turns withered and dry)

as well as enmity and disgust (the fecal turn at which that which was formerly gladdening to body and spirit turns foe to both).

In Grainger's colonial personification the insects that catalyze spontaneous acts of joining and disjoining are partial and partializing agents: partial because they are in parts (*insect* or in sections); partializing because their move into cane joints has the effect of breaking cane bodies to catalyze processes that preempt those of sugar refineries.^{xvi} It is this double sort of partiality that drives animation in Grainger's insect poetics. The proposition that in the insect-ridden tropics partiality catalyzes animating processes implies that the movement and combination of the particulate precedes, and directs, form and system. As though Maupertuis's speculation that particulate bodies had an inherent tendency to combinatory motion were given proof in the plantation colony, in this insect poetics animacy was inherent to each part and intensified as the result of the interactions among partial and partializing kinds.^{xvii} The deformations and formations that follow on the movements of Grainger's insects presume the ongoing production of the world from the bottom up. Moreover, in making animacy the effect of partializing material processes, this insect poetics challenges the strongly centripetal focus of metropolitan personification's accounts of system (whether the system of the season or that of the empire).

The account of animacy we see emerging in Grainger's colonial poetics was not unique to him. Nor was the first to articulate it and its effect on aesthetic practices. A number of earlier commentators on the Americas as well as those who travelled and lived in them suggested that animating processes worked differently in the tropics. Buffon's claim that American climactic conditions changed the expression of matter and with it the shape and forces of bodies might be the most famous. However, the most fabulous and the most positive (or least phobic) meditation on the transformational animacies evident in the tropics was that of Maria Sibylle Merian. Sixty years before he wrote *The Sugar-Cane*, the German painter and self-taught Aurelian traveled to Surinam

where her own figuration changed. Even before her time in the colonies Merian's work was unusual in that, instead of presenting specimen, or a range of closely related species, as other painter naturalists of the period often did, her paintings depicted specimens' habitats. Moreover, Merian's paintings featured all of the moments of an insect's life cycle, thus adding a strong diachronic element to her work. In Surinam, she produced the notes and drafted paintings for her *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (1705), which expanded on this quasi-environmental focus to attend to the ways that micro-processes redirect formation.^{xviii}

For instance, consider plate 31 of *Metamorphosis* [Figure 2, Maria Sibylle Merian Plate 31], which features the caterpillars of the Queen Swallowtail in larval, nymph, and imago [butterfly] stages as well as the Cotton Rose Mallow. Katharina Schmidt-Loske notes that the Cotton Rose Mallow is not native to Surinam and, moreover, that it is not the Queen Swallowtail larvae's primary food source. Yet, in critiquing Merian's failure to offer a proper ecology, Schmidt-Loske passes over the painting's key dramatization: species that can take different forms, as we see in both the Cotton Mallow's flower, one red one white, and the strikingly different coloration of the Swallowtail imago, one gold and black and the other peacock green, brown, red, and gold.^{xix} Merian's paintings of insects and plants in Surinam contemplate an account of process that precedes formation and organization, a process whereby epiphenomena inflect the organization of bodies. In considering how and why the same species can produce markedly different forms, plate 31 cuts against the presupposition of most eighteenth-century natural history, which expected that species and kinds were pre-existing entities that could be sorted into the taxonomical table (as, for instance, Linnaeus clearly expected to be the case). The image's juxtaposition of plants and insects suggests that something about the relation between these partial bodies allows an exchange of elements such that the same kind can become different from itself.^{xx}

If this colonial tropology emphasizes the movement of parts and partial bodies and their power to organize (and disorganize) the scenes that they confabulate, this changed account of animacy in turn inflects how personification works. Most obviously, here personification's animating power is a property of particulate natural and linguistic materials instead of the positively charged affect that moves through the species and kinds it gathers. Thus Grainger repeatedly complains that these cane-infesting insects are not and cannot be moved by feeling, especially not by sympathy or by filial love: they are "Remorseless" and "seiz[e]" [cane] infants without pity (2 221; 206-7). Grainger even describes the insects as *parricides*. This histrionic accusation might be rather apt since Grainger claims that insects give no heed to familial feeling, particularly not to a love expressed through sympathy and respect. In so doing, they destroy the power of father and families, whether in social roles (the family and the plantation modeled on it) or in natural historical ones (the family of Linnaean taxonomy). Moreover, the inflamed and negative affect suffusing Grainger's charge suggests that the problem isn't that there is no feeling in an insect poetics but that its partitionings give rise to what he sees as bad feelings and tense alliances – for instance federations -- instead of the sweetness and sentiment his poem associates with patriarchal families. ^{xxi}

This figural operation of partitioning expresses what Grainger perceived to be a material reality of tropical life just as much as the circulation of good feeling expressed what metropolitan poets thought to be a material reality of the nature they described. That is to say, the ornamentations of Grainger's insects fragment the forms, sets, and structures of the sugar colony. We see the material transformation affected by this insect poetics in Grainger's claim that tropical bugs approach the cane plant as a partial body and in doing so partialize it. It is not, after all, the cane plant as such that interests the insects (as it does the planter). Nor are they occupied by the set of cane bodies that constitutes the commodity crop. Rather, Grainger's insects occupy leaves and joints, converting them into gorgeously ornamented wombs, or as he puts it, "every [cane] joint a

gemmy embryo bears.” In doing this, the insects reveal the plant to be partialized and also part of the milieu necessary to insect individuation, a revelation that makes possible technics that are based on recognizing the constitutional sectionality of all kinds, that rise from the recognition that all kinds and all life exists *in sections* that exceed mechanistic materialisms.

In this insect poetics, animacy is entirely immanent, by which I mean that movement and change comes from the partialized, and for this reason incomplete, words, bodies, and kinds that compose any given scene. Significantly, this form of animacy can divide bodies, kinds, and systems in ways that exceed property divisions, as we see most clearly in the fact that these insects’ actions transform the island colony from one system to another: a first one that Grainger reports as giving human beings sensory pleasure as well as gladness and gold; a second that gives them none of these things. Indeed, that Grainger so consistently emphasizes the explosive effects of insects, parasites, and certain plants on human bowels suggests that insects and the tropical forces associated with them make human beings into partializing agents who produce wastes that threaten the system of commodity exchange. As this last point suggests, the threat posed by an insect poetics is quite literal because it converts the West Indies’ key commodity, sugar, into a substance that is not only unmarketable but that converts human bodies into excrementary parts and the plantation to an unproductively fecal terrain.^{xxii} That these insect stainings can change the contours and material composition of the colony, human beings’ sensory and bodily experiences of it, as well as their bodily production and reproduction (by turning human bodies’ (re)productivity to the creation of waste) suggests that these insects entirely within the plantation system -- in no small part because of colonial exchange which brought together parasites from all over the globe -- can also produce outsides to it. Or, to put it more bluntly, here movements or animacies inside of a given system (the partializing movements of an insect poetics) produce an outside to this system that allows a re-composition of its inside.^{xxiii} Notably, the insecterregnum that pulses in Grainger’s poetics doesn’t

produce no system. Rather, its fragmentations change existing systems to give rise to different ones. If this difference goes under the name of *waste* in Grainger's account, it is possible to follow out how the mode of animacy and affect Grainger discusses inflects systems. While here I focus on how it changes the operation of personification and the system of poetics, one might also offer a more frontally economically-focused analysis of how Grainger's waste imagines the emergence of a post-commodity economy.

IV.

If Grainger ventriloquizes the insect poetics emerging in the colonies, he also works hard to put it to rest. He initially tries to put it to rest in Book 2 by recommending that "if the [insects'] living taint be far diffus'd" (2 251), St. Kitt's entire sugar crop must be burned to the ground:

let the hoe uproot
The infected Cane-piece; and, with eager flames,
The hostile myriads thou to embers turn:
Far better, thus, a mighty loss sustain,
Which happier years and prudence may retrieve;
Than risque thine all. (258-263)

Book 2 also attempts to manage the effects of this insect poetics by building a series of analogies, launching the process that was the counterpart to the metropolitan mode of personification. If Grainger's colonial personification indexes the material conditions of the colony, his accumulating analogies aim to neutralize the partitioning force of an insect poetics by proposing that St. Kitt's insects are analogous to other colonial phenomenon. They are

Innumerable as the painted shells, that load
The wave worn margin of the Virgin isles!
Innumerable as the leaves the plumb-tree sheds,

When, proud of her faecundity, she shows,

Naked, her gold fruit to the God of noon. (2 216-220)

Grainger's analogies cast the insects as the first in a series of types of tropical phenomenon. Thus even if the colonial scene is structured by partitionings that disrupt the metropole's commercial goals, Grainger's analogies integrate the colony and its species into a taxonomy, in so doing preserving the conditions for metropolitan knowledge, organization, and exchange.

Immediately after Book Two's insecteria it turns to describing the tropical hurricane and earthquake so closely allied with insects in Grainger's manuscript [recall figure 2], perhaps because they also pass outside of the muse's enumerating power. "Say, can the Muse, the pencil in her hand/ The all-wasting hurricane observant ride?" Grainger asks, and follows with a series of questions and scenes of desolation that suggests that the muse's "serious numbers" cannot proceed in the face of this tropical poetics (2 270-271; 3). If Grainger implies that his metropolitan poetry falls short of describing and organizing the tropical phenomena that he takes as his subject, he responds to this limitation by giving up on the project of description and launching the story of Creole lovers, Theana and Junio.^{xxiv} This story riffs on that of Thomson's star-crossed and storm-doomed lovers, Amelia and Celadon, in Book 2 of *The Seasons*, which in turn reprises the description of the storm in Book 1 of Virgil's *Georgics*. In the place of description of the colony, then, Grainger offers a set of literary allusions that offers a metropolitan cultural tradition as a check on the tropical partitioning that passes into and transforms figural practice across Book 2.

Grainger again attempts to neutralize this insect poetics in the poem's fourth and final book, particularly at its close, which launches a classically metropolitan personification in which the Thames recirculates a gladdening affect that would weave together all of the globe in commodity exchange:

All hail, old father Thames! Tho' not from far

Thy springing waters roll; nor countless streams,
Of name conspicuous, swell thy watery store;
Tho' thou ... to the sea devolve ... thou art king of streams:
Delighted Commerce broods upon thy wave;
And every quarter of this sea-girt globe
To thee due tribute pays; but chief the world
By great Columbus found. (4 635-643)

Despite the considerable infrastructure that Grainger builds to eliminate his colonial poetics, the partitioning aesthetics, materiality, and sociality that emerges in it is not put to rest. Most obviously this is because his poem cannot eliminate the poetics that it also practices. More particularly, this personification that closes the poem's concluding book is countered by the poem's final stanza, which opens with a prediction that revolutionary storms and fires might cause "Britannia" to "crouch" "to her offspring" (4 660; 662).^{xxv} Grainger suggests that revolution will be avoided if King George is wise and also if the colonies share in the metropole's affect: "if these Cane ocean-isles,/ ... on which Britain for their all depend,/ And must for ever; still indulgent share/ Her fostering smile" (4 675-678). However, the poem's conclusion indicates that the future of British empire in the Americas is precarious, and that if the British do not succeed in binding together metropole and colony in a shared affect as well as in an economic relation in which colony and metropole are mutually dependent if in hierarchical relation, then the empire will go to parts as projected by Book 2's insect poetics.

The poem's closing suggestion that political insurrection follows on the colony's insect poetics references the threat of rebellion by white Creole planters and merchants who resented the crown's mercantilistic policies. This threat of political insurrection is also associated with the African slave population at several points in Book 4, which focuses on the parasites that plagued the

plantation's slave population, expanding on Grainger's *Essay on the More Common West-India Diseases* (1764). Grainger's medical essay moves from the proper "seasoning" of Africans to nosologies of the "diseases" (Book 2) and "distempers" (Book 3) common to the slave population as well as the ways West Indian plant "medicines" can be used to treat these problems. The commitment to classification evident in these nosologies is clearer still in the Linnaean index the *Essay* appendixes, which tabulates all of the American insect, plant, and animal species referenced therein. The fourth book of *The Sugar-Cane* strives to stay with the taxonomizing impulse of the *Essay*. It opens with a personification of the Muse of Africa that gathers together West Africa from present day Senegal to Niger to Nigeria and presents African species (palms) and commodities (fruit, gold, and human beings).^{xxxvi} While this collocation follows on that of metropolitan personification, the African muse is grief-struck at the sight of her "sons in fetters bound" (4 15). Grainger implores the muses to give him power to spin verse adequate to this grief, an adequacy that he suggests would be manifest in laying out the differences and similarities among African nations as well as the care necessary to make denizens from each of these nations good and happy laborers on the plantation. Over the course of Book 4, he makes the apologist's argument that a just slavery will overcome an unjust slavery, in the process affirming slaves' manhood and assuaging the Muse of Africa's grief. Book 4 goes about laying out the conditions necessary to this putatively just slavery. This justice is mainly afforded by ordering and organization, first, of slaves' bodies by ridding them of insects and helminths and, second, of slaves' actions by educating them in agricultural techniques that remedy the eclecticism that Grainger, like many other eighteenth-century Anglo-Europeans, suggested was a weakness of untaught Africans (1 268). This organization of bodies and actions aspires to re-ignite the gladness that Grainger names as the overarching affect of the plantation colony. Indeed, he claims it works in producing gladness as, for instance, when, near the close of the poem, he

describes a West Indian dance, probably a calinda, in which “the gay [slave] troop circularly wheels,
And frisks and capers with intemperate joy” (4 387-8).

Yet, besides the sugar cane, Africans are the key vector for insects and worms, and Book 4 also suggests that, like the cane plants of Book 2, they have been traversed by their partitioning power. Grainger warns planters to guard against Obeah and slave-based treatments of physical and social ills, calling particular attention to what he presents as the bad mixtures of Afro-American folk medicines:

tell the laughing world

Of what these wonder-working charms are made.

Fern root cut small, and tied with many a knot;

Old teeth extracted from a white man’s skull;

A lizard’s skeleton; a serpent’s head:

These mix’d with salt, and water from the spring,

Are in a phial pour’d; o’er these the leech

Mutters strange jargon, and wild circles forms. (4 385-392)

If Grainger presents Obeah as an indiscriminate and thus ridiculous mixing of parts, Grainger undoubtedly understood that folk medicines and rituals were linked to insurrection, particularly since he was writing in the wake of Tacky’s Rebellion in Jamaica (1760-1), where Obeah played a factor and of Makandal’s execution for fetish production in St. Domingue (1758). Grainger’s expectation that slaves tend toward partitioning and strange mixings emerges again just before the poem’s close, this time with an expressly political edge. As he closes his account of the calinda, Grainger warns that the planter must “let not ... the drum their [the slaves’] mirth inspire” for Africans’ polyrhythmic drumming leads to “bacchanalian frenzy” and “Fell acts of blood, and vengeance” (4 602-604). If the poem closes with the threat of political rebellion, the Africans who

are the main subject of Book 4 and who are so thoroughly traversed by insects and given to partake in their partitioning power, particularly in fast, polyrhythmic music, are as much a threat to metropolitan order as white creoles resenting mercantalistic policies.

The colonial tropology in which parts and partitionings precede organization is not, then, only a feature of the 115 lines of Book 2 that are concentrated entirely on insects since it also inflects Grainger's effort to describe tropical hurricanes, earthquakes, helminths, slave culture, and white Creole sentiment. Putting this insect poetics in tense relation with the poem's metropolitan figurations was not Grainger's ambition: he attempted to stay within the poetic conventions of his contemporaries and, whether he wanted it or not, he operated within the epistemological conditions of possibility of his time. He made no effort toward idiosyncrasy and, if anything, was particularly fixated on hewing to established aesthetic traditions. Nonetheless, his entirely earnest commitment to turning metropolitan figure and form to colonial subjects gave rise to a poetics that have made Grainger's poem an oddity from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth and early twenty-first, when Shaun Irlam suggested the poem's incoherent social and political projects produce a failed aesthetic, and, more recently, when Cristobel Silva extended this analysis. Despite the substantially different aesthetic standards governing mid eighteenth- and late twentieth-century taste, Grainger's work has consistently been judged bad by critics ranging from Samuel Johnson to Edmund Gosse to Wyndham Lewis, although not because of any special ineptness on his part: Grainger's verse scans neatly; his poetry evidences a deft knowledge of the British poetic and natural historical tradition of his day; he is entirely correct to claim that georgics have license to take up subjects that would seem bathetic in other poetic modes; he sticks closely to the aesthetic principles laid out by peers like Kames.^{xxvii} Moreover, his earlier and nontropical work escaped such criticism and was even praised long after his death.^{xxviii} The consistent determination of his tropical poem's badness is, then, not so much indicative of his lack of poetic talent but, rather, follows on the material conditions of the

colony that he commits himself to describing, which pass into and reorient his figuration and his themes, giving rise to an aesthetics that is not entirely of the Enlightenment but not of any other age either.

V.

The metropolitan mode of personification in which Grainger aims to participate is in keeping with what Foucault determined to be the Enlightenment's conditions of knowledge in *The Order of Things*. It emphasizes visuality, as is evident in its attention to a range of visual scenes as well as its pronounced interest in microscopy. It uses poetic structuring devices – in particular figuration and notably personification, meter, and intra- and interline breaks – to order the range of things it brings to visibility, in so doing making clear the contribution of poetics to the era's commitment to organization and taxonomizing. This poetic structure also allowed for the mixing of the elements that it gathered, thus presuming the possibility of combining and building proportions and algebraics from the nomination and organization of the units sorted into taxonomies.^{xxx} This Enlightenment (or "Classical") episteme gave way to a modern episteme in which knowledge focused on interiority, human life and finitude, and on the optimization of life and productivity that Foucault would later term *biopolitics*. Foucault believed that this modern episteme in turn was passing to another, one that later critics have called the Information Age and that is characterized by an increasing departure from modernity's focus on interiority, man, organicism, and life, to focus on surfaces, data and the data set, and the milieu in which interchanges of data occur. Looking back to eighteenth-century systematics, including its interest in animating and thus connecting the diverse kinds these systems interpolated, allows us to think through our own era's ethos of data and connectivity, distributed agency, and destabilized human subjectivity, and it allows us to do this with the distance made possible by thinking historically.^{xxx, xxxi}

If the metropolitan personification and the metropolitan Enlightenment to which it contributed might advance the development of a trans-epistemic thought that helps us to craft more finely tuned analyses of our own moment, the biggest gain of this analysis comes from following out the significance of Grainger's accidental insect poetics. The insect poetics that surfaces in *The Sugar-Cane* develops from this same epistemological ground as that of metropolitan personification. Again, the emphasis on the visible, on organization and mixing that are achieved through figure, on the display of surfaces, and on animacy. Yet there is a difference because insect poetics undercuts the taxonomizing and animating modes of metropolitan organizations. Taxonomy is undercut because Grainger's insect poetics posits kinds, structures, and systems as following on the movement of parts rather than having movement follow on organization, which is the condition of most metropolitan taxonomies. Metropolitan personification's account of animacy is undermined because animacy is cut from its socializing affective function and cast as an innate, and not necessarily socializing tendency of the partial.

While metropolitan personification hews closely to Foucault's periodization, the colonial personification that also emerges in Grainger's poem indicates the emergence within the metropolitan Enlightenment of a colonial aesthetic in which this knowledge turns toward non-epistemic ends without yet forging a new episteme. Notably, this colonial account of animacy, organization, and formation isn't a harbinger of the modernity that critics have long argued followed on the Enlightenment. It is as entirely indifferent to interiority, man as the measure of all things, and organicism as is the metropolitan personification in which Grainger's poem also participates. My proposition is that this colonial aesthetic that emerged within the Enlightenment also moves outside of it: it is neither a part of the Enlightenment nor of the Modernity that followed on it. Because Grainger's poem belongs, at least not in entirety, to either period, it could not be appreciated in terms of either Enlightenment or Modern aesthetic standards. This is not to say it wasn't read and

imitated – it was – but almost always by other writers in the colonies or former colonies, whether Jamaican politician and poet Bryan Edwards’s saccharine mimicry of Grainger’s work, Philip Freneau’s bitterly critical association of the tropics’ “Snakes, scorpion’s ... lizards, centipedes” with the slave driving “despots” whom Grainger justified (“To Sir Toby”), Lansdown Guilding’s effort to cast the problem of “Insects infesting the sugar-cane” in terms of an emerging entomology, or even Emily Dickinson’s pronounced insectophilia, evident not only in her remarkably partitioning figurations and her flies and buzzings, but in her sometime practice of enclosing insects with the poems she sent friends. If vestiges of this insect poetics move through later writings from the colonies and former colonies as well as metropolitan writing inflected by it, the most pressing point is that this untimely mode of figuration and organization was never spent in the service of any domain of power and knowledge. Pushing this claim further indicates that Grainger’s insect poetics and the mode of organization and animacy in which it trades is in a peculiar relation to the present. It is a precedent that, because it was never epistemic and never spent, is not entirely past and can be taken up differently by critics than either the Enlightenment or a swiftly passing into obsolescence modernity.

Moreover, Grainger’s insect poetics is not simply one forgotten knowledge among many but one that might be especially useful for thinking our present. It might inculcate an aesthetic and science that contributes to a critical environmentalism based on the partial, or the insect, yet is able to slide from the small-scale to the systemic. In part such a focus is desirable because in this moment when tropical and desert climates are spreading south and northward, insects are inheriting the earth. Insects’ smallness contributes to fast metabolic rates and massive reproductive capacities, that, in tandem with their high mobility, have allowed them to respond to changing climactic conditions far more effectively than larger animals and vegetable life (Stange and Ayres, Raffles).^{xxxii} Although the temptation of our moment is to think ever larger (as the term *Anthropocene* suggests) we might instead

strive to think the slight and the phenomenal power of the epiphenomenal. The capacity of the small and the slight is recognized by states and sciences today that explicitly work to harness the powers of smallness, including insects (Feynman, Mawani). Yet the capacity of the epiphenomenal to recompose this world also offers far less dominant interests a political parable especially necessary as we pass move beyond modernity's ways of thinking agency and struggle to develop new ways of conceptualizing animacy, agency power, organization, and system.

Like the eighteenth century's natural historical tables, its camera obscuras, or its eidophusikons, personification is an aesthetic technology long ago cast off as quaint. Colonial writers like Grainger's never-epistemic insect poetics can only seem still quainter and curiouser. Still, turning on this outdated *techné* that has no more use value and whose special effects fall flat, in addition to giving us critical historical distance and a parable for our times, might provide base and rhythm to invigorate the theories we are building to conceptualize or own moment's key terms whether information (which struggles with many of the problems with which taxonomy did), network (which echoes system), and agency (which echoes animacy). That this base and rhythm derive from an explicitly colonial and racially motivated mode of thinking system recalls the problem of exploitation, which if it structures our knowledge production, might make more visible the social and political ramifications of the theories and aesthetics in which we traffic. Moreover, such a method collates Book 2's insectaria with Book 4's justification of racial subjugation not only by critiquing it (which is and remains a necessary operation) but by following out its nearly eclipsed potential for an alter enlightenment and an alter modernity.

ⁱ My thanks to Sandra Gustafson, Joe Fitzpatrick, Alex Cook, Frederic Neyrat, and Sara Gabler Thomas as well as audiences at Brown University and Rutgers.

ⁱⁱ Grainger again emphasizes his preference for Book 2 in an April 1763 letter to Percy (Nichols 284).

ⁱⁱⁱ Gilmore notes the passages of the poem cited in reviews in *Poetics of Empire* 39-43.

^{iv} On the low themes and itinerant organization expected in the georgic, see Whicher. Writing about the georgic mode, Whicher explains that when “the material to be transmuted into poetry is ... commonplace and unglamorous, it presents a maximum challenge to the poet Whatever success he achieves finally will be a triumph of sheer craftsmanship” (vi-viii). See also the introduction to Goodman’s, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*. Goodman notes Virgil’s punning use of *versus* to “designate both the furrows of the field and the lines of verse on the page” (1), in so doing exploring the relation as well as the tensions between agriculture and aesthetic cultures. On the georgic mode in the American tradition, see also Sweet.

^v For more on Grainger’s effort to integrate West Indian phenomena into a British culture of sensibility and commercial exchange, see Egan. For another account of the poem’s effort to manage the relation between colony and metropole, see Thomas. See also Randhawa, Sheild, Irla, Rusert, and Silva. Ziser’s discussion of the poem which attends to Grainger’s parasites in terms of Michael Serres’s work, is the precedent that is closest to my own (75-81). I am grateful to Stephen Thomas for sharing his work in progress on Grainger with me.

^{vi} To heighten Book Two’s focus on West Indian challenges to the British cultural projects, Grainger moved more idyllic interludes like the encomium to the good West Indian planter Monsanto out of Book Two and into Book One. In both the manuscript and the published versions, Book Two’s focal point is a fabulously elaborate and sustained account of insect parasites that emerge not simply as poetic subjects but as the book’s principle agents because their massings and patternings direct the planter’s and the poet’s movements. On manuscript pages facing this fabulous account of tropical bugs, he added a long description of a hurricane intercalated with variants on his insectaria. He also added to Book Two the story of the star crossed and storm-lost lovers Junio and Thenia.

^{vii} By my phrasing, figure is the source of and precedes form. Although I will not develop this argument in detail here, in future work I will elaborate an account of figuration that complicates the dyad of content and form more typical to literary criticism.

^{viii} On the emergence of proto-capitalist positions in the seventeenth century and their competition with mercantalistic positions, see Appleby.

^{ix} On the association of pinions and poetry, consider Milton’s description of his vocation as “Growing my wings” (Letter to Charles Diodati 1637). Pope’s later account of “Milton’s strong pinion” in *Imitation of Horace*, and then, not even ten years after Grainger’s poem, Phillis Wheatley’s association of poems and pinions in “On Imagination.” This association of the pinion and the pen is no doubt linked to the profusion of eighteenth and nineteenth-century poems that associate birds and insects with poetry, making the bird’s song and the insect’s flight the counterpoint to and in some cases the highest poetic action (for instance Keat’s “Ode to a Nightingale” or Hopkins’s “As Kingfishers Catch Fire”). On insects and poetics, see Keat’s “On the Grasshopper and the Cricket” as well as Emily Dickinson’s many poems that exploit this theme (including 1068).

^x On nymphs, dyads, genus loci and personification see Blair (I 326). See also Samuel T. Coleridge’s letter to Sotheby in the *Collected Letters* (cited in Knapp, 24). For a twenty first century account of this connection, see the first chapter of Eve Sedgwick’s *The Weather in Proust*.

^{xi} Kevan is less certain of the contemporary designation of two of the other insect pests that Grainger gives vernacular names (the greasy fly and the blast).

^{xii} See Canevaro.

^{xiii} Indeed, it is this visibility of the insect’s parts that made them the animal counterpart to the plants whose parts and reproduction were all visible from the outside.

^{xiv} My reading of this scene and my sense of its importance is indebted to Goodman’s discussion of Thomson (33-66).

^{xv} Robert Hooke, *Micrographia*; Antoni Leeuwenhoek, *The Leeuwenhoek Letter*.

^{xvi} What I describe here is close to what Combes describes in her account of Gilbert Simondon’s process philosophy. Simondon points out that philosophy and technics have almost always proceeded by posing bodies, forms, and individuals as pre-existing terms and have then postulated processes as resulting from these already constituted entities. His effort is to invert this order to argue that process precedes and exceeds the constitution of bodies, forms, and systems. This is why instead of using the term *individual*, which he sees as a given and enclosing term, he uses the term *individuation* to describe a process of taking form in which an entity is always in-formation and vulnerable to deformations, or what Simondon describes as a state of metastability. Simondon, then, argues for a precarious individuation that is partialized because it is participating in transformations that are continually unfolding across two locations. First, from processes in the milieu proper to a given individuation, and Simondon suggests that this milieu contains the conditions for an individuation and is for this reason an exteriorized part of it (so if breathable air, standable

ground, adequate food and water, as well as transport and informational systems constitute the twenty-first century human milieu, then these are not outsiders to us but exteriorized parts that make possible the persistence of a specific individuation). Second, these transformations can also come from processes unfolding in separate fields, milieus, and individuations that redound on a given individuation. In Simondon's philosophy, animacy is not the property of bodies, then, but processes that give rise to the limited and always necessarily partialized agency of an individuation.

^{xvii} On Maupertuis's claims about particulate matter, see *The Earthly Venus* as well as Terrall's *The Man Who Flattened the Earth*, especially 199-230 and 310-348.

^{xviii} Maria Sibylla Merian, *Insects of Surinam*.

^{xix} As Schmidt-Loske points out, the reason that the Swallowtail butterflies are different colors is that the imago's coloration varies depending on its sex. Yet, as Schmidt-Loske also notes, Merian didn't know this. If our commentary on Merian's painting is simply that she has observed, without knowing it, that the sex of the fly determines its coloration in its imago form, we fail to attend to the problem that Merian's painting express, namely that something invisible but nonetheless material causes the pupae or nymph of the same species to mature into diverse and non-equivalent forms.

^{xx} As Dodd puts it, Merian's Surinam paintings attend to the ways that "the environment determines not just the timing but the path of development" such that "alternate bodies" can develop "from the same genes" (267; 266). For Dodd, Merian anticipates phenotype plasticity.

^{xxi} Note that here affect follows on rhythm and organization and is not its generative cause.

^{xxii} Although Grainger attempts to show how various sorts of "dung" are useful to agriculture, as a number of other critics have pointed out, the poem's proliferation of fecal matters sometimes makes it seem as though the proleptic conversion of green into gold is a cover for another prolepsis whereby green runs to scat. On the critical response to Grainger's scatology, see Gilmore (52). While other critics have treated this scatological tendency as evidence of the poem's badness or its bad faith I take the poem's scatological tendency as evidence of a counter-productivity that the poem also registers. By my account, Grainger's fecal orientation is not simply symptomatic but substantial and must be interpreted as such.

^{xxiii} My interest in the ways that the inside can produce outsiders is inspired by Frédéric Neyrat's work.

^{xxiv} Grainger's plot for this story follows so closely on Thomson's as to include a final moment in which the female lover petrifies immediately after her death: "Upon her breathless corse [sic] himself he threw, / And to her clay-cold lips, with trembling haste, / Ten thousand kisses gave" (II 447-449). There are also a number of differences between Grainger's and Thomson's stories of star-crossed lovers caught in a storm, among them Grainger offers biographies of his characters, particularly the male, Junio, who although Creole is educated in England and takes the Grand Tour only to decide that his West Indian home is equal to any other place. Also, Junio dies along with Theana at the end of Grainger's rendition, leading him to conclude that it is the Cane island's and reader's work to recall "their matchless love" (II 553). This process of remembrance come into the place of, and aims to dislodge, the poem's insect poetics.

^{xxv} Note that here again Grainger emphasizes the impossibility of patriarchal organization in the sugar colony.

^{xxvi} The *London Chronicle* review attributed to Johnson cites these lines for special praise.

^{xxvii} On the reception of Grainger's poem, see Gilmore (36-53).

^{xxviii} See Gilmore on Gosse's estimation of "Solitude" (51).

^{xxix} Tracking personification in the period indicates another feature can be added to Foucault's account of the eighteenth-century episteme: knowledge in the period was invested in lending animacy to the things organized into tables and by representations. Most typically, this animacy was expressed in terms of affect, and it used figure and rhetoric to pass affective charges through the systems that it gathered. This indicates that the taxonomies of the period—whether they produced the order of language, of natural history, or of exchange—were never as entirely mechanistic as they have been taken to be, even though the period's accounts of anima emphasized system and technics rather than treating it, as 19th-century discourses subsequently would, as a special property of life forms.

^{xxx} The eighteenth century's systemic thought bears striking similarities to the twenty-first century's increasing focus on networks. In the eighteenth century, as in the twenty-first, animacy is everywhere at stake, whether in actor network theorists' claims that everything is connected and animated (Latour); in so-called new materialists' efforts to build methods capable of attending to scales of significance below and above those obvious to human beings (Barad, Bennett); in environmentalist feminists' attention to "animacy hierarchies" that idealize power (Chen), and even in the work of those who criticize this attention to animacy and call for a return to twentieth-century Marxist analytical frames and with them the concept of agency (Rosenberg; Baumbach, Young, and Yue). The constellation of recent critical work that engages the problem of animacy indicates a broadly-felt need to rethink the term on a level that includes, but also exceeds, that of the body and the anthropos central to modernity's biopolitical epistemology.

^{xxxi} If new networked accounts of animacy are symptomatic of the Information Age's emerging episteme, such inter-epistemic approach to the present suggests that it makes little sense to proceed as though new or more distributed accounts of animacy are necessarily positive (for expanding or reassembling the social, for instance). It makes just as little

sense to argue that such accounts are necessarily regressive or complicit with economic exploitation (for failing to build a vanguard collectivity capable of expressing the agency of dominated classes). If such approaches, as well as the pronounced effort to build new methodologies, are an expression of our episteme, they will certainly sometimes operate in the service of exploitative economic conditions (as metropolitan personification did in the end) and will sometimes operate to produce new organizations of the inside (as did colonial personification). This critical historical distance gained from thinking across epistemes might help produce positions that leave a place to human beings, as both metropolitan and colonial personification did, while neither idealizing the human being and human agency as particularly fascinating and ethical terms or dismissing them as entirely passé.

xxxiii See Raffles, especially “The Sound of Global Warming.”

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