Jefferson and the politics of nineteenth-century southern pastoral

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Jefferson and the Politics of Nineteenth-century Southern Pastoral

Peter Templeton

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

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Abstract

This thesis examines a number of literary texts from and about the nineteenth-century American South through a transatlantic lens, in order to consider mutations and alterations in the pastoral tradition importantly fostered in the region by Thomas Jefferson. Due to the turbulent political and, eventually, military situation in the United States during the period under discussion, detailed attention is given here to the many ways in which literary pastoral was adapted in response to shifting regional needs. The thesis begins by considering the pastoral influences on the political philosophy of Jefferson, specifically his notion of America as a pastoral ‘New Jerusalem’. It establishes the emergence of American pastoralism through the colonization process, and examines how an English yeoman ideal came to exist in the colonies. Part Two maps and evaluates alterations to the Jefferson ideology in several Southern novels of the antebellum period (especially John Pendleton Kennedy’s *Swallow Barn* and Nathaniel Beverley Tucker’s *The Partisan Leader*), such as a focus less on the small farmer than on the land more generally, that emerged in the face of the political threat from Northern abolitionism. This section of the thesis also considers plantation literature’s idyllic tropes in a new light by utilizing the American travel writing of British authors – particularly Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope – so as to establish a parallax interpretive position. In Part Three, the thesis provides detailed examination of Southern texts of the postbellum period, with especial focus upon writings by Mark Twain and the lesser-known Virginian writer Mary Tucker Magill’s novel, *The Holcombes*. This section investigates the reimagining of and by the South following defeat in the Civil War. Focused on returns to, and further divergences from, the original Jeffersonian ideal of the pastoral, it also emulates Part Two in turning to selected English writing – here, Thomas Hardy’s own fictional negotiations of significant rural change – so as better to identify and assess the politics of the Southern literary imagination.


**Introduction: American Studies and Southern Pastoral**

**Region, Nation and Transnation in American Studies**
This thesis will stress the importance of engaging both with a transnational and also a more strictly transatlantic model within US literary studies. It will examine the question of pastoral in the literature of the American South from the conclusion of the Revolutionary War until the later nineteenth century, in relation with selected literature of England in the same period, to reflect upon the region’s immersion in a colonial and postcolonial dynamic. The United States, following independence, was a former set of colonies still dominated by a culture that until only recently considered itself British, while Britain found itself in a new global order that featured a former dependency as a rising world power, not culturally dissimilar to itself, that could not be ignored. For these reasons, a transatlantic approach which examines the many ideological and material connections between the South and Great Britain is desirable. A transnational approach is also valuable as we attempt to move beyond a static national model, as it can provide an awareness of local specificity that is essential to do justice to important regional variations in instances of international exchange.

Before setting out the theoretical reorientation we can gain from the new American Studies, however, we should assess the continuing productivity of older definitions of pastoral: both those generated by English literary criticism, and those produced in a specifically American context by the ‘myth-symbol’ school. Actually pinning down a precise meaning of pastoral is, in fact, a rather difficult task. While earlier modes of pastoral were theorized in relation to poetry, in drawing upon later texts this thesis will be focusing upon pastoral’s survivals in travel writing and fiction. As Paul Alpers has identified:

> Since the novel is the characteristic form of the epoch in which the literary system ceased to be expressed by clearly defined and related genres, it seems neither useful nor plausible to claim for the pastoral novel the literary motivation or generic coherence of older forms. Rather, a piece of fiction can be called pastoral when its author – for whatever reason, with whatever awareness, and concerned with whatever subject or theme – has recourse to usages which are characteristic of older pastorals and which in turn make a tale or novel pastoral in mode.¹

Due to this thesis being concerned with a period where the novel, rather than poetry, is the dominant literary form, this passage is of particular relevance to us. However, in practice it means we must

move away from the clearest definition of pastoral available, thereby exposing us to some
disagreement amongst scholars as to what characteristics pastoral actually has. William Empson
describes pastoral rather poetically as ‘putting the complex into the simple’, which is a suggestive
phrase, but does not seem to go far enough in defining the mode. However, getting critics who do
go some way towards a more thorough definition to agree is difficult. Frank Kermode, for example,
writes that ‘the tension between town and country seems to be productive of the special kind
of literature we call Pastoral’, positioning pastoral as a retreat from the city that is somehow in tension
with urban experience. Alternatively, Roger Sales reminds us that all pastoral need not be situated
in the country, and that ‘it is thus perfectly possible to have urban, and indeed suburban, versions of
pastoral.’ Critics also differ on the subject of the pastoral’s instrumentality or agency. Renato
Poggioli writes that ‘the bucolic dream has no other reality than that of imagination and art.’
However, Harry Levin has argued that ‘Nostalgia for a happier day would be a sterile emotion, if it
merely sighed for what was not; encouraged by the rotation of the seasons, it is transfigured into a
hope for recurrence.’ It quickly becomes clear, then, that critics even disagree on the extent to
which writers in a pastoral mode conceive of their work as being connected to the real world.
Despite these difficulties of definition, it is important to continue to engage with pastoral in the
Anglo-American context, not least because when we are considering contact zones between cultures
‘nature provides an especially rich point of intersection.’

Considering these factors, then, in this thesis the pastoral will be seen to operate on a
number of levels. Firstly, as noted American scholar Leo Marx has outlined, as an ideologically
charged representation of a managed natural landscape, as opposed to a truly uncultivated,
primitivist one. Terry Gifford has argued that ‘American Arcadias are usually set, not in a garden,
but in a wilderness’, yet while that certainly has some resonance with regard to texts from the
Northern American states, it is not a claim that holds up under scrutiny when we consider material
that is explicitly Southern. Secondly, the pastoral of the American South will, following Raymond
Williams’s observations on this literary mode, be positioned ‘between the pleasures of rural
settlement and the threat of loss and eviction’. The threat of loss will be seen primarily as a
consequence of the great social upheaval that came about in the South as a result of the Civil War.

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1984), pp. 93-97 (p. 95).
4 Roger Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1983),
p. 15.
5 Renato Poggioli, ‘Pastorals of Innocence and Happiness’, in *The Pastoral Mode*, ed. by Loughrey, pp. 98-
110 (p. 98).
6 Harry Levin, ‘The Golden Age’, in *The Pastoral Mode*, ed. by Loughrey, pp. 120-24 (p. 120).
7 Thomas Hallock, *From the Fallen Tree: Frontier Narratives, Environmental Politics, and the Roots of a
Lastly, I shall be considering pastoral with particular regard to the work of Gifford, who has identified three ways in which a text can be called pastoral: the first relating to its parallels with ancient literary form, the second covering content and ‘any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast with the urban’, and finally a third, derogatory sense in which pastoral is seen as an idealization which obscures social and economic reality. These final two understandings of pastoral will be particularly important for this thesis.

Pastoral’s centrality to the myth-symbol school of American Studies is well-known. Lawrence Buell recalls that Henry Nash Smith ‘was after all the first person to receive a Ph.D. in the field, on the strength of the dissertation that later became Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth’. While its focus on the West ultimately means that Smith’s text is somewhat peripheral to the particular regional concerns of this thesis, it retains some thematic similarities and its construction as a region-specific critique also lends it an obvious usefulness. I will go on to argue that the literature of the South (reflecting different Southern aspirations as to the nature of the Union as a whole) differs greatly from that of the North, and, as such, the South needs to be treated as a cultural domain in its own right, one that operates as part of the United States, yet is, in some ways, ideologically distinct from its other constituent areas.

This idea of regional distinctiveness is complicated, however, since in Virgin Land, Smith seemed to have a desire to unlock the truth of a fundamental ‘American-ness’. He began by revisiting Crèvecoeur, asking about the fundamental nature of an American, suggesting that, in spite of attempts by authors and philosophers to answer the question from Crèvecoeur’s time onward, ‘the varying national self-consciousness they have tried to capture always escapes final statement.’ In spite of this search for something unifying in the American experience, Smith suggests that the West operates as a regionalized symbol of American agrarianism, immediately dividing the region from the rest of the country at the very moment he imbues it with symbolic value. Still more problematically, Smith begins his examination of the American West from a position of geographical exceptionalism:

The present study traces the impact of the West, the vacant continent beyond the frontier, on the consciousness of Americans and follows the principal consequences of this impact in literature and social thought down to Turner’s formulation of it. Whatever the merits of the Turner thesis, the doctrine that the United States is a continental nation rather than a member with Europe of an Atlantic community has had a formative influence on the American mind and deserves historical treatment in its own right.

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10 Gifford, Pastoral, p. 2.
13 Smith, Virgin Land, p. 4.
Virgin Land was well-received initially. Leo Marx wrote in The Machine and the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (1964), that ‘In his remarkable book, Virgin Land, Henry Nash Smith shows that down to the twentieth century the imagination of Americans was dominated by the idea of transforming the wild heartland into such a new “garden of the world.”’\textsuperscript{14} This does seem to be the case, with the untamed West occurring repeatedly throughout the literature of the United States as a figure of both adventure and freedom. However, Smith actually suggests that the frontier had only a slight influence on the United States, while real political and ideological power stemmed from ‘the domesticated west that lay behind it’.\textsuperscript{15} This observation, that the political reality of power in the settled lands of the American West differed markedly from cultural presentations of the ‘frontier’, will be important to my study of the South, with its feudal overtones of rank and agrarianism persisting long after its own industrialization had begun.

A contemporary review of Virgin Land by John T. Flanagan suggested that ‘with most of [the] contentions it is difficult to argue. They are stated with conviction and sometimes with brilliance.’\textsuperscript{16} Indeed, there are many assertions in Smith’s text that are still of value today. One such example is that, while Manifest Destiny and territorial expansion ‘quickly became a principal ingredient in the developing American nationalism’, there is recognition in Virgin Land that for some, such as Philip Freneau, the American expansion across the continent was not a nationalist enterprise, but an internationalist one.\textsuperscript{17} For Freneau, the goal of exploiting the mineral wealth of the new continent was not to augment US strength but ‘to bring agriculture to the summit of perfection and make the nations brothers by disseminating the riches of the new world throughout the earth’.\textsuperscript{18} While this is undoubtedly a utopian vision of the West, its inclusion in Virgin Land ensures that Smith’s reading of the pull of the West is never reducible to a single strain of national expansionism and Manifest Destiny; it also recognizes an implicit internationalist strain in early American thought. Smith’s reading embraces both the nationalist notion of the US as a continental country and Freneau’s notion of enriching the entire world (which strongly implies an Atlantic community of which the US is part). Smith also goes on to show that Manifest Destiny was far from universally accepted. He discusses arguments such as those of Senator Louis T. Wigfall, who contended in the years prior to the Civil War that ‘the notion of colonizing and extending the area of freedom was nothing but “red republicanism; it is federalism; it is nationalism; it is an ignoring of history.”’\textsuperscript{19} Smith stresses, then, that the appeal of the West could be motivated either by nationalist or

\textsuperscript{15} Smith, Virgin Land, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{16} John T. Flanagan, review of Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth, American Literature, 22, 4 (1951), 534-36 (p. 536).
\textsuperscript{17} Smith, Virgin Land, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{18} Smith, Virgin Land, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{19} Smith, Virgin Land, pp. 150-51.
internationalist concerns, but that, simultaneously, it was non-existent for some. This will be important to remember as we examine a South that is not only politically and culturally different to the rest of the US, but also riven with internal dispute and ideological conflict.

Smith also argues for the importance of region in the formation of American political thought. He examines nineteenth-century connections between the West and the South, specifically the political machinations of John C. Calhoun. Writing that ‘Calhoun begins with the assumption that the Western and Southern states occupy a single physiographic region, consisting of the Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Plains from the Atlantic to the Rio Grande – a patent translation of political desire into geographical terms’, Smith reaches the conclusion that something once taken for granted – the Western frontier – is not a static idea, universally accepted and both instantly and effortlessly assimilated into US mythology.20 Rather, the conceptualizations of both region and nationhood are points of contention, mediated by a range of factors, including (but by no means limited to) the political desires of the players involved, the US position on the world stage, and, on a more localized level, the interrelations of individual American regions in matters relating to domestic issues. This is significant when discussing how authors from different regions frame questions such as slavery, as we will see later in this thesis.

Smith’s analysis of the figure of the yeoman, for example, reveals an important schism in the nineteenth-century US. The ideal of the yeoman was a central figure in the popular imagination of the British American colonies, and subsequently came to be a major symbol of the American West. However, when Smith writes that ‘by the 1850s the South had become actively hostile to the yeoman ideal’, this has implications for the idea of a culturally homogeneous US (and indeed, for this study of mutations in Southern pastoral).21 Two possibilities are evident here: either the South had become ‘un-American’ and veered away from the rest of the nation, or the idea of an ideologically constant US was no longer sustainable. If the South constitutes a significant portion of the United States, then it cannot be acceptable to redefine the South as ‘un-American’ once it no longer fits a preformed definition; rather, it must be the definition that is at fault. To accommodate this necessary shift, Smith is forced to break down the United States into smaller regions, in this case West and South, in order to explore how cultural practices and ideological formations were modified across the varying zones within the nation. The idea of an ideologically homogeneous US is, then, shown by Smith to be reductive, and the failure of significant regions to conform to a national ideology, instead interpreting pastoral in their own ways, makes a mockery of the notion of unity. The United States, as a nation, is too large and diverse for myths and symbols to be exactly applicable throughout. In this thesis, the idea of a diversification of American mythology along

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20 Smith, Virgin Land, p. 148.
21 Smith, Virgin Land, p. 145.
regional lines will play a vital part as I work to unpick the paradox of a South that is by turns rampantly Republican and heavily rank-oriented.

Another practitioner of what Lawrence Buell has described as ‘the so-called “myth-symbol” approach’ whose work has obvious relevance to a thesis exploring an American pastoral mythology is Leo Marx.22 Marx elucidates both the garden myth and the submerged mechanized threat which he describes as having ‘appeared everywhere in American writing since the 1840s’.23 He begins The Machine in the Garden with the assertion that ‘The pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery’, a claim that he goes on to validate through an analysis of the work of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Crèvecoeur, Jefferson and others.24 Marx traces these threads of pastoralism throughout the period of British colonization and into the new US republic, and eventually arrives at the conclusion that, while such pastoral symbolism is not uncommon in the Old World,

[the US] experience as a nation unquestionably has invested [pastoral] desires with peculiar intensity. The soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over our urbanized landscape is largely a vestige of the once dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness.25

Marx implies a particularly nationalistic brand of the pastoral, a set of cultural symbols intensified by experiences within and across the landscapes of the United States. This reading of a US pastoralism as somehow transcending a more traditional European pastoral vision is significant as we come to approach American texts. That ideology readily feeds upon features of the physical landscape is certainly true, and Marx’s analysis of a US pastoral culture obviously has resonance with the Jeffersonian vision of the New Republic, an idea that will be central to this thesis. Discussion here will aim both to register the continuing utopian resonances of pastoral in the nineteenth-century South and also to subject this literary discourse and cultural formation to rigorous ideological critique.

Marx also identifies the presence within the American garden myth of the threat of the machine. He examines Nathaniel Hawthorne’s comments (under the heading ‘Sleepy Hollow’), and suggests that the whistle of the steam train that disturbs Hawthorne’s solitude forces ‘him to acknowledge the existence of a reality alien to the pastoral dream’.26 He goes on to say that ‘variants of the Sleepy Hollow episode have appeared everywhere in American writing since the 1840s’, stressing that the symbol of the machine penetrating the peaceful sanctum of the garden is both

24 Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 3.
widespread and enduring.27 This threat from the machine and mechanization will play an important part in this thesis, identifiable in the antebellum works of John Pendleton Kennedy and others. It will also be important to consider when examining the presentation of locomotives and steamboats by Mark Twain.

However, there is a need for caution here. The myth-symbol approach has come under much critical scrutiny since the decades in which these texts by Smith and Marx were initially published, and in light of that we should be careful with regard to how far we carry across its methods and insights. In Flanagan’s initial review, in spite of its overwhelmingly complimentary tone, Virgin Land was described as having one major flaw. Flanagan wrote that ‘the only serious criticism of the book is that it is essentially skeletal.’28 By the time Bruce Kucklick wrote ‘Myth and Symbol in American Studies’ in 1972, this lacuna had become a major problem for practitioners of American Studies. Kucklick wrote that ‘one has only to listen to the persistent and recurring angst voiced by graduates in American studies to realize that this scholarly genre has not adequately defined what it is about.’29 In a commentary on Kucklick’s essay, Howard P. Segal writes that he ‘reveals classic philosophical errors and basic methodological failings in the efforts to identify through myths and symbols, a distinctive and uniform American culture and experience’.30 In fact, these methodological flaws were acknowledged by the myth-symbol scholars themselves from the beginning. In his essay ‘Can American Studies Develop a Method?’, Smith wrote that ‘no ready-made method for American Studies is in sight. We shall have to develop one for ourselves, and I am afraid that at present we shall have to be content with a very modest program.’31 Marx agreed, saying that ‘so far, that is, as the tacit definition of what constitutes an acceptable scholarly method is borrowed, by whatever circuitous route, from the physical sciences, then I for one would argue that it is neither possible nor desirable for American Studies to develop a method.’32 By contrast, Kucklick argues that ‘the use of image seems to obfuscate matters’ and insists that a more tangible methodology is not only desirable but essential.33 This does raise questions about the methodological solidity of earlier American Studies scholarship, not least about the use of the words ‘myths’ and ‘symbols’, which, while somewhat appropriate for pastoral, are not the most secure analytical terms. Segal describes the use of such ambiguous terms as ‘the substitution of platonic

28 Flanagan, review of Virgin Land, p. 536.
30 Howard P. Segal, ‘Commentary on “Myth and Symbol in American Studies”’, in Locating American Studies, ed. by Maddox, pp. 87-90 (p. 87).
31 Henry Nash Smith, ‘Can American Studies Develop a Method?’, in Locating American Studies, ed. by Maddox, pp. 1-12 (p. 11).
33 Kucklick, ‘Myth and Symbol in American Studies’, p. 76.
forms for material realities’, and argues that there is no obvious intellectual foundation for the myth-symbol approach.\(^{34}\) Indeed, a rejection of the study of material realities seems to be exactly what Marx is advocating in ‘American Studies: A Defense of an Unscientific Method’. The use of the terms ‘myth’ and ‘symbol’ seems itself to homogenize a set of cultural associations and assumptions that developed in the Old World over millennia: Marx appears to acknowledge as much with his references to Virgil’s *Eclogues*, pastoral writing that predates the founding of the North American colonies by more than a millennium.\(^{35}\) Since the Americas were colonized by Europeans, even if there were to be an American myth it would necessarily be descended from the symbolic associations of those migrants. A more substantial methodology leads to the conclusion that the US, not being culturally in isolation, should not be studied as if it were. This is obviously important to consider when we position Southern pastoral ideology in a larger global context.

Another problem relates to the totalizing quality of some of the myth-symbol arguments. The definition of American Studies as offered by Nash Smith was ‘the study of American culture, past and present, as a whole’.\(^{36}\) This idea is obviously incompatible with any desire for a more region-based approach to the study of the US, and the importance of removing the nation as the starting point for enquiry is borne out by the significant changes that have taken place in academic thought between the 1960s and the present. Study of the culture of the United States as a whole may have seemed like an achievable goal in 1957, but by the time Kucklick wrote ‘Myth and Symbol in American Studies’ in 1972, the US had undergone the divisive traumas of the Civil Rights movement and the Viet Nam War, while the formative stages of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court case on abortion, which would profoundly affect the state of American gender relations, were also occurring. The idea of a united US culture no longer seemed a possibility, and this led Kucklick to write that the myth-symbol scholars ‘tried to relate intellectual currents to the culture’s zeitgeist and to argue that some symbols and myths dominated all America’.\(^{37}\) R. Gordon Kelly would also criticize the myth-symbol approach in an essay, ‘Literature and the Historian’, published in 1974: ‘Given the complexity and diversity of cultural knowledge in American society, it seems equally unwarranted to conceive of an America as a unitary culture for the purposes of historical analysis or to define a handful of literary figures as qualitatively superior cultural informants.’\(^{38}\) This extract refers to a heterogeneity in American society that is largely unrecognized by the myth-symbol approach. Buell, too, writes that ‘Smith could stipulate without fear that a scholar was a “he”’.\(^{39}\) By the time Kelly and Kucklick were writing, previously marginalized American groups had begun to

\(^{34}\) Segal, ‘Commentary’, p. 87.


\(^{36}\) Smith, ‘Can American Studies Develop a Method?’, p. 1.

\(^{37}\) Kucklick, ‘Myth and Symbol in American Studies’, p. 79.


\(^{39}\) Buell, ‘Commentary’, p. 15.
find their voices in the academy. As Sharon O’Brien suggests, Kelly’s assertion may seem obvious in ‘our multicultural 1990s, but [it] needed to be said in 1974’.40 This recognition of social diversification is important, because once the illusion of American unity is shattered and we begin to acknowledge difference, we can move beyond reductive nationalist notions and also appreciate regional specificity.

Greater racial and sexual diversity within the academy drew attention to problems with another of Marx’s assertions, namely that within a text ‘a large part of the meaning […] resides in the inherent emotional power of the work.’41 Kucklick immediately takes issue with this, suggesting that ‘If a work has this inherent capacity, then its aesthetic merit should be clear to everyone; Moby-Dick, for example, would have been acclaimed as a masterpiece upon publication, and there would be no question of achieving critical consensus, or of relying on the judgment of literary critics.’42 Kucklick, then, clearly reveals a blind-spot in Marx’s logic. The assumption Marx makes is that members of the academy will make the same decisions about which texts are valuable, and that these value judgements ascribe to the work an inherent quality. Marx does not acknowledge here that his own value judgments are created by his cultural position and that a plurality of cultural positions, which emerges as the academy becomes more accessible, leads to a variety of differing conclusions. Kelly suggests that ‘by defining literature in terms of an inherent power to compel responses, we reduce the need to examine the social factors which might otherwise be presumed to shape both the creation and the effect of literature.’43 The presumption of ‘an inherent power’ in cultural texts conceals the fact that Smith and Marx are both native-born white males of the professional classes, working in institutions that would at that time have been made up primarily (if not totally) of people from similar backgrounds. This privileged perspectival position is also the logic behind Southern texts being largely ignored until the second half of the twentieth century, as American literature became defined as almost exclusively the literature of the North from the antebellum period onwards. The works created by such a relatively homogeneous grouping as the North-Eastern states reflected the ideological boundaries of that community. It is also no coincidence that until the twentieth century those cultural artefacts considered canonical were almost universally Northern (or shared Northern cultural values). The myth-symbol approach, with its doctrine of obvious inherent value, seems to allow no possibility for self-reflexive examination of the construction of such a patriarchal and racially privileged American canon. As Sharon O’Brien puts it: ‘By basing cultural generalizations on a text like Moby-Dick, the experience of many Americans would be silenced, just as the differences of women and African-Americans were often

42 Kucklick, ‘Myth and Symbol in American Studies’, p. 84.
43 Kelly, ‘Literature and the Historian’, p. 94.
erased in the generalisations about the “American character” that stressed self-reliance and individualism.  

However, despite greater awareness of methodological pitfalls within the discipline, by 1989 little seemed to have changed. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. wrote that ‘today’s American Studies scholarship repudiates most of the cultural and political premises of the myth-symbol-image school; less clear is how far current approaches to context supersede past practices. Self-consciousness began to emerge about both the Cold War beginnings of American Studies and the necessity of providing the discipline with a more rigorous methodology in this more modern climate. The view of a cultural outsider, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, was that ‘Area Studies were established to secure U.S. power in the cold war.’ George Lipsitz delved slightly deeper, observing that ‘Anti-communism and uncritical nationalism during the early years of the Cold War transformed the study of American culture in significant ways, imposing a mythical cultural “consensus” on what previously had been recognized as a history of struggle between insiders and outsiders.’ Lipsitz’s argument rests on the premise that the Cold War and the resultant upsurge in US nationalism led to flawed methods and a reductive discipline. He suggests that ‘American Studies scholars too often have been accomplices in an unjust representation of American culture, depicting it as more monolithic and less plural than the realities of American life and history warrant.’ This belief is supported by Alice Kessler-Harris, who states that ‘the desire for unity inhibited any public critique of institutions that accepted the tempting funds offered by foundations like Carnegie and Rockefeller to develop American Studies programs with the explicit aim of shoring up national identity in the face of a perceived totalitarian threat.’ American Studies had been guided towards a singular position by political reactions to the threat of communism, but the end of the Cold War led to an unpacking of the notion of a singular United States. As Kessler-Harris puts it, ‘the absence of a common enemy, you might say, makes room for common dissent.’

American Studies has moved from concern with an inherent notion of ‘Americanness’ to exploration of the many different subjective positions and experiences within and, indeed, beyond, the United States. Berkhofer insists that ‘The exemplary works have moved from stressing the basic homogeneity of the American mind and uniformity of the American character to noting the diversity

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50 Kessler-Harris, ‘Cultural Locations’, p. 336.
of the American population and divisiveness of the American experience.\(^5\) The American experience is, of necessity, divisive. The present-day US consists of fifty states and numerous districts and territories, extending from the Caribbean and Eastern seaboard to the islands of the Pacific Ocean. That such a vast nation-state based on a culture of immigration could sustain a singular, unified experience that simultaneously excludes the rest of the world (and, as a consequence, the various points of origin of all the migrants that constitute that culture of immigration) seems remarkably implausible. American experience is splintered because its origins are truly global.

It is this last point – the relation of the US (and American Studies) to the rest of the world – that I would like to focus on here. Lipsitz argues that a distinctly ‘American’ method potentially has less merit for American Studies than the mode of cultural theory practised in European academies. He suggests that ‘far from representing the end of American Studies, European cultural theory offers an opportunity to reconnect with some of the important aims and intentions of our field in new and exciting ways.’\(^5\) Barry Shank elucidates key points in the venture of the ‘new’ American Studies:

American studies is also interrogating the very stability of the founding term, ‘America’. In many ways, the ‘new’ American studies recognizes a fundamental absence at the heart of its venture. The most exciting new scholarship is briskly dismantling the traditional reliance on political-geographic borders to mark the appropriate contexts for tracing and analyzing the flows of cultural history. Obviously, ‘America’ is not geographically coincident with the United States. Equally obviously, America does not exist in isolation from the rest of the world and never has (as the very names of the continents demonstrate).\(^5\)

In the new American Studies, then, there is a rejection of Smith’s assertion that a study of the US as a discrete entity is desirable. Indeed, there is a rejection of the idea that this model is capable of providing the rigorous methods required of the field in the twenty-first century.

John Carlos Rowe is a major proponent of an American Studies with a wider, more internationalist, and more theoretical focus. He begins by saying that the future of American Studies is dependent upon continued interrogation of earlier, reductive ideas. He says that, ‘given the long traditions of study systematically devoted to “American identity” or “national character,” we must continue the critical work of the past two decades, in which just such a provincial nationalism has been subjected to successful criticism in terms of its ideological consequences.’\(^4\) Rowe promotes an American Studies that continues in the same self-reflexive vein rather than regressing to a conventionally nationalist approach. He argues that

\(^5\) Lipsitz, ‘Listening to Learn’, p. 312.
Undoubtedly the consensus-based intellectual history that was once foundational for American Studies is no longer a possible or even desirable goal for the field, and new terms for intellectual debate and exchange are vitally needed to address such central issues as colonialism and postcolonialism, postnationalism, multiculturalism, cultural hybridity, postindustrial class divisions, neoregionalism, and subject positions determined by ethnicity, gender and sexuality.\textsuperscript{55}

In outlining his proposition for a ‘new’ American Studies, Rowe begins by repeating Kelly’s argument that concern with a pervasive ‘Americanness’ is not a solid basis for intellectual debate. Critiquing the doctrine of US exceptionalism, he claims that it has contributed to both ‘U.S. cultural imperialism and its exclusions of the many different cultures historically crucial to U.S. social, political, and economic development’.\textsuperscript{56} He reiterates Shank’s argument concerning a recasting of the discipline’s geographical net:

As American Studies reconceives its intellectual project as the study of the many different societies of the western hemisphere and of the influences of the different border zones that constitute this large region, such as the Pacific Rim and the African and European Atlantics, it will become a genuinely ‘postnationalist’ discipline whose comparatist methods will overlap and thus benefit from the work of other comparatists.\textsuperscript{57}

American Studies cannot be built on a foundation that assumes the US exists in a vacuum. As a nation that spans the width of a continent, the United States exists in oceanic relationships with a number of other nations. As a country whose current population primarily consists of migrants from other continents (and their descendants), the relationships that the US has with countries across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans will necessarily be vital in the creation of any sense of communal and cultural identity. Rowe recognizes this and suggests that ‘immigration has always shaped the United States in ways that demonstrate the shifting nature of such cultural boundaries.’\textsuperscript{58}

Rowe’s approach to American Studies is based, therefore, upon the idea that something should stand in place of ‘the nation’ as a starting point for any coherent methodology. He suggests that, ‘given its explicitly multicultural and transnational composition and the rapid national legitimation demanded by its revolutionary origins, the United States calls particular, albeit not unique, attention to the fabricated, imaginary qualities of its national coherence.’\textsuperscript{59} The formation of the US, with its confluence of migratory peoples, shatters any notion of an autochthonous American character. A nation comprised of migrants from all corners of the world, practising different religions and cultures, and speaking different languages, highlights the frailty of the idea of the ‘nation’ in this case. Since the nation is something of an idealized concept and the US could only ever be fragmented, Rowe argues that ‘as we widen our critical perspectives, so should we consider

\textsuperscript{55} Rowe, \textit{The New American Studies}, p. xiv.
\textsuperscript{56} Rowe, \textit{The New American Studies}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{57} Rowe, \textit{The New American Studies}, pp. xiv-xv.
\textsuperscript{58} Rowe, \textit{The New American Studies}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{59} Rowe, \textit{The New American Studies}, p. xix.
a broader spectrum of social, political, and cultural alternatives to the nation." He then takes his lead from Mary Louise Pratt and her idea of the ‘contact zone’, or the point at which cultures meet and negotiate, in multiple modalities, with one another. Rowe proposes that we ‘begin to construct a new comparative U.S. cultures curriculum and canon around an elaborated and developed theory of the contact zone’. Rowe’s desire is that the contact zone, and the points of negotiation between the variant migrant forces in US history (along with interactions between these US subcultures and other cultures traditionally considered outside them), will form the basis for American Studies. I concur, proposing both a widening and narrowing of parameters, by which I mean examining the US in light of both its disparate regions (exemplified here by focusing on the South) and its susceptibility to influences that have crossed international borders. Rowe’s post-national approach allows us to see the regional characteristics of Southern pastoral in texts with more clarity than forcing them to fit homogeneous national definitions will allow, while also allowing us to go beyond national borders, taking into account the South’s postcolonial dynamics.

Wai Chee Dimock argues with respect to the existing foundation for American Studies that ‘that ground, though methodologically crucial, is often left implicit’. She puts forward a similar view to Rowe in Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time:

I have in my mind a form of indebtedness: what we called ‘American’ literature is quite often a shorthand, a simplified name for a much more complex tangle of relations. Rather than being a discrete entity, it is better seen as a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages, and cultures. These are input channels, kinship networks, routes of transit, and forms of attachment – connective tissues binding America to the rest of the world.

Dimock begins to chart US literature along similar lines to Rowe and his thinking of the contact zone, by imagining ‘pathways’ forged between the US and other geographies and cultures where they are forced to encounter one another. This can be on the grandest scale of migration (as we will encounter with America’s inherited pastoral), or, at its most minimal, the experience of a single reader encountering a text from another culture. Dimock begins with the example of Henry David Thoreau’s engagement with ancient texts from India and shows how a connection is formed between these texts and Walden (1854). She argues that

The map of the world that Thoreau lives in is probably not one that we recognize. As far as he is concerned, the Ganges River is in direct contact with Walden Pond; he owes his

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60 Rowe, The New American Studies, p. xxii.
61 Rowe, The New American Studies, p. 12. The source of the contact zone concept is Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992); see particularly pp. 6-7.
intellectual genesis to the mixing of the two. Concord, Massachusetts, might be an American locale, but it is irrigated by an ancient text from Asia.64

An immediate connection between Concord, Massachusetts and the Ganges does not occur in any conventional sense, but Dimock is right to draw one out here: Thoreau has obviously been influenced by these Indian texts, and his encounters with them have helped to shape his production of *Walden*. This is perhaps an example of the contact zone on its smallest possible scale, as a single reader (in this case, Thoreau) comes into contact with, and has to negotiate, a text from another culture. As a result, regardless of spatial and temporal distances, a connection is forged between the US in which *Walden* becomes such an influential book and the India of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Dimock reminds us of the limiting nature of the nation by exposing the vast multitude of connections forged not just through traditional pathways such as territorial exchanges and migratory patterns but also through more localized cultural and intellectual contacts. Dimock’s ideas will be useful to this thesis as they will allow us to break away from a rigid model of the Southern United States and conceptualize the region instead as marked by multiple input channels, including, for example, interaction with the travel writing of British visitors. Dimock also prompts consideration of the ways in which different literatures respond to global developments and intellectual currents across ‘Deep Time’, which will be advantageous as we explore mutations of pastoral in response to the forces of modernity in the nineteenth century.

Paul Giles has also theorized that ‘the relationship between American literature and geography, so far from being something that can be taken as natural, involves contested terrain, terrain which has been subject over the centuries to many different kinds of mutation and controversy.’65 He, too, stresses an approach aligned with the ‘new’ American Studies, remarking that ‘the development of American literature appears in a different light when read against the grain of British cultural imperatives, just as British literature itself reveals strange and unfamiliar aspects that are brought into play by the reflecting mirrors of American discourse.’66 Giles places himself here in a transnationalist position, analysing US literature through a British cultural lens, and vice versa. He also explicitly argues against the myth-symbol approach, suggesting that ‘These mythic accounts of American literature occupying its own separate sphere can be seen as a culmination and continuation of attempts earlier in the twentieth century to define an Americanist field specifically against the oppressive weight of British cultural hegemony.’67 Giles wishes to reject this approach, arguing that ‘by problematizing the boundaries of “American literature”, it may be possible to bring

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to the surface some of those issues that critical narratives based upon a coherent teleology of national identity necessarily leave out."\(^{68}\)

However, Giles’s own work has received criticism for a perceived narrowness in its Anglo-American focus. Spivak, writing of comparative literature, suggests that ‘the logical consequences of our loosely defined discipline were, surely, to include the open-ended possibility of studying all literatures, with linguistic rigor and historical savvy.’\(^{69}\) She argues for an end to a tiered model of comparative literature that has an implicit preference for Euro-American traditions in which less powerful nations (particularly those of the southern hemisphere) are marginalized. Giles, with his focus primarily on relations between the United States and Great Britain, has been accused of subjection to precisely that Euro-American bias that figures such as Spivak, Rowe and Dimock are attempting to move beyond. Bryan Wagner, reviewing Giles’s *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (2002), suggests that a problem with the book is its ‘willingness to articulate itself almost exclusively in relation to an earlier formation of American studies without so much as referencing the histories of coincident fields such as black studies and ethnic studies, fields that, it should be noted, were transnational from their point of origin’.\(^{70}\)

Giles’s work is undoubtedly less geographically adventurous than the work of a critic like Dimock, though that does not mean it is automatically of less value. Giles outlines his reasons for prioritizing comparison of British and American literatures in the introduction to *Transatlantic Insurrections* (2001):

One reason for focusing upon British and American cultures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is to show how the emergence of autonomous and separate political identities during this era can be seen as intertwined with a play of opposites, a series of reciprocal attractions and repulsions between opposing national situations.\(^{71}\)

There is actually a good reason for continuing with a transatlantic, or British-American, dialogue when we consider the realities of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century United States, not least in examining a pastoral ideal. Giles is considering a region of North America along the Atlantic coast which was settled predominantly by the British, and then studying it across a period of time in which it became independent from Britain. Using Rowe’s model of the American contact zone, it is easy to see the ways in which the British culture of the migrants (including British pastoral mythology) was forced to negotiate the American landscape, and how a US culture was formed both out of this geographical reality and out of a subsequent revolutionary rejection of ‘Britishness’ in favour of a new national identity. More problematically, though, Giles often deals in rather static

\(^{68}\) Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, p. 8.

\(^{69}\) Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, p. 5.


national units. The US tends to become, in his work, something of a homogeneous entity, lacking the regional specificity that we can see in Smith and others, as New England culture often seems to stand in for the whole. Across the Atlantic, too, Giles tends to use ‘Britishness’ when ‘Englishness’ would be more terminologically accurate. A more supple position in this regard, one that recognizes ideological fluidity both within and, indeed, across national frameworks, is desirable and will be sought in this thesis.

Giles himself acknowledges the value of moving away from an Anglo-American dialogue, but also insists upon the validity of his own approach when he says that

There have been various other moves recently to expand the ‘Early American Canon,’ to move it away from an ‘Anglo-oriented “Agenda”’ by embracing works from sources other than New England male intellectuals. While these interventions are timely and important, they too risk seeking to erase the spectre of imperial power simply by ignoring it.72

Giles’s work seeks to demonstrate the importance of continuing to recognize the mark Britain’s imperial legacy has left on the Americas. Here and elsewhere, then, he positions himself as a comparativist: ‘While most postcolonial accounts of literature are concerned at some level with questions of ethnocentric consciousness and conflict, my reading of British-American culture will revolve around the more discomfiting figures of mirroring and twinning, where mutual identities are not so much independently asserted but sacrilegiously travestied.’73 Such an approach will be important in this thesis, dealing as it does with the Southern states of the US in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because the US of the period was a specifically postcolonial nation, one in constant dialogue with its former colonizer, while Britain’s continuing influence was felt through its status as both an industrial and maritime superpower. However, Giles’s conceptual dexterity also allows him to stress the postcolonial underpinnings of early US culture without devolving into a method that would privilege the more established, British texts:

The methodology here will tend more toward the comparative than the postcolonial, in [Edward] Watts’s sense of that term, since I am concerned with American literature not as subordinate to an imperial British literature, but rather as something that develops in parallel to it. My focus will be on points of transnational convergence and interference that arise out of works incorporating their own particular local perspectives.74

Giles’s approach manages to combine discussion of the distinctly national formations the myth-symbol school of criticism was searching for with awareness of transnational exchanges. This method is based on the premise that there is a strong material and imaginative bond between Britain and America, both before the latter’s independence as the colonies and subsequently as the republic. The colonization process creates a series of interweaving connections, such as the emergence of

72 Giles, Transatlantic Insurrections, p. 10.
73 Giles, Transatlantic Insurrections, p. 2.
74 Giles, Transatlantic Insurrections, p. 2.
British pastoral strands in American mythologies, which cannot be easily undone by any process like a revolution. Those connections survived the Revolutionary War, and, as a consequence, British cultural formations (and, in some cases, conscious rebellions against them) served to shape the new republic. Giles refers to his preferred approach as ‘bifocal’, suggesting an intricate relationship in which both countries manage to look ‘in different directions simultaneously’.75

The historical grounding of Giles’s work also makes it a useful resource for a thesis such as this one. He highlights the impact of the contemporaneous political environment upon the formation of American identity in the eighteenth century, and suggests that ‘it was British imperial ambitions that served as the “main counterpoise” to regional diversity in the American colonies, so that, paradoxically, they began to acquire structural similarities and a greater sense of American identity precisely through their subaltern relationship with Great Britain.’76 For a thesis exploring the South and its position within a fragmented US, the relevance of such historical and political groundwork is obvious. If US unity is fostered in reaction to British imperial ambition in North America, then, as that ambition abates (and the US develops its own expansionist agenda), such unity potentially comes under strain. It is no surprise, then, that the concepts of ‘North’ and ‘South’ in the US begin to emerge once the threat of British conquest has passed.

This historical fieldwork also gives us some valuable insights into the importance of literary form. Giles cites the example of William Byrd II, suggesting that forms of US dialect were engaged in intricate relations with the ‘supposedly masterful language of London’.77 With American colloquialisms often standing against this apparently authoritative language of British imperialism, Giles argues that ‘it is this sense of doubleness and duplicity that many American writers of this time skilfully work with; these, however, are precisely the kinds of formal relations that can be understood only by reading British and US literatures in parallel.’78 Giles’s reading of the literatures of the US and Britain with each other as a constant reference point results in disclosure of the formal and political intricacies that come from the two countries sharing such close historical ties. Such a comparativist approach will be crucial to this thesis as it highlights the political reality in which ‘the South’ as a cultural entity comes to exist from a collection of independent states in the pre-Civil War period.

This project will, however, deviate from Giles in regard to its area for study. Giles quite rightly characterizes the early United States not as one coherent unit but as a disjointed confederacy of different cultural constituencies. He suggests that ‘to describe the formation of an identifiably American culture as predicated upon indigenous conceptions of native “experience” is, at best,

misleading. Early American experience was a duplicitous and paradoxical business. The awareness of disunity throughout the US is not new. One of the best things about the scholars of the myth-symbol school was, in spite of their quest for a unifying discipline, their recognition of regional diversity within the US. Smith referred to ‘American culture’ before immediately adding, ‘or the varieties of American regional subcultures’, recognizing implicitly that a pervasive American culture was impossible given such geographical, ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Regional specificity was not absent in the formative days of American Studies, and it is something which still has real benefits for the new American Studies.

In Transatlantic Insurrections, Giles works with texts from across the thirteen colonies (though with a strong emphasis towards New England and New York) and, subsequently, the United States, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He defends this practice by saying that ‘Byrd’s Virginia, Dwight’s Connecticut, and Irving’s New York all refract the world of old England in a different manner, but in each case we see at work an implicit double perspective which serves to formulate the indigenous culture comparatively, in terms of what it is not’. While this is clearly valid, I aim to depart from this focus on the North-east of the country, and instead concentrate purely on a region largely ignored by Giles, the South, by which I mean the areas from Virginia southwards along the East coast and then gradually further westwards to Missouri in the Mississippi basin. In examining a single region, we will be able both to highlight texts otherwise forgotten and to revitalize over-researched texts by reading them in new ways, in particular by examining the pastoral strands within them through a transatlantic lens. I also hope that a project focusing on the US South will confirm the unviability of the nation-state to act as a foundation for literary criticism in the twenty-first century. I aim to show how Southern texts refute expectations we still may have of American literature, shaped as those expectations historically have been by a strong cultural bias towards New England and New York. The more conservative, rural South did not produce the same cultural artefacts as the more industrial and populous Northern states, and perhaps the reason that Southern writing prior to Mark Twain has been relatively ignored is that it does not fit Northern literary models. To demonstrate the complexity and contentiousness of Southern texts produced during the period under discussion, a move both within and beyond the nation, working at both regional and transnational levels, is necessary.

The Pastoral in the South

W. H. Auden refers to pastoral mythology’s two competing strains of thought. He suggests that ‘our dream pictures of the Happy Place where suffering and evil are unknown are of two kinds, the

79 Giles, Transatlantic Insurrections, p. 11.
80 Smith, ‘Can American Studies Develop a Method?’ p. 4.
81 Giles, Transatlantic Insurrections, p. 11.
Edens and the New Jerusalems.82 This thesis will argue that over the course of the nineteenth century, the pastoral ideal in the Southern United States necessarily mutated from being one of a New Jerusalem to one more Edenic in nature. I intend to explore how the consciousness of the American South begins to reflect Auden’s theory that ‘the psychological difference between the Utopian dreamer and the Arcadian dreamer is that the backward-looking Arcadian knows that his expulsion from Eden is an irrevocable fact and that his dream, therefore, is a wish-dream which cannot become real.’83 To examine in detail the changing nature of Southern pastoral, this thesis will be divided into three parts. The purpose of the first of these sections is to examine the Jeffersonian ideal in detail, including its pastoral formulation of America as a ‘New Jerusalem’. I will explore the emergence of American pastoralism through the colonization process, and examine how an English yeoman ideal came to exist in the colonies. I will then show how political developments from colonization to independence served to reinforce these ideas, and how natural history texts that represent the environment by writers such as William Bartram came to play a part in the continuing development of the idea of the US as a chosen land. This first section will then turn to the work of Thomas Jefferson himself, and, focusing mostly on Notes on the State of Virginia (1785), will examine the emerging conception of the South as a pastoral idyll. A series of subsections will focus on Jefferson’s ideas of nature and the yeoman, and also attempt to understand the ideological structures that underpinned his, and more broadly Southern, attitudes towards race. Race is, of course, a crucial concern for this thesis, as an ideology of black inferiority was essential in the configuration of the labour force of the Southern planter class, and was also a point at which Southern ideology came into conflict with forces both from the Northern US states and Great Britain.

After this expository section, the thesis will turn in Part Two to the period 1830-1860. This section will interrogate the changes that occurred to the pastoral idyll in an era in which the slave system came under attack from the Northern United States. The lifestyle of the South’s wealthiest citizens proved unsustainable without the slave system. This chapter aims to map alterations to the Jeffersonian ideology, such as a focus less on the small farmer than on the land more generally, that proved necessary to accommodate this political threat from abolitionism. To draw out this distinct thread of Southern mythology, I will examine two literary texts of the antebellum South, both of which are to this day relatively unstudied. The first, John Pendleton Kennedy’s Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion (1832), has been called by Kevin J. Hayes the ‘foremost example of a minor genre of antebellum American literature known as the plantation genre’.84 This novel was popular at the times of its publication, and would go through a number of editions in later years.

including ‘a two-volume Swedish translation’ in 1835. While much antebellum literature suffered a fall in popularity following the Civil War, Hayes suggests that, unlike many other novels, Swallow Barn retained a certain amount of popularity, and had such notable defenders as the former Senator for Massachusetts, Robert Charles Winthrop. Were we to begin to form a Southern canon, then, Swallow Barn would be an essential part of its pre-Reconstruction section. By contrast, The Partisan Leader (1836) by Nathaniel Beverley Tucker does not demand canonical status for itself with the same conviction. John L. Hare insists that the novel ‘never enjoyed commercial success’. A strange novel in many ways, and without the formal merits and literary sophistication of Swallow Barn, it is nonetheless perhaps the foremost literary utterance of Southern secessionism. I include it here both for its distinctive tone (remarkably different from that which we find in Kennedy), and for its political and cultural positioning. One thing that both texts have in common, as Hare suggests, is that they ‘represent an almost undiscovered treasure of the literary history of the antebellum United States’. To counterpoint these Southern-authored pastorals, Part Two will also consider the American travel writing of Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope, which, diverse as it is, helpfully defamiliarizes elements of Southern texts by serving as a kind of parallax. Consideration of these texts also enables us to examine the ways in which Southern pastoral ideology shifted in response to particular critiques. This section will use its literary materials, both US- and British-originated, to explore the South’s antebellum conceptions of race, labour, the South as idyll, and the threat to that idyll posed by the Northern US and Britain.

Part Three of the thesis will involve detailed examination of Southern texts of the postbellum period, again over a span of thirty years, from 1865-1895. This section will show the reimagining of and by the South following defeat in the Civil War. Focused on returns to, and continued divergence from, the original Jeffersonian ideal of the pastoral, it will explore the work of Mark Twain, but will also consider at length fiction by the much less well-studied Southern novelist Mary Tucker Magill. The chapter seeks to discover how the South changed ideologically with military defeat, and with Emancipation: how does the South deal with the way of life lost with the end of its labour supply? By using two such diverse writers as Magill and Twain, we will be able to consider these questions without forcing some kind of continuity onto the South that did not exist in the post-war period. To develop this consideration of dissensus, I will discuss their work again using a transatlantic model, specifically the work of Thomas Hardy, another author often concerned with the passing of a rural way of life. Using Hardy prismatically, I will examine how the postbellum Southern texts continue to present a way of life lauded as a pastoral idyll but betray its crisis by the contortions with which they reimagine the now-untenable slave system.

85 Hayes, ‘Swallow Barn’, p. 1132.  
86 John L. Hare, Will the Circle be Unbroken?: Family and Sectionalism in the Virginia Novels of Kennedy, Caruthers, and Tucker, 1830-1845 (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 112.  
87 Hare, Will the Circle be Unbroken?, p. ix.
Part One

Jefferson and the Inheritance of Pastoral
To understand the importance of the pastoral in the literature of the American South, we need to study Thomas Jefferson. However, we cannot simply begin with Jefferson at the time of the Revolution. The roots of his thought can be traced back through the period of colonization (and further back still, into the history of England and other European centres). When Leo Marx wrote that ‘the pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery’, he acknowledged that one of the principal ideas concerning how this geographical domain has been culturally understood emanates from the other side of the Atlantic.\(^1\) By writing that ‘Virgil’s *Eclogues* are the true fountainhead of the pastoral strain in our literature’, Marx integrates the American pastoral tradition with European precursors.\(^2\) To further highlight associations that were made in England between classical pastoral and the American colonies, James Ellison has argued that ‘the connection between Virgil and Virginia for Renaissance Englishmen was more than merely impressionistic: it was promoted as a matter of historical fact.’\(^3\) With this in mind, to understand the pastoral ideas of Jefferson we need first to trace pastoral’s role in the early colonization of the continent. The chapter will then proceed to place the pastoral within Jefferson’s political thought, both to gain a solid sense of what is meant by ‘Jeffersonian’ and to examine how these ideals changed to accommodate the material reality of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American South.

**A History of Pastoral in the Colonization of Virginia**

Charles M. Andrews writes of the colonization of Virginia that ‘it was realized, as early as 1617-1619, that a variety of ways would have to be contrived to enlarge the population and increase the agricultural output.’\(^4\) This historical exposition helps us to understand the material conditions which spurred colonization, namely that to ensure a profitable enterprise could be established in the New World a higher level of migration was required. Richard Gray agrees, arguing that ‘the colonisation of Virginia was primarily a business enterprise, financed by merchants and nobles who wanted a good return on their investment.’\(^5\) Gray recognizes, however, that ‘this did not exclude less materialistic aims’, and he begins to outline some ideological goals for the colonization of the Americas.\(^6\) His theory is seconded by Ellison, who adds that, ‘clearly, gentlemen flocked to Virginia to make their fortunes, but there was also a sense of public service in the enterprise.’\(^7\) It certainly seems plausible

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\(^6\) Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 1.
\(^7\) Ellison, *George Sandys*, p. 89.
that migrants from Europe would bring their pastorally-inflected ideology with them. Indeed, Terry Gifford remarks that ‘the American vision of its land was created by the colonialists through Eurocentric imagery’, which suggests that we cannot consider the American interpretation of landscape without taking our reference points from existing European ideologies and the art forms that, in part, shaped them (and were shaped by them).\(^8\)

Gray elaborates by detailing the desire of Protestants to spread their religion to the native population, but soon turns to the influence exerted by the English ideal of the yeoman farmer. To fully comprehend the colonization, we need to understand this figure of the yeoman, because it is primarily small landholding farmers from Britain who initially created the North American colonies. Prior to migration, these farmers were badly disadvantaged as enclosures began to replace common lands in Renaissance England. Gray argues that much of the rebellion against this social upheaval came from dismay at the disappearance of the small landowner, suggesting that ‘it was a protest […] against the loss of something regarded as quintessentially English – against the destruction of someone who had traditionally been seen as the “backbone of England.”’\(^9\) Subsequently, this self-sufficient figure of national identity – ‘the “backbone of England”’ – would be transplanted to North America, as the ethos of colonization tapped into popular currents in English ideology. Writing of William Bullock’s pamphlet, *Virginia Impartially Examined* (1649), Gray suggests that ‘Bullock insisted that the future inhabitants of Virginia should pursue a diversified agricultural economy for the obvious purpose of promoting self-subsistence.’\(^10\) It is apparent that as the colonies became more established, farming played a much larger role in the intellectual justification of colonization, since ‘by the time Sandys set sail for Virginia, it was clear that there was no gold, no fabulous riches. Instead wealth would have to be created slowly and painstakingly, through agriculture and commerce.’\(^11\) Bullock’s pamphlet and, since it is far from unique, others like it are of significance to any work on Jefferson. To understand Jefferson, we need to grasp the cultural prehistory of the Virginia that he inhabited, and how the region was perceived. These pamphlets offer us the chance, therefore, to explore how ideas of the colonies were first formed. This is invaluable if we want to understand the genesis of a regional philosophy.

How far pamphlets like *Virginia Impartially Examined* began to shape the cultural life of colonized America can be seen when we consider the parallels between the ideologies of the traditional English yeoman and the new American colonist. Gray writes of the Elizabethan attitude to the English yeoman that ‘the essence of his condition, all agreed, was his ability to be self-subsistent – which permitted him the proud independence and love of personal freedom.’\(^12\) These ideas of self-

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\(^9\) Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 3.
\(^10\) Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 7.
\(^11\) Ellison, *George Sandys*, p. 158.
\(^12\) Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 3.
sufficiency were to become almost synonymous with the official ideology of the US, and have proved so enduring that they have resonated in US politics subsequently. Such distillation of the yeoman ideal can also be seen if we turn to Louis B. Wright’s *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies 1607-1763* (1957). Although this text might look somewhat venerable today, it has enduring historiographical worth, and I cite it here because Wright argues that ‘For the first two hundred and fifty years after the first settlement at Jamestown in 1607, life in America was profoundly influenced by the nearness of the people to the soil.’\(^{13}\) He goes on to say that ‘At the beginning of settlement and for many generations thereafter, agrarian society and the leadership that an agrarian society developed played a paramount part in the civilization of North America.’\(^{14}\) The value of Wright’s work is his pioneering recognition that colonial America was an agrarian society. The colonies operated, at least initially, as a land for the yeoman, giving rise to a soil-tilling lifestyle.

Just as the pastoral is seen to have been an influence on how men worked in the colonies, it also played a role in the colonization process for women. Historically, different elements of pastoral mythology have been emphasized in order to suit certain social and cultural needs: in this case, to appeal to a specific gender. Susan Scott Parrish has argued that in the early eighteenth century the foundation of the colonies was aided by the use of pastoral to encourage British women to travel to them. She contends that

> For eighteenth-century British colonial women from Boston to Montserrat [...] both popular science texts and pastoral poetry made a virtue of living in the imperial periphery. These texts allowed colonial women to envision their world not as a degenerate or ‘savage’ outpost, but rather as virtually removed from the temptations and ‘arts’ of the city while replete with specimens coveted by the eye of metropolitan science.\(^{15}\)

Parrish identifies that pastoral was used not only in the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages of North American colonization, but later into the eighteenth century as well. She reasons that women in the North American colonies ‘constructed the New World as a pastoral space, through letters, drawings, poetry, and exchanges of specimen gifts’.\(^{16}\) Parrish suggests that seeing the landscape in pastoral terms was not a given, but rather a process, one that was not complete in the first wave of colonization but was continually reconstructed and reimagined throughout the history of British North America. Much as pastoral allowed the English yeoman to imagine the American wilderness as potential farmland, so it enabled the English woman to conceptualize the land not as a danger but rather as an idyll. This language, referring to the ‘arts’ of the city, almost biblical in its presentation of the urban

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as sinful, is present throughout the period of colonization and, as we will see later, has significant bearing on how Jefferson imaginatively constructs the land.

We cannot, then, truly understand this early phase of American history without comprehending the concepts of the pastoral and the yeoman. These two concepts were indissolubly linked for Jefferson. As William Barillas has argued, his vision of this latter figure ‘was pastoral; an ethical, aesthetic preference rather than an economic principle underlay the yeoman farmer archetype.’ Therefore, it is essential that we recognize the pastoral traits inherent in Jefferson’s yeoman ideal. However, an understanding of these concepts is also necessary if we are to fully appreciate far grander narratives in American history. Indeed, championing of the yeoman cause seemed to extend far beyond the sage of Monticello, as the threat posed to the figure in the eighteenth-century colonies has been identified by historians as one of the main causes of the American Revolution. Brown Fehrenbacher suggests that a ‘land-population-wealth’ crisis developed. He argues that ‘the result of the combination of a stationary land base with a populace that doubled every generation was extreme population pressure on the land. The outcome […] was a strong tendency for both the urban and rural lower and middle classes to suffer a notable decline, absolute or relative, in wealth and property.’ Fehrenbacher goes on to suggest that rebellion connected to the American Revolution began along the frontier, as people pushed further westward to leave behind densely populated areas and take advantage of uncolonized land, because ‘the homestead ethic provided a basis for rebellion’. As he formulates it, this homestead ethic ‘included three key beliefs: in the right to have and hold, incontestably, a family-size farm; in the right to enjoy a homestead unencumbered by a ruinous economic burden; and in the right peacefully to occupy the homestead without fear of violence to person and property’. The American Revolution was underpinned at one level by a belief that the yeoman farmer had been betrayed by the refusal of British overlords to allow colonists to settle in Native American lands, and thus was threatened with a catastrophic decline in his fortunes. In this way, paradoxically, American Republicanism and, consequently, rebellion against Britain became bound to the ‘backbone of England’.

It has already been noted above that economic pamphlets played a part in spreading the conceptualization of the colonies as a pastoral idyll. However, these pamphlets were by no means the sole literary means of propagating an ideology of the American landscape. Beyond the initial phase of colonization, writings in natural history, read widely in Britain, also played a part in continuing to shape American pastoral, with reference to the remarkable natural beauty of the continent. Pramod K. Mishra suggests that ‘the genre of natural history emerged as a quintessential discipline of the

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19 Fehrenbacher, *Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization*, p. 76.
20 Fehrenbacher, *Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization*, p. 76.
Enlightenment and colonial modernity, a discursive site that combined travel, ethnography, science and journalism to form a nexus between the colonies and the metropolis, between the nation and its transnational, transcultural forces. The genre of natural history, read in the Enlightenment in the same way we might read travel writing today, was popular on both sides of the Atlantic and helped to spread the image of the New World as a natural marvel. Considering the language used by botanist William Bartram, for example, North America’s standing during this period as a natural wonder is unsurprising. I include the following extract from Bartram’s *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, The Cherokee Country… together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians* (1791), which is hardly atypical:

> Behold, for instance, a vast circular expanse before you, the waters of which are so extremely clear as to be absolutely diaphanous or transparent as the ether; the margin of the basin [sic] ornamented with a great variety of fruitful and floriferous trees, shrubs and plants, the pendant golden Orange dancing on the surface of the pellucid waters, the balmy air vibrating with the melody of the merry birds, tenants of the encircling aromatic grove.  

This language would play a major part in the British Romantics’ conception of America. Tim Fulford has argued that ‘Wordsworth derived “Ruth” from Bartram. Southey’s “Songs of the American Indians” show Bartram’s influence. Coleridge, meanwhile, treasured the *Travels*, and recommended it to his beloved Sara Hutchison.’ However, Bartram’s writings of America, however, would also influence Americans themselves, including, as we shall see, Jefferson. It seems that the combination of great natural beauty with the established pastoral ideal of the yeoman generated a sense of America, on both sides of the Atlantic, as the perfect environment for the latter, a New Jerusalem in which this self-sufficient figure could prosper.

Despite the idyllic notion of the colonies that would come to dominate the popular imagination in both Britain and the colonies themselves, ideas of nature were hardly monolithic. Bartram, a contemporary of Jefferson’s, was a noted naturalist. The prose of the two is sometimes comparable in terms of stylistics, since, ‘even among the naturalists, whose task it was to examine soberly the shape of the American landscape, a touch of edenic enthusiasm could be expected’. However, Bartram’s attitudes towards human encroachments upon American nature differed greatly from those of Jefferson. It is productive to consider these two figures alongside one another, not least because there is some evidence of tangible historical connections between them. Thomas Hallock recalls that ‘When Thomas Jefferson, acting then as president, was planning an expedition to the Red

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River valley, he suggested that Bartram should join it. Bartram declined.²⁵ While it is definitely a stretch to argue that this is indicative of a fundamental difference of opinion between the two, it is an interesting historical footnote, and what is beyond doubt is that they wrote very differently about nature. Mishra observes that ‘Bartram clearly saw what was to come. Both the nation and the colonial power were ways of accomplishing one goal: turning God’s common into private property and connecting it to the colonial enterprise.’²⁶ Unlike Jefferson, Bartram could not believe that colonization was an extension of the yeoman ideal into other parts of the world, and he saw in it instead the proliferation of enclosures. For Jefferson, by contrast, the colonial process preserved and enhanced the figure of the yeoman, because the colonists lived as small-scale farmers, providing primarily for themselves and their families. Bartram’s interpretation of the colonial project is perhaps more complicated, recognizing that in the colonization model there was little room for common lands, an ancient feature of the English landscape. He was anxious that as each American colonist enclosed his own small piece of land, colonization proliferated not yeomen, but landowners. Each colonist was, in effect, a miniature version of landed property holders back in England. This chapter’s discussion will now turn to Jefferson’s modelling of the Virginian landscape that his rural figure, be it idealized yeoman or pseudo-landowner, is to inhabit.

‘Natural Right and Natural Reason’: Jefferson and the Politics of American Landscape
Comparisons between the writing styles of Bartram and Jefferson are long-established. Almost fifty years ago Gilbert Chinard, discussing Jefferson’s presentation of nature in Notes on the State of Virginia (1785), argued that ‘only Bartram a few years later, and Chateaubriand at the beginning of the next century, with much longer and more elaborate descriptions, could equal or surpass these few strokes of description.’²⁷ Indeed, as with Bartram, Jefferson’s descriptions of the topography of Virginia are idyllic. He describes the scenery at the Potomac’s confluence with one of its many tributaries in the following terms:

In the moment of their junction they rush together against the mountain, rend it asunder, and pass off to the sea. The first glance of this scene hurries our senses into the opinion, that this earth has been created in time, that the mountains were formed first, that the rivers began to flow afterwards, that in this place particularly they have been dammed up by the blue ridge of mountains, and have formed an ocean which filled the whole valley; that continuing to rise they have at length broken over at this spot, and have torn the mountain down from its summit to its base. The piles of rock on each hand, but particularly on the Shenandoah, the evident marks of their disrupture and avulsion from their beds by the most powerful agents of nature, corroborate the impression. But the distant finishing which nature has given to the

²⁶ Mishra, ‘All the World was America’, p. 248.
picture is of a very different character. It is a true contrast to the foreground. It is as placid and delightful, as that is wild and tremendous.  

This rather lengthy extract is included in its entirety as it allows us to see Jefferson’s conception of nature simultaneously as placid idyll and as irresistible, yet positive, force. For him, it manages to be both potent and beautiful. It is this combination of power and pleasantness that makes nature operate as a central figure for an idealized American society, or, as Leo Marx puts it, ‘A great hope makes itself felt almost wordlessly in the texture of Notes on Virginia. The topographical details, like the opening scenes of The Tempest, establish a firm naturalistic base for utopian revery.’ For Jefferson, sociological considerations are influenced by the natural environment of Virginia; indeed, it is an essential component of his utopian vision of the New World. He describes the natural bridge as ‘the most sublime of nature’s works’ (26), implicitly registering the superiority of the American landscape to the European.

However, whilst Jefferson’s rhetoric of nature is forceful, there is an established critical tradition that places him within ‘a pastoral, not a primitivist’ tradition. In Jefferson’s mind, the pastoral is the garden; or, more precisely, it is a human reinterpretation of nature as opposed to the wilderness of nature itself. Ironically, Jefferson mediates the seemingly unprecedented American landscape through the lens of an ancient European art form. His conception of nature is informed primarily by what Harold E. Toliver has described as ‘the idyllic element of pastoral’. We can also consider this presentation, at least at this stage, as more pastoral than agrarian because, as Marx adds, Jefferson ‘is adopting a point of view for which an accepted literary convention is available […] there can be no doubt about the influence of literary pastoral upon Jefferson.’ Jefferson is as influenced by a literary mode that deals in metaphors and symbols, as he is by direct engagement with the realities of agrarian living. At this point, he is more classical than revolutionary, reproducing the pastoral and the ‘egalitarian, Adamic ideology’ that had shaped the American colonies, rather than subverting it.

Mishra suggests, however, that Jefferson’s conception of nature may be as motivated by politics as much as his politics are inflected by nature. He argues that

Jefferson invokes the scientific, secular, and cosmopolitan realm of nature (‘the laws of nature and nature’s God’) in order to legitimate the local and the particular – the nation. Second, the invocation to the cosmopolitan, universalist philosophy of nature enables Jefferson to sever

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28 Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, ed. by Frank Shuffelton (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 21. All subsequent references to this text will be given in parentheses.
29 Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 120.
30 Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 121.
ties with what Europe symbolized at the time – monarchy, aristocracy, and other kinds of artificial distinctions and statuses.34

Following Mishra’s line, it appears that Jefferson’s thoughts about nature are doubly reinforced. The new republic is superior because of its natural splendour, while, simultaneously, the landscape of Virginia is highlighted as the opposite of the artifice of Europe. In this way Jefferson conscripts the very backdrop as a tool in the cause of American Revolution, which is somewhat ironic considering that, as we have seen, these ideas of the Virginian countryside are founded on potentially conservative pastoral ideology. It becomes clear, then, that the natural and the political landscapes are conjoined in a loop, constantly reinforcing one another and with the state of the natural world deeply embedding the idea of American supremacy in Jefferson’s consciousness.

Chinard has noted that Jefferson’s ‘vision of an America entirely given to agriculture may look Utopian in the extreme, and would be Utopian if Jefferson had really believed that it was susceptible of becoming an actual fact. But, in practice, this ideal was on the contrary subject to many adjustments and modifications.’35 Jefferson may have been a pastoralist, but he was certainly no primitivist, and it is the inherent mutability in pastoral which allows him to make these necessary amendments – and, as we shall see, will allow his intellectual progenies to make their own, different modifications, all while still claiming to be faithful adherents of his philosophy. Indeed, while the pastoral and primitive may overlap on occasion, they are different. Marx notes one of these points at which they converge, suggesting that ‘both seem to originate in recoil from the pain and the responsibility of life in a complex civilization.’36 However, he goes on to argue that the primitivist hero ‘keeps going, as it were, so that eventually he locates value as far as possible, in space or time or both, from organized society; the shepherd, on the other hand, seeks a resolution of the conflict between the opposed worlds of nature and art.’37 Jefferson does not reject his civilization, nor does he try to remove himself from it. What he seeks, following pastoral’s logic, is an idealized version of it, a way to reconcile values drawn from art with a political reality. He does not, for example, favour the closeness to nature of the Native American, a civilization vastly distinct from his own. While his rhetoric suggests that, given a choice between the Industrial Revolution that was beginning to take hold in the ‘civilized’ Old World, and a primitivist lifestyle, he would choose the latter, in reality he favours a route between the two, that of the managed nature we see in the pastoral idyll. As Marx highlights, ‘the symbolic setting favoured by Jefferson, needless to say, resembles the Virgilian landscape of reconciliation but it now is a real place located somewhere between l’ancien régime and the western tribes.’38 This positions the fledgling US as a happy medium, between the primitive

34 Mishra, ‘All the World was America’, p. 217.
35 Chinard, Thomas Jefferson, p. 132.
existence of the indigenous population and the corruption of the Old World. The point is made clear by David Bell, who argues that ‘Jefferson invented a “middle landscape” for America. The middle landscape is neither wild nor refined, it is the mise en scène for the necessary condition of 18th century man.’39 Though the presence of a well-established ‘middle landscape’ in European pastoral long before the eighteenth century may make us balk at Bell’s suggestion that Jefferson invented it for America, especially considering the role that we have seen pastoral playing in the colonization process, he is certainly a principal player in its achieving the cultural dominance that it enjoyed in the early years of the Republic.

The environment of the state of Virginia, as well as its climate, is seen as ideal for planting and subsistence, upon which Jefferson believed the young United States should build its economy. Jefferson writes of the climate that

> I have known frosts so severe as to kill the hiccory [sic] trees round about Monticello, and yet not injure the tender fruit blossoms then in bloom on the top and higher parts of the mountain, and in the course of 40 years, during which it has been settled, there have been but instances of a general loss of fruit on it. (86)

While Jefferson does not suggest that the climate in Virginia is universally good, there is a repeated implication that land to the west of the regions on the Atlantic coast will provide more fertile and productive land for farming. Jefferson refers to Virginia having ‘47 inches of rain annually, which is considerably more than usually falls in Europe, yet from the information I have collected, I suppose we have a much greater proportion of sunshine here than there’ (80-81). In this sentence he manages to establish the suitability of the Virginia climate for arable farming, referring to the abundance of two important factors in the production of crops. Jefferson acknowledges that this yield of rainwater is effectively an average figure, before beginning to talk of the region to the west of the state and its aptness for cultivation:

> From thence, descending in the same latitude to the Mississippi, the change reverses; and, if we may believe travellers, it becomes warmer there than it is in the same latitude on the sea side. Their testimony is strengthened by the vegetables and animals which subsist and multiply there naturally, and do not on our sea coast. (81)

His argument, resting as it does upon the availability of land to the west of the fledgling United States, is based upon the pastoral mythology that had played a part in both British and American thinking for centuries. While it never follows the reasoning to quite the same degree, there is congruence here with what Raymond Williams describes as pastoral’s ‘magical invocation of a land that needs no

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farming’. Agriculture, then, is portrayed as being easier work the further west you go: indeed, the further you get from Europe.

Marx argues that ‘In the egalitarian social climate of America the pastoral ideal, instead of being contained by the literary design, spills over into thinking about real life.’ Here, he seems to be implying a distinct difference in the American condition. This claim of American exceptionalism seems fanciful, given the considerable epistemological, cultural and political links between Great Britain and the US (not least as evidenced by the carrying across the Atlantic of a pastoral imagination). The fact that Marx made his assertion in the intellectual climate of the 1960s means he gives the idea more credence than we might today, when transnational connections across cultures are more highly emphasized. However, without our needing to adopt his exceptionalist stance, Marx can still be seen as recognizing acutely how the specific local conditions of an unsullied yet manageable natural landscape, and the sheer number of opportunities for the creation of small-scale farms, allowed pastoral values from east of the Atlantic to acquire significant political capital in the US, more so than they had ever managed in Britain. Because in the US there was enough land for large numbers of people to own their own farms, a situation became possible in reality that, through social upheaval in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period, had been restricted to the domain of art in Great Britain. Hallock has argued that, for Jefferson, ‘nature […] provides the foundation for a reconstituted political realm.’ Also, Jefferson’s yeoman is his equivalent of classical pastoral’s shepherd: that is to say, the yeoman is the figure that his version of pastoral cannot exist without. It is, as Marx suggests, ‘the good shepherd of the old pastoral dressed in American homespun’. Marx also makes the point that Jefferson’s landscape is an inhabited one: ‘it is a landscape with figures, or at least one figure: the independent, rational, democratic husband-man.’ I will now turn my attention to the connotations of the yeoman, that idealized being on which Jeffersonian pastoral rests.

‘A perfect dominion in his lands’: Jefferson and the Economics of the Yeoman

Frank Kermode writes that in the literature of Elizabethan England, ‘there was a tendency to laugh at country folk, and this was a traditional activity; but there was also a tendency to idealize them.’ By the time we reach Jefferson and Virginia in the late eighteenth century, idealization seems to have won the day. The importance of the yeoman for Jefferson cannot be overstated. Richard Gray makes the link between Jefferson and the philosophy of earlier Britons in North America:

41 Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 130.
43 Hallock, From the Fallen Tree, p. 99.
His basic assumptions were the same as those of a series of writers, the first celebrants of Virginia, of whom quite probably he knew very little. Like them he saw the yeoman-farmer as a new hope for a new land; like them he saw the yeoman as a political bulwark; like them, he felt that absolute virtue resided in a simple, self-subsistence economy; and like them, too, he believed that the yeoman as militiaman would provide most effectively for the state’s defences.47

Jefferson is aligned with an older North American tradition which demonstrates the importance of the small-scale subsistence farmer to his political ideal. Religious overtones again confirm the yeoman as a suitable moral guardian of the state, while here the yeoman is also considered to be sufficient to provide the state’s military and economic power. This self-subsistent trait is also of prime importance for study of Southern pastoral, since, as Renato Poggioli claims, ‘pastoral economy seems to realise the contained self-sufficiency that is the ideal of the tribe, of the clan, of the family.’48 Pastoral is, then, suffused with the very qualities that, for Jefferson, position the yeoman as a suitable foundation for New World society.

Gray also argues that the philosophy of Jefferson that would, in later years, be thought of as ‘American’ was in fact referring specifically to Virginia, yet was not concerned with the actual, imperfect Virginia but ‘rather an ideal Virginia in which the primary political, economic, and social factor was the yeoman’.49 He goes on to flesh out Jefferson’s intellectual descent from the early British colonists of North America, arguing that ‘Like the Virginia Pamphleteers, he tended to regard colonization as an opportunity, courageously seized by many, to recapture the pride and independence of the traditional yeomanry, in this case the Saxon yeomanry of legal tradition.’50 The assumption that Jefferson was wholeheartedly in favour of the yeoman’s emergence as the principal figure across the United States was questioned by Henry Nash Smith, who argued that ‘he does not seem to have felt that his devout agrarianism was applicable to the area beyond the Mississippi’.51 However, more recent scholarship seems to be based more closely around Smith’s comment that ‘Jefferson was clearly the intellectual father of the American advance to the Pacific.’52 In subsequent chapters, however, I intend to show how the idea of expansion ‘from sea to shining sea’, attributed here to Jefferson, would prove to be unpopular with his fellow Virginians and other Southerners. Eugene D. Genovese notes that ‘Southerners opposed expansion for a variety of reasons, but mostly because they

47 Gray, Writing the South, p. 22.
49 Gray, Writing the South, p. 19.
50 Gray, Writing the South, p. 20.
52 Smith, Virgin Land, p. 15.
feared more free states’, which would eventually have led to an anti-slavery majority in Congress. As the new nation began to colonize westwards, political pressures on the Southern states due to their support for the expansion of slavery led to their casting the yeoman (and, indeed, Jefferson’s philosophy more widely) in a different light. For the moment, however, we can note Hallock’s assertion that ‘the Notes on Virginia issue a blueprint for national expansion.’ Jefferson, then, provided the intellectual basis for Manifest Destiny, which eventually led to the yeoman becoming a symbol more potently of the West, where land was more available and affordable in the absence of large-scale plantations, rather than of Virginia or of the slave South more broadly. We shall see later how Southern society turned against the figure of the yeoman in a way that the American West never did.

To understand the importance of the yeoman to Jefferson’s political ideal, we need to return to the distinction between pastoralism and agrarianism. Leo Marx points out that, while ‘the true agrarians of his day, the physiocrats, had demonstrated the superior efficiency of large-scale agriculture, Jefferson continues to advocate the small, family-sized farm’. Jefferson argues in Notes that ‘those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God’ (170), and by doing so he casts the yeoman of Virginia into the role fulfilled by the shepherd in early European pastoral poetry, giving the figure a religious hue. This creates a kind of moral hierarchy, and Jefferson uses religious language in support of his positioning small-holding farmers at its summit. In this, he is effectively repeating conventions that we can detect in European poetry, since ‘in the poems of rural retreat there is a marked transition from the ideal of contemplation to the ideal of simple productive virtue.’

Drawing upon the work of Poggioli, we can see another explicit link back to the ethos of the pastoral:

Foremost among the passions that the pastoral opposes and exposes are those related to the misuse, or merely to the possession, of worldly goods. They are the passions of greed: cupidity and avarice, the yearning after property and prosperity, the desire for affluence and opulence, for money and precious things. The bucolic considers the pursuit of wealth – auri sacra fames – as an error as well as a crime, since it makes impossible ‘the pursuit of happiness’.

Since Jefferson is generally regarded as the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, which of course famously includes reference to ‘the pursuit of happiness’, Poggioli’s words have immediate resonance. We can quite clearly see parallels between Jefferson’s political philosophy and the economy of the pastoral, in which huge surpluses and profiteering are morally forbidden. The logical consequence of this is that larger-scale agricultural endeavours are perceived as a threat to

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56 Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 55.
57 Poggioli, ‘Pastorals of Innocence and Happiness’, p. 100.
those ‘chosen people of God’, the tenant farmers. The yeoman has this connection with the divine because his practices connect him far better with the soil. As Roger G. Kennedy has observed, ‘yeomen among the European-Americans adopted more salutary conservation practices from Indians than did planters because yeomen and Indians had more in common than planters and Indians.’58 The sustainability of land was a problem amongst planters which the yeoman farmer did not have, because the latter was more deeply connected to his own, small plot, which provided for his own subsistence. He could not exhaust it in the same fashion as the planter:

The family farmer might grow crops for the market, but first he had ‘to provide food for the family and feed for the milk cow and his work stock’. Thus a larger portion of his property, acre for acre, was set aside for the family garden and for stock – and more was replenished by manure – than was the case on a plantation. The family farmer, by manuring, returned more to the earth than the plantation owner, who devoted every acre he could to his cash crop and turned out the cattle to range where the staple would not grow. The family farmer grew his own food when he could, while the planter, intent on getting crops to market, would supplement food grown domestically with purchases necessary to keep slaves or mules or cattle working.59

Kennedy goes on to argue that ‘Jefferson advocated a therapeutic view of the land. It was not merely a commodity, but an agency, a crucible nurturing good citizens in vitro.’60 This crucible could not be fashioned by the planter’s methods in the way that it was by the subsistence farmer’s more sustainable techniques. For Jefferson, the plantation system’s intensive practices ensured that it was not an economically suitable adaptation of the pastoral, the ‘harmonious garden’ that, after all, we will encounter in plantation literature, but rather a threat to this ideal.61 As a consequence, those who, by contrast, protected the soil, the substance which created good citizens and a worthy society, were in Jefferson’s thinking more morally endowed than the planter. Rather than merely taking from society by exhausting the land, the yeoman gave back to it by ensuring that the agency for creating generations of good citizens remained intact. For this reason, the planter could not operate as the democratic figure in the Jeffersonian system in the same way that the yeoman could.

Jefferson’s political rationale places the material happiness of individuals above an increasing national profit margin. He argues in Notes that an economy constituted of yeomen rather than one based on plantations, or aping the success of European manufacturing, is beneficial because ‘the loss by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government’ (171). This would seemingly rule out the production of cash-crops, and the expansion of the nation’s manufacturing base. Marx adds that, for Jefferson, the criterion of value

59 Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause, p. 12.
60 Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause, p. 41.
is not measurable, material living standards but ‘the over-all quality of life – that rules out manufactures’. In this instance, Jefferson ignores quantifiable material returns in favour of the same quasi-mystical link with nature that is inherent in classical pastoral, implying that the latter will, in spite of the lack of any measurable evidence, provide greater happiness for the population than any calculable rise in wages, profits or living standards. Here Jefferson runs the risk of falling under the spell of the pastoral as fantasy. Gifford suggests that ‘pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat which may […], either simply escape from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, “our manners”, or explore them.’ By advocating a pastoral economy in the face of the obvious wealth to be made from manufacturing, Jefferson could be accused of a purely escapist vision, one that relies not on a careful response to material reality but on nostalgia and an application of outdated literary modes to the harsh living conditions of the young republic. However, he manages to avoid this pitfall by adopting a more balanced approach to yeoman farming on the one hand and manufacturing on the other than some of his rhetoric may suggest. As Marx suggests, Jefferson ‘could not give full credence to the myth’ of a New Eden.

Jefferson’s political philosophy would continue to be influential in the antebellum period because it was not purely reactionary, but proved flexible in the face of technological advance and economic necessity. The War of 1812 with Britain made the need for manufactures apparent, and Marx has acknowledged that, for Jefferson, ‘to accept the need for manufactures in 1816, therefore, does not mean abandoning his basic principles.’ That this willingness to be pragmatic was reflected not just in Jefferson’s own thought but on a national scale was suggested many years ago by Charles L. Sanford, who noted that despite a continued opposition between Europe and a righteous American simplicity, political changes were made to protect and expand American industry:

Cultural nationalism was whetted by the War of 1812 and by the end of the period had made its way into foreign policy with the Monroe Doctrine and into domestic policy with Henry Clay’s American system of protective tariffs and internal improvements. In all this a recurrent theme was the contrast of America’s simple rural virtues with the supposed decadence of urban Europe.

This cultural nationalism was built on the rock of Jefferson-inspired rural virtues, and it increased in the antebellum period in spite of developing urbanization and mechanization in the United States. What Sanford identifies here is the multi-layered nature of Jefferson’s thought. As the US began to expand its manufacturing base and to protect its own industry following the War of 1812, at the same time a mode of nationalism based around completely contradictory ideas, those of rural simplicity,
tightened its hold. Jefferson himself was an advocate of ‘internal improvements’ of a mechanical nature, and the self-sufficiency of his own estate of Monticello derived in part from his ‘promotion of domestic manufactures’.  

It is this sensitivity to the increasingly persuasive claims of American industry that allows us to identify Jefferson’s pastoral thought as embodying New Jerusalem more than a New Arcadia. Though his thought is inflected by an ancient English pastoral, he does not exclude modern technological advances and small-scale manufactures as a route to prosperity; rather, he draws a new distinction between a small manufacturing element and a widespread factory system. Marx describes this combining of personal preference for the pastoral with recognition of the necessity of a national manufacturing base as a ‘complex response to the conflicting demands of the self and society’.  

For Jefferson, mechanization and manufacturing that assist the dominance of the small landholder are valuable. His vision of a republican empire invoked not merely a ‘vast, fertile, virgin landscape [but also] a virtuous, patriotic citizenry ready to exploit its gifts’. Innovation that allows agriculture to survive economically is desirable. For Jefferson, the problem with the factory system, by contrast, is the severing of the worker from the land:

Since the freeholder relied on nobody but himself, Jefferson declared, he was less likely than the wage-earner to act from dishonourable motives or to be swayed by outside influences; while, because he had a stake in the land, he was always likely to serve the interests of law and order, that is the interests of property.  

The key within Jefferson’s political thought is self-interest. The industrial worker who does not own his own land has considerably less self-interest than the small farmer, who will be inclined to uphold that type of society which guarantees his well-being. This criticism applies just as well to the plantation owner. The planter has no economic stake in keeping soil sustainable, whereas this is vital for the yeoman. Here, the opposition traced earlier between Jefferson and Bartram rises to the surface. While Bartram believed that the enclosed private farms of the colonies portended the end of the yeoman ideal in those lands, for Jefferson the small landholding farmer became the bedrock of society. When the yeoman is given his own land, his property to protect, he in turn protects the state to ensure his own interests.

Marx goes into some detail about the distinction between factories and machines in Jefferson’s philosophy. He alludes to how hindsight can help us to understand the difficulty we now have in comprehending Jefferson’s views on this issue, suggesting that ‘today Jefferson’s attitude is bound to seem curious. Why, we cannot help asking, does he fail to connect the new machinery with

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67 Gray, Writing the South, p. 19.
70 Gray, Writing the South, p. 20.
Soho and the transformation of England into a vast workshop? Again, the answer is to be found in the value of the machine to the yeoman. By this I mean that the machine’s worth is directly proportional to how much it assists in the survival of the yeoman ideal. Because of their threat to the yeoman farmer, Jefferson ‘was thoroughly opposed to the development of manufacturing plants, to the creation of large industrial cities housing thousands of salaried workers’. Yet while on the one hand large manufacturing centres were undesirable because they disconnected the worker from a vested interest in both the land and property, on the other the individual machine potentially had positive value:

From Jefferson’s perspective, the machine is a token of that liberation of the human spirit to be realized by the young American Republic; the factory system, on the other hand, is but feudal oppression in a slightly modified form. Once the machine is removed from the dark, crowded, grimy cities of Europe, he assumes that it will blend harmoniously into the open countryside of his native land. He envisages it turning millwheels, moving ships up river, and, all in all, helping to transform a wilderness into a society of the middle landscape.

The key binary opposition that is mobilized by Jefferson’s thought is thus not between manufacturing or mechanization on one side and nature on the other, but between the life-worlds of the Old World and the New. Transplanted from the contaminated Old World and put to the service of terraforming a wild landscape and creating a pastoral paradise, the machine becomes, paradoxically, a force of good. Any reflection of the European situation was viewed negatively, however. Jefferson identified two European manifestations in particular to avoid. Firstly, creation of large manufacturing centres, like the industrial towns then emerging in Britain, was considered by him a blot on the landscape, the intrusion of the satanic within the edenic. This is why Jefferson claims with pride in Query XII of Notes on the State of Virginia that ‘we have no townships’ (114), stressing American independence from industrial and trading centres which leaves the new nation with a rural life merely assisted by the tools of modernity. Secondly, any mechanization that results in enclosure of the land, or shifts the agricultural base from small-scale farms to large plantations, is perceived as detrimental to the yeoman and, consequently, to the creation of a pastoral idyll.

However, Jefferson’s ideas of yeoman democracy were distinctly colour-coded. Mishra suggests that his ‘liberal secular universalism of science, reason and nature did away with the old distinctions and applied the universal principles of equality to all free men, except where, in Jefferson’s words, “the difference is fixed in nature”’. The yeoman, in Jefferson’s conception, is explicitly a white figure of European origin or descent, and the forced migrants from Africa, together with the indigenous population, did not fit into his model of democracy. To conclude

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71 Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 147.
72 Chinard, Thomas Jefferson, p. 327.
73 Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 150.
74 Mishra, ‘All the World was America’, p. 218.
this assessment of Jeffersonian pastoral, then, we must consider his engagement with the large black population of the Southern United States.

**The (Non-)Place of the Slave in Jeffersonian Pastoral**

At first glance, we might consider Jefferson to be more liberal than his Southern contemporaries when it comes to the subject of slavery. Chinard speaks of Jefferson’s opposition to slavery on the grounds that ‘the existence of slavery is as degrading for the masters as for the slave’.  

There is some evidence for this in *Notes*, since Jefferson states that

> There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. (168)

Here Jefferson opposes slavery on the grounds that it is destructive not only for the victims, but the enforcers, because it sets a precedent to turn future generations against the ideals of liberty. He goes on to investigate the political ramifications:

> The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half of the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patriae of the other. (168)

Jefferson not only considered the implications of slavery for a republican political system, but, with alarming prescience, predicted the problems of future race relations as a result of ‘the peculiar institution’. The fear of some erosion in the morality of the white majority is also figured in religious terms, when Jefferson adds that, in the event of a conflict, ‘the almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest’ (169). It becomes clear, then, that, unlike later Southerners who attempted to ratify the institution of slavery in a religious context, Jefferson considered it ungodly, even going so far as to warn his fellow Southerners that ‘his [God’s] justice cannot sleep forever’ (169). In this regard at least, Jefferson would appear to be somewhat ahead of his peers on the subject of race. In fact, Michael Hardt suggests that Jefferson often cited ‘obstacles posed by political forces and his white compatriots’ for his deferring any genuine moves to limit or end slavery.

Considering Jefferson’s belief that the yeoman was an appropriate basis for a political system, it is paradoxical that there is no place for black people in his ideal. In fact, Timothy Sweet asserts that Jefferson’s statements of ‘American pastoralism […] in which “those who labour in the earth” are the “peculiar” avatars of “virtue”, elides various relations among land, labor, and capital’, and in fact

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reveal the limitations of his yeoman ideal since a great number of those who do labour in the earth are clearly marginalized (including not just slaves, but also white Southern wage-labourers). Indeed, we can also ground some practical objections to slavery on Jeffersonian premises. These include the implications that slavery has for the notion of self-interest. There can be few people less invested in property than a slave who is denied any possibility of ownership. As Kennedy observes, in a passage worth quoting at length:

Why were they given light plows even when it became more widely known that some contour plowing might help retain rainfall and that heavier plows would make more effective contours? Because they had no reason to be solicitous of their owners’ soil or machinery. A yeoman might become attached to the land he had cleared and planted, where he had chosen to live, where his children had been born and his wife had toiled beside him.

If a yeoman happened to become prosperous enough to get a new piece of equipment, such as a fancy new heavy plow, he could be trusted to care for it. Why should a slave care? And from the planter’s vantage point, why give him a chance to show how little he cared?

The presence of a large number of slaves is dangerous to the yeoman paradigm. Slavery both allows planters to pursue unsustainable agricultural policies and establishes a disenfranchised group with no interest in the preservation of property. Rather than creating a society that self-propagates, a significant social group is created that is actively interested in altering the existing order.

There would appear, then, to be a conflict between two strands of Jefferson’s philosophy, caused by the difficulties he has in incorporating racial difference into his yeoman model. Indeed, there is much scholarship relating to Jefferson’s Janus-face on the issue of slavery. His recounting of the history of the institution in the colonies, for example, avoids placing blame at the doorstep of the Republic. Christa Dirksheide notes that, for Jefferson, ‘slavery was a vestige of Virginia’s colonial past, a reminder of the tyranny and exploitation the British monarch had exercised on his British American subjects.’ However, Kennedy prompts us to see the reality behind Jefferson’s statements:

Jefferson placed the blame for [slaves’] presence upon the intervention of slave sellers managed from London with the personal complicity of the King of England. What if all this had been true? What then would have been possible after independence? Relieved of the intrusive British, freed of the incrustations left upon them by kings, clergy, and commercial corruption, the planters might more easily have restored the old order, a yeoman’s Virginia. And they might also have removed the slaves. But as it was, that task, to which some of them aspired, was too much for them.

In this insightful paragraph, Kennedy highlights the truths that Jefferson’s presentation of early colonial history elides. He places the beginnings of American slavery thirty years earlier than

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78 Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause, p. 13.
79 Christa Dierksheide, “‘The great improvement and civilisation of that race’’. Jefferson and the “Amelioration” of Slavery, ca. 1770-1826’, Early American Literature, 6, 1 (2008), 165-97 (p. 172).
80 Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause, p. 15.
Jefferson suggests, which undermines the latter’s notion of there ever being a period in which Virginia was dominated by the yeoman. As soon as the colony was stable, its society had an element of slavery within it; the Southern pastoral idyll was not contaminated by slavery, but, ominously, was instead always dependent upon it. Kennedy also refutes Jefferson’s argument that the blame for slavery lies with the British. If it was a British vice, rather than an American one, then in the post-Revolutionary period abolition of slavery would surely have occurred. That it did not implies that a more ambivalent approach to slavery existed in the early Republic than Jefferson suggests.

Frank Shuffelton suggests that one of the reasons for currently high interest in Jefferson studies is the combination of his liberal values with less progressive ones: ‘his contradictions and ambivalences seem to reflect the contradictions of America itself.’\textsuperscript{81} With specific attention to the question of race, Douglas R. Egerton adds that ‘more than any other member of the founding generation, Jefferson exemplified the inconsistent outlook and behaviour of the post-revolutionary republic. He consistently and eloquently professed to despise slavery, yet he freed only those bondpeople who were related to him.’\textsuperscript{82} It is also true that, following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Jefferson did nothing to stop the proliferation of slavery amongst the newly acquired territories. Not only did he fail to oppose slavery as President, but there is rhetoric in \textit{Notes on the State of Virginia} which can only be described in modern terms as racist. First, we encounter an assertion he makes regarding race’s determination of beauty:

\begin{quote}
Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or lesser suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? (145)
\end{quote}

Jefferson’s statements about beauty not only reflect prevailing aesthetic attitudes that white was more attractive than black (attitudes which, we shall see, force their way into pastoral in the nineteenth century), but also begin to conflate ideas of race with those of morality.\textsuperscript{83} There is an implication that black people’s skin acts as a mask denying interlocutors any way to read their emotions, suggesting the possibility of undetectable deceit. Jefferson does not base his racial thinking solely upon aesthetic and moral grounds, however, but also engages in a pseudo-scientific critique, suggesting that black people ‘secrete less by the kidnies [sic], and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odour’ (146). This comment, which today we would not hesitate to label racist, ignores not only biological reality, but also the material conditions in which slaves lived and

\textsuperscript{81} Frank Shuffelton, Introduction to \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Jefferson}, ed. by Shuffelton, pp. 1-11 (p. 4).
\textsuperscript{83} For further discussion of Jefferson and his contemporaries’ thinking concerning race and beauty, see Elise Lemire, \textit{Miscegenation: Making Race in America} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), esp. p. 11-34.
worked. Body odour that was most likely a natural consequence of gruelling field-work in the hot Southern climate is naively (or mischievously) attributed here to difference in physiology. We might identify in this conceptual move some of the negative connotations of pastoral, which, for its critics, is prone to obscure the realities of harsh agricultural work.

Nor does Jefferson limit his racial observations to the physical. He also expresses opinions about the mental capacities of slaves, claiming that

Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous. (146)

Jefferson appears to understand the impact of living conditions on the intellectual development of slaves when he acknowledges that ‘it will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move’ (147). However, his eventual conclusion, in spite of this contextual gesture, is that ‘never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration’ (147). Considering this catalogue of comments from Jefferson, then, the reader is surely forced to agree with Hardt’s assertion that ‘Black people are less beautiful than white people, Jefferson claims, smell worse, and generally lack prudence, reason, and imagination.’

Egerton interrogates Jefferson’s interpretation thus:

Refusing to concede that his overworked, unpaid labourers had little opportunity to hone their artistic or intellectual skills, Jefferson precipitated a vicious circle of illogic. The alleged inferiority of blacks was used to justify their enslavement, yet the resulting inability of his weary slaves to comprehend ‘the investigations of Euclid’ was in turn used to prove that they were indeed inferior beings.

Though racism causes Jefferson’s logic to unravel here, it is worth noting that the train of thought that slavery was best for the inferior black race would recur as a defence of ‘the peculiar institution’ right through to Emancipation. The way in which these arguments would be repeated and modified by many Southern voices, including those of John Pendleton Kennedy and Beverley Tucker, discussed in the following chapter, shows the extent of Jefferson’s influence on the South. We will hear more of those voices as this thesis progresses.

There is also a contradiction in the way in which Jefferson frames the emotional awareness of African Americans. First, he claims that after liberation the former slaves should not live amongst the former slaveholders, because ‘ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained’ should make any harmonious union impractical (145). However, he goes on to argue that ‘Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether heaven has

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84 Hardt, ‘Jefferson and Democracy’, p. 49.
given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection’ (146). It is this contradiction that, once again, as with the yeoman ideal, allows Jefferson’s political thought the flexibility that was necessary for it to survive and continue to influence public opinion in the slaveholding South. Jefferson’s plan for removing slaves, ‘to declare them a free and independent people’ (145), would have been controversial. As Egerton notes, ‘Jefferson’s planter brethren, of course, would never support a plan that eliminated the state’s working class.’86 Once more, Jefferson’s idealism gives way to the pragmatism necessary to accommodate his Southern neighbours, and it is this pragmatic face of Jefferson that allowed Southerners in the nineteenth century to take his ideas and reframe them in ways that may initially seem at odds with the Jeffersonian ideal. Kennedy writes of the inner conflict between Jefferson the idealist and Jefferson the pragmatist:

Had he exerted himself, the Southern land might have become a seed-bed for family farmers. [...] Why was he so diffident? Jefferson had his own personal economic interests to protect and political ambitions to advance. His political base was among those who were deriving the chief benefits of that way of life.87

Kennedy manages to capture here the ambiguity of Jefferson, who did not attempt to make this ideal society a reality. The Declaration of Independence itself, which Jefferson significantly authored, embodies this contradiction, declaring that all men are created equal, yet remaining deeply colour-coded. It is this internal juxtaposition between radicalism and conservatism that allows Jeffersonian pastoral to ‘maintain a chameleonic capacity to mould itself to the requirements of widely divergent political interests’.88 As this thesis progresses, it will consider further the conjunctions between nineteenth-century Southern pastoral and racial ideology.

For all Jefferson’s revolutionary credentials, then, he was prone to extreme conservatism at times. His conception of landscape was framed by pastoral literature, and so, like the North American colonies themselves, it stemmed from British roots: not only descriptions of the British landscape, but also the efforts of pamphleteers to construct an image of the colonies that would encourage migration. One of the effects of this presentation was that the colonies functioned in their formative days as a haven for the marginalized yeoman, since his self-sufficient virtues, while eroded by enclosures at home, were perfect for the project of colonization. This figure would, in turn, become the foundation stone in Jefferson’s conception of the American republic. There are, however, a number of conceptual difficulties that arise from attempting to situate a very British figure within a distinctly American landscape, since Jefferson’s philosophy is itself allochthonous. For one thing, the English yeoman figure did not, in its original guise, exist alongside a racially defined system of slavery. Jefferson’s

87 Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause, p. 29.
version of the yeoman ideal thus encountered another set of pressing political realities. Gene Andrew Jarrett surmises that this was because ‘Jefferson needed to disqualify blacks from political representation in order to avoid emancipating them from slavery and then granting them formal citizenship on American soil.’

This is not to say, however, that Jefferson’s constructs were rigidly observed by his political descendants. Hallock writes that ‘Jeffersonian principles warped with the next century’, but in fact it is the contradictions in his thinking itself that made varied readings, or misreadings, of his pastoral vision an inevitability in the volatile political situation of the nineteenth century. This thesis will now turn to Southern writing of this period and, also using selected English texts to shine a light upon the South, will examine how Jeffersonian principles were refracted in the region during such turbulent times. The next chapter will consider the fate of Jeffersonian pastoral in the antebellum period, specifically from 1830 to 1860, while Part Three will focus on the rather different mediations of the Jeffersonian ideal in the three decades which followed the Civil War.

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90 Hallock, ‘Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West’, p. 56.
Part Two

Transatlantic Visions of the Antebellum South
Criticism of American literature of the years prior to the Civil War often focuses on the North-east of the country, primarily on the regions of New England and New York. There are some exceptions to this, as significant work has been done in the field of Southern literary studies by the likes of Scott Romine, John L. Hare and Richard Gray, but as a general rule criticism is still disproportionately weighted towards the literature of the Northern states. As a consequence, the vibrant literary culture of the Southern states has been, relatively speaking at least, neglected, and many Southern writers popular in their own time forgotten, at least until a recent resurgence in critical interest. This chapter will attempt to help redress the balance by chiefly studying two novels from the antebellum South: *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (1832) by John Pendleton Kennedy and *The Partisan Leader* (1836) by Nathaniel Beverley Tucker. These novels will be aligned with, or at times against, writings by illustrious literary visitors to American shores, namely, the travel writing (and on occasion, the fiction) of Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. Dickens would travel to the United States for the first time in 1842, a journey that inspired the travelogue *American Notes for General Circulation*, published later that year. Dickens caused controversy with his travel narrative which was poorly received back in the United States, although, as he remarked in the preface to the cheap edition of 1850, ‘no visitor can ever have set foot on those shores, with a stronger faith in the Republic than I had, when I landed in America.’¹ Trollope would visit some years later, technically not during the antebellum period but during the first year of the Civil War, and *North America* was published in 1862. However, as this text appeared little more than a decade after publication of the revised edition of *Swallow Barn* in 1851, and a mere six years after the fictitious date that Tucker utilized on the title page of *The Partisan Leader*, I include it here both as a commentary relevant to this specific moment in American history and as a counterweight to the voice of Dickens, to avoid giving the impression of there being a singular English perspective on the US. In fact, by being composed during internecine conflict, *North America* is useful as it gives us an outsider’s view of the South at its most secessionist and belligerent, actually engaged in Civil War with the more powerful North. It also allows us to compare views of the actual conflict with Tucker’s predictions of the coming war. Most importantly for this thesis, though, will be the opportunity these texts, both British- and American-authored, afford us to study the changing face of Southern pastoral, as it entered into crisis during a period in which the westward expansion of slavery forced the various regions of the US along a path that would eventually lead to war.

Since Kennedy and Tucker are not the authors best-researched by the contemporary academy, a brief biographical sketch of each would be beneficial at this point. John Pendleton Kennedy was born in 1795 in Baltimore, Maryland, and lived through the Civil War (which he

¹ Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 278. All subsequent references to this text will be given in parentheses.
opposed), dying in 1870. He served as a Whig representative for the state of Maryland, and also in
the cabinet of President Millard Fillmore. His entry in the *Biographical Directory of the United
States Congress* lists him as a ‘novelist of distinction’. It is clear, then, that Kennedy was a member
of the Southern political elite, holding office in both the legislative and executive branches of
government, while also being a respected novelist. *Swallow Barn*, an early example of plantation
literature, was first published while Kennedy was serving in the Maryland House of Delegates,
appearing under the pen-name Mark Littleton. However, the revised edition was published by J.B.
Lippincott of Philadelphia under his real name, and includes a preface outlining his authorial
intentions. The novel holds a place of some distinction in the history of Southern letters. A review
by Edward M. Gwathmey in 1922 announced that ‘we greet Kennedy’s *Swallow Barn* on its
republication with the same pleasure we feel in greeting an old friend of our youth who has been
absent from our midst for a long time and who suddenly reappears.’ This enthusiastic response
from a twentieth-century reviewer suggests that the novel was well-esteemed, and that it had
sufficient popularity and respect to survive the strife of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Nathaniel Beverley Tucker (his first name used less frequently than his second) has a
similar story. Born in 1774 in Mattoax, Virginia, Tucker was a member of the Southern professional
classes, the son of noted legal scholar St. George Tucker. He was also the half-brother of
distinguished Virginia politician, John Randolph of Roanoke, who served in both the United States
House of Representatives and the Senate as a member of Thomas Jefferson’s Democratic-
Republican Party. In the aftermath of the War of 1812, in which Tucker served as a Lieutenant, he
became a judge, serving as a federal justice between 1820 and 1823. Tucker was, like his half-
brother, fiercely committed to the cause of state sovereignty, and this is reflected in his writings of
the 1830s, of which the most notable is *The Partisan Leader*. Tucker died in 1851, five years before
the supposed authorship of *The Partisan Leader*, and ten years before the Civil War changed his
native Virginia forever. It is more difficult to study *The Partisan Leader* today than it is to engage
with *Swallow Barn*, not least because evidence is much less plentiful as regards the novel’s
contemporary reception and Tucker’s reputation as a novelist. Reviews of the novel are scarce, and
it has not undergone the same extent of facsimile reprinting as Kennedy’s novel. However, the text
is included here because it represents a truly subversive position within the antebellum South, a

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position that would go on to be fully instantiated in secessionist political and, ultimately, military actions.

It would perhaps be easy to consider these two novels an irrelevance in the twenty-first century, far removed as the plantation system, secessionist thought and theories of racial superiority are from mainstream US culture today. However, the position of this chapter will be that such texts, written from the perspective of the Southern white elite (of which both Kennedy and Tucker were fine examples), provide possibly one of the most important resources we have as we endeavour to understand more fully the politics and aesthetics of the Southern pastoral imagination – a cultural tradition that is, of course, far from exhausted in the contemporary South.

‘Sovereignty of the State’: Pastoral and States’ Rights
Between the War of 1812 and the commencement of the American Civil War in 1861, one of the main causes of political tension in the United States concerned, of course, the relationship between the federal government and individual state legislatures. By this point, the history and political choices of North and South meant that their regional consciousnesses had developed differently, and each was wary of the other achieving political dominance. Even Manifest Destiny, the belief in the divinely ordained spread of the US across the American continent, was judged in each region by how it would affect the power balance in the federal government. The most frequently adopted defence against the perceived abuse of federal power by the other faction, whether this was a legitimate fear or not, was the doctrine of States’ rights. As time went on, this policy would become associated primarily with the South, because ‘since the end of the war of 1812 with England, the region had been suffering from a prolonged economic depression; while at the same time its proportion of representation in the central government was gradually decreasing and the powers actually appropriated by that government were steadily on the increase.’ As the population of the North grew faster than that of the South and it consequently acquired more power in the federal system, the South feared that it would have Northern will forced upon it. States’ rights thus became its political shield. This meant that, while the federal government held a mandate on certain issues, such as foreign policy, in internal matters the word of the state legislature took precedence. As the nineteenth century progressed, in the South ‘what united all planters and yeomen was their commitment to states’ rights, even if those rights were defined as a defence of local, community autonomy.’

Thomas Jefferson became the father of the States’ rights movement for the South. This may cause some surprise to those who think immediately of Jefferson as a principal author of the

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Declaration of Independence, which provided the intellectual underpinning of the federal government of the United States. However, Jefferson ‘also wrote the Kentucky resolutions of “nullification.”’\textsuperscript{10} Put succinctly, nullification meant that in cases where a state legislature opposed a law created by the federal government, it could opt out of its application to its state, or nullify the effect of the law within its boundaries. Although to a modern reader such resolutions seem to render a federal system redundant, with Southern paranoia growing about the emergent political power of the North, nullification was seized upon as a strategy by the Southern political elite. The doctrine became particularly popular in South Carolina, which was later a hotbed of secessionist thought, and which in the antebellum period had a champion with a national profile in US Vice-President John C. Calhoun. Indeed, it was ‘the nullification movement in South Carolina [that] completed the transformation of Jefferson into the Father of State Rights’\textsuperscript{11} Of course, Jefferson was dead by the time nullification became a genuine political issue, and as a consequence was more amenable to such tactical appropriations. There was more reverence shown towards Jefferson in death than there had been in life, and he lent the cause respectability through his role as one of the founding fathers of US democracy, which made the doctrine more difficult to criticize. As Merrill D. Petersen has acknowledged:

As the movement gained momentum in South Carolina and spread into national politics, the Nullifiers made a concerted effort to identify their cause and doctrine with Jefferson and the Old Republican party. Nullification was enhanced by the prestige of the Jefferson symbol, the sanction of hallowed precedent, the fiction of its success in ‘the revolution of 1800’. Quite aside from their genuine response to the historic Resolutions, the Nullifiers chanted Jefferson and ’98 because it was the best possible strategy. From the Senate, [Robert Young] Hayne implored his friends at home to base their proceedings on the Resolutions of ’98, confident that only in this way could they carry with them the South and a large portion of the people in other quarters. Jefferson was the Nullifiers’ armor of safety and flag of victory. Chanting his name and doctrine, celebrating his birthday, showering him with oratory – this was a ritual in South Carolina politics for several years.\textsuperscript{12}

This is how Jefferson became inextricably linked with States’ rights, which would live on as a major part of US politics even after the nullification crisis had passed. The strategy of nullification was, in itself, unsuccessful, but the furore surrounding the movement galvanized Southern politics, made Southerners more insular, and had a great bearing on their belligerent attitude around mid-century.

The pastoral was, as we have seen, never far from the Southern consciousness, due to a popular belief that the South was an instantiation of a New Jerusalem. It was also seized upon by critics determined to indict Southern backwardness, as ‘images of a rural ideal serve[d] as a

\textsuperscript{11} Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{12} Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 53.
commentary on the actual world’. The South frequently imagined itself in pastoral terms, and in contemporaneous Southern literary production the pastoral was often enlisted as a potential weapon for States’ rights just as readily as Jefferson was co-opted by the political elite. The Southern conception of pastoral mobilized the genre’s constitutive distinction between rural and urban, so that an idealized rural South was contrasted with an urban North. The rural became a bastion of virtue, the urban a sign of moral decay and corruption. In reality ‘the North, like the South, was predominantly agrarian’, and the South, wilfully or otherwise, overstated the extent to which industrialism had infiltrated Northern society. Indeed, Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie have argued that ‘even in the northeastern United States […] where advanced technology applied to agriculture had been adopted since the early decades of the century, probably less than one-fourth of farmers made use of modern equipment as late as 1850’. However, ill-founded or not, a political tendency in the South implied that manufacturing was responsible for the debasement of Northern society, and, in its consciousness, ‘the Mason-Dixon line became a kind of moral demarcation, crossed only by the occasional contaminating influence.’

It might seem difficult, at first, to consider *The Partisan Leader* as bearing traces of the pastoral since it is set in the future, and the pastoral is most familiar to us as looking backwards. However, what we see in the novel is a nostalgic projection of the future, an act of representation ‘which recovers values that are located in the country’, so that, thematically, it still conforms to the definition of a pastoral. Set in an imagined world in which the South has already seceded from the Union, *The Partisan Leader* is a good place from which to begin an analysis of the representation of States’ rights in antebellum Southern literature, given that it was ‘designed to show the ghastly results of continued consolidation of federal power’. Tucker was an advocate of secession under the presidency of Andrew Jackson, and he conceived of his political purpose as being to ‘preserve the principles that Jefferson and Madison had expressed in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798’. The philosophical underpinnings of *The Partisan Leader*, then, are born of an understanding, or misprision, of Jefferson popular in the 1830s.

The first thing we notice (aside from the rather tortuous syntax) about Tucker’s presentation of a separate South is that it is a prosperous region:

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16 Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 41.
The system of free trade now established, which has restored to the South the full benefit of its natural advantages, and made it once more the most flourishing and prosperous country on earth; which has multiplied the manufactories of Great Britain, and increased her revenue by an increase of consumption and resources, even while some branches of revenue were cut off; and which, at the same time, has broken the power of her envious rival in the North, and put an end for ever to that artificial prosperity engendered by the oppression and plunder of the southern States; is such an anomaly in modern diplomacy, that the rulers at Richmond, or even at Washington, might well have been surprised at it.20

Here we can see Tucker using his region’s antebellum economic depression as a lens through which to view the contrast between the North and South. The implication is that it is Northern politics and the use of tariffs that keep the South poor, and, once freed from the negative influence of the North and committed to free trade, increased revenue will allow the Southern pastoral idyll to prosper. Tucker also intimates that the South’s prosperity lies in its ‘natural advantages’ over other regions and nations, which can plausibly be seen as an example of Terry Gifford’s third category of pastoral, in which an idealization ‘celebrate[s] a landscape as if no one had to sweat to maintain it’.21

One of the most noteworthy things in The Partisan Leader is that the South goes to war with the North, and is victorious. The narrative suggests that Virginia could not be stopped from ‘joining the southern League, except by force, and that, in a contest of force, she would be backed, not only by the southern States, but by the power of Great Britain’ (56). The idea of British support certainly had its parallels in reality, as ‘by the 1850s the planters of South Carolina […] came to believe that by withholding their cotton they could force British intervention in American politics on Southern terms.’22 The misconception that a Southern confederacy would be supported by Britain persisted during the Civil War itself; in reality, British assistance never came. Trollope, sympathetic to the South in many ways, remarked that he would ‘not believe it possible that there should in very truth be a quarrel between England and the Northern states’, suggesting that even amongst those supportive of the South there was little appetite for war.23

In the years before the War, though, Tucker and Southerners like him refused to believe that Britain would not protect the interests of their Lancashire cotton-mills and come to the South’s aid in the event of a military conflict. However, ‘the problem for King Cotton was that […] the English textile boom was not only past its peak but drawing to an end.’24 As such, Southerners had a false sense of security. This is reflected in the ease with which, according to Tucker’s fiction, Virginia and the South secede and defeat the North; even while at war, Virginia’s plight seems no more

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20 Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, The Partisan Leader (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1933), p. 49. All subsequent references to this text will be given in parentheses.
21 Gifford, Pastoral, p. 2.
23 Anthony Trollope, North America, ed. by Robert Mason (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 48. All subsequent references to this text will be given in parentheses.
perilous than that of a cat cornered by a mouse. The pastoral on offer in Tucker’s work, then, only
complies with the version of pastoral which Gifford offers us, relating to the erasure of the
difficulties of rural labour. It cannot be made to square with Raymond Williams’s assertion that the
pastoral needs to be bound up with ‘the threat of eviction and loss’, since for Tucker the military
might of Great Britain ensures that there is no threat of defeat.\textsuperscript{25} Tucker’s South, then, is no Arcadia,
but a New Jerusalem; that is to say, there is no looking back to an idealized past except to inspire a
belief that the South, once freed from the North, can live out a pastoral idyll in the future and fulfil
the promise of the initial Virginia colonies.

A New Jerusalem model would seem to be supported by Trollope. Writing of his travels
during 1861, he speaks immediately of the American conflict, presumably because had he not his
narrative would have been faced with quite an elephant in the room. Trollope backs the fundamental
goal of secession (namely, two separate federations) from the outset, arguing that the United States
has been ‘torn to pieces by the weight of its own discordant parts – as a congregation when its size
has become unwieldy will separate, and reform itself into two wholesome wholes. It is well that this
should be so’ (20). His argument is that the political and social chasm between the North and South
is so large that they cannot co-exist, and nor should they have to. It would be better for all parties, in
Trollope’s opinion, if one side did not have to be governed by the other, and they parted and were
free to self-regulate. Trollope even goes as far as to criticize the North for going to war in the first
place, arguing that the prize of conflict is ‘that which if regained would only be injurious to it’ (21).
However, it should be noted that Trollope’s support for the South and secession is not wholehearted.
He casts doubt on the right to secede:

> Nobody, no single Southerner, can really believe that the constitution of the United States as
framed in 1787, or altered since, intended to give to the separate States the power of
seceding as they pleased. Such licence would have been destructive to the very idea of a
great nationality. Where would New England have been as part of the United States, if New
York, which stretches from the Atlantic to the borders of Canada, had been endowed with
the power of cutting off the six Northern States from the rest of the Union? (25)

Trollope uses New York as a practical example to point out that secession would never have been
understood as a right under the constitution. The architects of this document would never have been
so unwise as to allow such a situation to occur. Trollope’s argument, then, is that the South had no
legal right to secede, but that, given the intensity of political crisis, pragmatism should win out and it
should be allowed to leave. Given the antipathy of even someone sympathetic like Trollope, we
might infer that the peculiarly Southern variant of the States’ rights argument would seem to isolate
the South from all political moderates within the Atlantic world, as would the issue that made such
steadfast commitment to that doctrine necessary, namely the region’s devotion to slavery: ‘In 1750,

slavery existed in all the American colonies, and in most of the New World; a century later, the “slave South” stood increasingly alone, joined in the Western Hemisphere only by Brazil and the Spanish islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico.26 We will return to slavery later in this chapter, but it is referenced here to emphasize just how ideologically remote the South became during the antebellum period.

Tucker, however, did not consider the South so isolated, and, as we have seen, there is no significant threat to his idyll since he anticipated support from allies. In _Swallow Barn_, by contrast, the pastoral ideal is very clearly endangered, as can be identified in the political discussions that occasionally intrude upon the main romance plot of Ned Hazard and Bel Tracy. Unlike Tucker with _The Partisan Leader_, Kennedy does not set his story in an imagined future, so he cannot create a world in which the Virginian pastoral is perfectly intact. The South, as already noted, perceived the rising influence of the federal government in Washington as a great menace to the sovereignty of the individual states, and as a consequence that peril permeates _Swallow Barn_. Frank Meriwether remarks that ‘the sovereignty of this Union will be as the rod of Aaron;—it will turn into a serpent, and swallow up all that struggle with it.’27 This has two obvious implications. First, the suggestion is that all rival forms of power – including the sovereignty of the individual states – will be consumed by the expanding power of the federal government. We also cannot ignore the religious implications of Meriwether’s exclamation: it is worth remembering that it was Aaron’s rod, along with Moses’ rod, which inflicted the biblical plagues upon Egypt.28 The repercussions are clear: that increasing federal authority will result in consequences equally disastrous for the South. The narrative portrays States’ rights as of no concern to the federal government. One character asks rhetorically: ‘what does congress care about your states’ rights as long as they have your money?’ (163). While Kennedy never goes so far as the hot-headed Tucker (who describes President Van Buren as King Martin the First [120]), the presentation of federal authority is similar. For Tucker, Van Buren was an individual tyrant comparable with a European monarch; Kennedy’s meaning is more implicit, but the federal government is still figured as representing a tyrannical power, one that takes money from states’ residents while simultaneously making it harder for them to control their democracy.

There is distinct peril beneath the surface in _Swallow Barn_, unlike in _The Partisan Leader_; however, it is important to note that, like Tucker’s, Kennedy’s novel is suffused by a regionalist pugnaciousness. Ned Hazard embodies this. He asks: ‘what’s the use of states if they are all to be cut up with canals and railroads and tariffs? No, no, gentlemen! you may depend, Old Virginny’s not going to let congress carry on in her day!’ (164). It is clear from this statement that, despite the

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27 John Pendleton Kennedy, _Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion_ (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1860; repr. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, n.d.), p. 74. All subsequent references to this text will be given in parentheses.
28 Exodus 7.8-21.
federal threat, Virginia and other Southern states will not give up belief in their right to self-
determination without a fight. The negative view of Congress is predictably contrasted with a
positive interpretation of the power structures of the states. For example, the observation is made,
regarding the Virginian judiciary, that

the whole bench presented a fine picture of solid faces and figures, that might be said to be a
healthy and sturdy specimen of this pillar of the sovereignty of the state:- and was well
calculated to inspire a wholesome respect for that [...] magistracy which has always been so
much a favorite of the people of Virginia. (170)

Here, the machinery of the state is shown as able to represent and empower the people, in contrast to
the disenfranchising influence of Congress. We should note the South’s opposition to Congress,
since, as Trollope observes in North America, ‘the southern or democratic party of the United States
had [...] been in power for many years. Either southern Presidents had been elected, or northern
Presidents with southern politics’ (27). In reality, throughout the antebellum period the South was
well-represented, indeed over-represented, in Congress and regularly returned sympathetic men to
the White House (such as John Tyler, James K. Polk and Franklin Pierce, amongst others), which
seems to go some way towards exposing paranoia about federal plotting against the region. Indeed,
‘not only had a southern slaveholder occupied the White House for more than two-thirds of the
nation’s history, but southerners had enjoyed a comparable advantage as speakers of the House and
presidents pro tem of the Senate, while the Supreme Court always had a southern majority.’29
Despite the undoubted potential for a Northern overwhelming of Southern power, it was only later,
when Trollope was writing his travel narrative, that Washington posed any actual danger, with
Abraham Lincoln, leader of the all-Northern Republican Party, elected as president.

Considering the politics of Tucker, and the successful insurrection by rural Virginia
postulated in The Partisan Leader, it comes as no surprise that agriculture is idealized in the novel.
In reality, ‘antebellum prices for cotton tended to fluctuate wildly and in general slipped downward
over the antebellum period’, resulting in uncertain economic fortunes for the South since it had no
manufacturing base with which to counteract these trends;30 yet in The Partisan Leader, Tucker has
one of his central characters claim that ‘the southern States, including Virginia, are properly and
almost exclusively agricultural. The quality of their soil and climate, and the peculiar character of
their labouring population, concur to make agriculture the most profitable employment among them’
(169). Again, the South’s conception of itself obscures economic reality, but is also redolent of
Jefferson’s philosophy. Jefferson himself, as we have seen, wrote that he would gladly give up the
prosperity of manufacturing for the increase in happiness and moral richness that could be gained

29 Cobb, Away Down South, p. 35.
30 Susan E. O’Donovan, Becoming Free in the Cotton South (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,
2010), p. 16.
from small-scale agriculture. That Tucker made the small transition from Jefferson’s position to his own, in which nothing could be more valuable to the people of the South than agriculture, is hardly surprising.

Farming receives the same treatment in *Swallow Barn*. A lengthy description of Virginia suggests that

> Her wealth is territorial; her industries all savor the soil; her population consists of landholders, of many descents, unmixed with foreign alloy. She has no large towns where men may meet and devise improvements or changes in the arts of life [...] Her laws and habits, in consequence, have a certain fixedness, which even reject many of the valuable improvements of the day. (71)

Jefferson was concerned about the deleterious effects of the plantation system and its consumption of the land of the United States itself, but in the presentation of Virginia offered by Kennedy all Virginian industries are entrenched in a benign relation with the soil. Nothing is permissible if it does not sit comfortably with agricultural pursuits, and this creates regressive elements in Virginian culture which reject many ‘valuable improvements’. A peculiar ideological framework is emerging in this extract. Kennedy writes that the population of Virginia is of ‘many descents’, suggesting an immigrant culture with a variety of ethnic ancestors. However, he also asserts that it is ‘unmixed with foreign alloy’. The idea of such a paradoxical community is difficult to grasp, until we look at the context of the paragraph. Here, ‘foreign’ comes to stand not for an ethnic trait, but rather for a political one. Virginians, regardless of their ancestral legacies, comprise one community, and foreignness denotes instead people that are distant from the soil. Agriculture, a way of life for many (but not all), is then romanticized and given yet greater importance, to the point where it becomes the primary characteristic of Virginia’s, and the broader South’s, self-definition.

However, support for Jefferson’s fears about the effects of Southern agriculture on the soil comes from an unlikely source. Dickens, in *American Notes*, seems to imply that Jefferson’s suspicions about the plantation system were well-founded. Describing a railway journey to Richmond, he writes:

> The tract of country through which its takes its course was once productive: but the soil has been exhausted by the system of employing a great amount of slave labour in forcing crops, without strengthening the land: and it is now little better than a sandy desert overgrown with trees. (150)

Dickens’s observation here suggests that there is something inherently unstable in the pastoral ideology of the South. It was thought early on in the colonization period that American soil, highly productive in comparison with European land, could provide with very little effort required, and this was conducive to the development of a pastoral imagination. However, Jefferson feared, and Dickens’s observations show, that in fact the land required levels of care and support that it did not
receive under the plantation system. Mark M. Smith writes that ‘The commitment to single staple agriculture and planters’ indifference to internal improvements merely exacerbated the weaknesses of the southern plantation economy by depleting soil, limiting the level of capital accumulation, and keeping overall productivity low.’ The ethic of care for the land which the South frequently claimed for itself is shown to be mere ideology, since in fact its agricultural practices were exhaustive and actually had dangerously depleting effects. By using Dickens as a different line of sight on Southern agrarianism, the latter’s mystifications come into sharper focus.

While Kennedy seems to agree implicitly with the philosophy of Southern agrarianism, we must note the criticism present in the final sentence in the passage from *Swallow Barn* quoted above. Kennedy acknowledges that the Southern way of life, for all its virtues and values, means neglecting some of the advantages available to other communities – even their neighbours to the North. This awareness of progress elsewhere was not unheard of in the South: ‘Many voices were heard lamenting the backward state of Southern agriculture, and the failure of the South to industrialize, or even to build enough railroads.’ In fairness to the region, certain agricultural improvements were not suited to Southern conditions. For example, ‘the mechanical reaper was not suitable for corn, of which the South produced half the national crop in 1850.’ On the whole, though, a prevailing technophobia was indicative of a schizoid South in which people could believe in the Southern pastoral-agrarian myth absolutely, and yet still be aware of its negative consequences on the region. Dickens noted that ‘there is an air of ruin and decay abroad’ (151), showing that these consequences were perceptible even to visitors. Indeed, some ‘antebellum southern pastoral shows not so much a world in bucolic tranquillity and security as a world that is threatened by busy and destructive social, economic, and political fluctuations’. Kennedy was one of those more progressive figures who recognized such ‘fluctuations’ within the South itself, and we shall see more of his criticisms of the region as this chapter progresses.

Despite these critiques, though, *Swallow Barn* still has significant romantic elements. No less a figure than Vernon Louis Parrington observed that antebellum plantation literature ‘transmuted the easy-going plantation life into an enduring romance [and] the work was begun by Kennedy in his idyllic *Swallow Barn*’. Nothing is given the idealistic treatment quite as much as the state and people of Virginia itself. The landscape is described in glowing terms, as ‘in the country everything wears a Sunday look’ (307), suggesting a lazy idyll. Mark Littleton, the narrator of the novel (and, indeed, the pseudonym of John Pendleton Kennedy), pronounces in the introductory epistle that ‘there is not a by-path in Virginia that will take a gentleman, who has time

34 Bakker, *Pastoral in the Antebellum Southern Romance*, p. 3.
on his hands, in a wrong direction. This I say in honest compliment to a state which is full to the brim of right good fellows’ (20). The most immediate thing we notice here is the assertion that the state is full of ‘right good fellows’, a tribute to both the sociability and the morality of Virginian gentlemen. It is also apparent that the landscape itself is given a kind of moral quality. Even the road network seems to be associated with qualities of reliability and honesty. That something inanimate, like a dirt path, can be ascribed a sense of decency encourages the reader to look favourably on the moral sense, and judgement, of the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole. The state is idealized, and as a consequence the reader is encouraged to believe in its fitness – and, indeed, that of any Southern state – to govern itself. Rebecca C. McIntyre argues that Swallow Barn ‘established the plantation as romantic, chivalrous, gallant, grand, and elegant’. If we take McIntyre’s notion further, then, we can see an ideological system at work in which the state, the people within it, and the plantation system are all homologously endowed with attractiveness and charisma. A romanticized plantation further reinforces the argument that the Southern system works well, and that Southerners should be left to mind their own business.

Continuing with McIntyre’s point above that the plantation is ‘chivalrous, gallant, grand, and elegant’, it should be noted that the presentation of Virginia as a whole in Swallow Barn is essentially aristocratic. This is because, as Ian Frederick Finseth has noted, the pastoral plantation landscape was ‘a myth that fed on other ideologies […] such as deference to an aristocratic order’. Kennedy writes of Virginia that ‘her early population, therefore, consisted of gentlemen of good name and condition, who brought within her confines a solid fund of respectability and wealth’ (70), and by doing this he manages to link the Virginians back to European nobility. There is plenty of historical precedent for this view; Petersen reports that ‘The Southern Literary Messenger severely criticized those historians, such as Bancroft and Grigsby, who interpreted the revolution in Virginia as a democratic movement. It was in fact, said this sectional organ, “set in motion by the Cavaliers of the Tidewater”, with no support whatever from the demos.’ This could well be the reason for the noticeable conflation of romance and pastoral in Southern fiction, since, as Elizabeth Jane Harrison has noted, ‘the southern pastoral impulse was employed to help perpetuate the South’s myth of aristocratic origins.’ In fact, one thing that the United States, as a young nation, could have no pretence towards was extended aristocratic lineage. By connecting themselves back to the refinement of the British ruling classes, eminent Virginians could see themselves as both a class of people born to lead and, simultaneously, at the forefront of democracy.

This particular class inflection of pastoral is made manifest as the aristocratic portrayal in *Swallow Barn* extends to the landscape; indeed, *Swallow Barn* itself is described as being ‘an aristocratic old edifice’ (27). We should be aware that, in the nineteenth-century Southern consciousness, aristocracy and democracy were not seen as contradictory or mutually exclusive. Kennedy describes the US as ‘our republican empire’ (63), suggesting that democracy in the New World is compatible with imperialism and social hierarchies which we would traditionally associate with the great European powers. In fact, the political elite of the South was to all intents and purposes a powerful quasi-aristocracy in its own right. Gray writes that even after 1830, ‘a large proportion of local and state leaders still continued to be drawn from a small, wealthy class of people, and in any case the economic and social structure remained essentially unchanged.’\(^{40}\) From the literature of the period, we can deduce that the South conceived of itself in almost feudal terms, due to the influence of pre-revolutionary elite colonists in the region as opposed to the outcast Puritans in Massachusetts Bay. Perhaps, as Mark Twain would later claim with at least some degree of seriousness, this had more to do with the influence of Romantic novels by writers like Sir Walter Scott. Either way, ‘feudalism provided an analogy for the plantation South that many writers in the plantation system readily developed.’\(^{41}\) There are noticeable traces of this at a linguistic level in *Swallow Barn*. Frank Meriwether is referred to as ‘the master of this lordly domain’ (31). He is said to have come ‘to his estate, upon his arrival at age, a very model of a landed gentleman’ (33). Meriwether is evidently no Jeffersonian yeoman, and, from the choice of language here, we might associate him far more readily with an English landowner than a tenant farmer. Again, though, no tension seems to be felt between democracy and aristocracy; Littleton says of Meriwether that, ‘notwithstanding his amiable character and his doctrinary republicanism, I am told he keeps the peace as if he commanded a garrison, and administers justice like a cadi’ (33). It seems perfectly acceptable in Southern society, then, for a republican to believe in democracy and then act, effectively, as a dictator on his own estate. Littleton seems to have little problem reconciling the two, and in fact looks to praise Meriwether for his firm hand. How this discipline affects the labourers on his estate, his slaves, we shall see later.

The Southern self-conception of its aristocratic society was, in fact, not comparable with the European aristocracy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whose ranks had been thinned by revolutions following American independence. Rather, its notion of itself is more feudal, and is based upon an earlier European aristocracy. This allowed Southern gentlemen not to be tied to the likes of Viscount Howe and Lord Cornwallis (British noblemen who commanded loyalist forces in the Revolutionary War), and the British nobility which had opposed the Revolution. Nevertheless,

\(^{40}\) Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 40.

this swerve still did not plausibly link them with the English medieval barons. Rather, in trading on a romanticized notion of feudalism, the South associated itself with an Arthurian fantasy. For the nineteenth-century Southerner, feudalism was not a matter of tithes and plague-related labour crises; rather, it was a pastoralized imagined world in which every gentleman was his own Arthur, with his estate or plantation his Camelot. It would appear that, in this respect, Southern writers ‘compulsively appropriated and reinvented aspects of English culture to advance their own aesthetic designs’. In *The Partisan Leader*, for example, Tucker takes as a Southern gain the Northern ignorance of such cultural features. During an imagined meeting between President Van Buren and Mr. Baker, a legislator who operates in the text as a kind of proto-scalawag, Tucker has Baker remark on ‘the fantastic notions of what Southern men call chivalry, which infest the brain’ (107). By having one of the villains of the novel suggest that chivalry contaminates the mind, the novel implicitly shows chivalric notions in a positive light. Also, by having Baker make specific reference to ‘Southern men’, the implication is that Northern men have no concept of chivalry. Yet again with Tucker, this is a clear example of the operation of a binary opposition, where what is Southern equals good as opposed to a malignant North.

Perhaps no character better embodies romance in these novels than *Swallow Barn’s* Ned Hazard, who drives the main plot through his courtship of Bel Tracy. He is a duellist, to such an extent that ‘the chivalrous lore displayed by Ned Hazard was a matter of college renown’ (61). The act of duelling frequently occurs in medievalist fiction, of course, and soon after we learn of Ned’s prowess in the arena of combat we are told that he is ‘engrossed thus, like the states of the dark ages, in the cares of love, war and politics’ (61). With his good nature, his scheming and his romantic outlook, he stands as a fine example of the type of character that Mark Twain would later go on to parody with Tom Sawyer. Bel Tracy, the romantic heroine, is similarly seen as besotted with romance. She exclaims that ‘there is something pleasant in the idea of moated castles, and gay knights, and border feuds, and roundelays under one’s window, and lighted halls where ladies dance corantos and “trod measures” as they called it!’ (380). Of course, it is easy to imagine that an actual border feud would not have sat quite so pleasantly with Bel Tracy, nor would the harsh realities of medieval living (such as plague and famine) have fitted so comfortably with her romantic inclinations. With these attitudes, however, she is the perfect partner for Ned. There is a certain irony, though, that Mark Littleton notes since Hazard has hinted that ‘Bel Tracy is a little given to certain Romantic fantasies, such as country ladies who want excitement and read novels are apt to engender’ (228). This is uttered as a criticism, yet Hazard fails to notice the effects of the same influences on his own personality, and it is perhaps true that if he did not possess all those traits himself then his pursuit of her could well be in vain. Indeed, Hazard has often been considered a

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figure of fun, with Paul C. Jones observing that by having the character fall ‘short of the role of romance hero in almost every conceivable fashion, Kennedy is able to call into question the ideals to which the brave cavalier of romance is usually attached’. 43 That aside, since he exists at the centre of the narrative and is recognized as a character inspired essentially by feudal ideas, it would be safe to assume that the novel itself is bound up with ideas of a romantic feudalism, even if they (and the characters that embody them) are not always treated uncritically. 44 It is this indefinite sense in the novel that causes Jan Bakker to suggest that ‘William Empson would approve of the pastoral mechanisms Kennedy uses to let his readers make up their own minds about what he is saying in his work.’ 45 As Jones notes, Ned’s feudal obsession is mocked by the text ‘even as it continues to force him to strive for the ideal’, demonstrating the difficulty in arriving at a simple conclusion regarding the status of romance in the novel. The word ‘feudal’ is used many times throughout Swallow Barn, as when it is said that ‘a social winter party in Virginia affords a tolerable picture of feudal munificence’ (71). However, while the novel has obvious links with romanticized medievalism, it is worth noting the paradox of Kennedy’s use of a romance novel to criticize the conventions of romance novels. This may be a novel aimed very much at Southerners, but it is far from a simple or unreflective one, and Kennedy seems simultaneously to be both influenced by and gently parodying these Southern traits. As Bakker points out, neither Ned nor Bel ‘is likely to carry on the stabilizing good work of practical Meriwether on their joined plantations after they marry and Meriwether has died’. 46 While Kennedy is writing in a mode that would have been agreeable to the reading public of the South, he is also gently satirizing the romantic addictions of these young characters in contrast with the practical nature of the older Meriwether. This sport of playing at history is not always seen as a positive.

We might see this focus on the aristocratic as being significantly removed from the pastoral, since in the classical period pastoral was centred upon shepherds and nymphs, and later in European writing these same figures were used to critique the courts in which aristocrats tended to flourish. However, it would be wrong to disconnect Kennedy’s novel from pastoral. The setting of Swallow Barn is still rural, and although its protagonists subsist as agrarian aristocrats, rather than as rustic labourers, there is still an idealization of their condition which qualifies the novel as a descendant of pastoral, if not fully belonging to the mode in its classical phase. We should see Swallow Barn, and indeed The Partisan Leader, as pastoral, not least because Southern pretensions to nobility which

44 Jones, Unwelcome Voices, p. 135.
45 Bakker, Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance, p. 42.
46 Bakker, Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance, p. 45.
recur in these novels were based on myth, an inherent aspect of pastoral.\footnote{See Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 22.} In reality, the Southern planter classes had less in common with ancient British aristocracy than they liked to imagine.

The graces with which the planters liked to adorn their way of life and their great white mansions deceived many at the time, and more since, into accepting them as a class of well-bred gentlemen, strictly comparable to the nobility of Europe. Their account books tell a different story. Experience sobers the wildest blade, if he lives long enough; in the Old South the demands of plantation management turned innumerable roaring boys into disciplined capitalists. They had little in common with the gilded lords of England, whose talent lay in spending rather than getting.\footnote{Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, pp. 286-87.}

It seemed to matter very little to Southerners, however, that the actuality did not match the aspiration; in truth, the South was always as much an imagined place as a material reality. Dickens may have suggested that ‘it would be well, […] for the American people as a whole, if they loved the Real less and the Ideal somewhat more’ (*American Notes*, 270), but it is important to remember that, although this tendency led to dubious consequences, his strictures did not seem to apply in the imaginatively oriented South. James C. Cobb has written that ‘identity may, of course, be grounded in verifiable fact, but as the case of the South demonstrates all too well, it is often a mixture of the unvarnished and the varnished or even the whitewashed truth’, and there is no doubt that the Southern imagination did privilege an ideal over reality and that key tenets of Southern identity were built on somewhat suspect ‘facts’.\footnote{Cobb, *Away Down South*, p. 6.} The delusion of aristocratic status was believed just as firmly as the conviction that the North was dominated by manufacturing and industry. In truth, burgeoning Southern industries were as affected by mechanization as those in the North, and ‘the unquestionably capitalist planters and investors who launched each of these antebellum Southern industries (transportation, coal, sugar, and textiles) willingly adapted technology to facilitate production’ in much the same way that industrialists did in Northern states.\footnote{Delfino and Gillespie, ‘Introduction’, p. 13.} However, this industrializing of the South did not vitiate a prevailing pastoral ‘structure of feeling’.\footnote{Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 68.} Instead, the rural and aristocratic became bound together in the Southern consciousness in opposition to the North, conceived of as both urban and mercantile. Though the South had no substantial claim to any great aristocratic history, nor authenticated knowledge that the North was completely or even mostly industrialized, it never let the facts get in the way of a good myth. The South was, in its self-construction, rural, pure and had all of the virtues of breeding associated with a tradition of aristocracy. Such patrician leanings are presented as the natural order of things: in *Swallow Barn*, even a cock crowing is described as ‘the lord of some cabin hen-roost’ (100). By contrast, the North is seen by Southerners as a corrupting influence, removed as it is from the edifying effects of noble
lineage. As Williams has acknowledged, ‘all traditions are selective: the pastoral tradition quite as much as any other’.52

This idealization of the aristocrat is often connected in *Swallow Barn* to questions of chivalric conduct and manners. We are exposed early on to Frank Meriwether’s opinion of Northern etiquette. In the chapter entitled ‘A Country Gentleman’, he is said to think ‘lightly of the mercantile interest, and, in fact, undervalues the manners of the large cities generally. He believes that those who live in them are hollow-hearted and insincere, and wanting in that substantial intelligence and virtue, which he affirms to be characteristic of the country’ (35). As we have seen, the land of Virginia is presented as having inherent morality, so it is quite probable that the referent is not Southern cities here, and almost certain that cities like Richmond are exempt from Meriwether’s critique. Rather, this is aimed at Northern cities, urban areas dominated (at least in the Southern imagination) by trade and industry. Positive traits relating to common sense and morality are ascribed to the rural South, precisely because of their absence in the North. Trollope remarks that a reason for secession is that the two regions ‘are not homogeneous. They have different instincts, different appetites, different morals, and a different culture’ (*North America*, 22).

Early on in *Swallow Barn*, Kennedy establishes not so much a division as a hierarchy in which the rural South is privileged against the North precisely because it has many simple virtues that the North does not possess. The novel deduces the respective moralities and cultures of North and South by comparing their modes of social interaction:

A dinner party in the country is not the premeditated, anxious affair it is in town. It has nothing of that long, awful interval between the arrival of the guests and the serving up of the dishes, when men look in each other’s faces with empty stomachs, and utter inane common-places with an obvious air of insincerity, if not of actual suffering. On the contrary, it is understood to be a regular spending of the day, in which the guests assume all the privileges of inmates, sleep on the sofas, lounge through the halls, read the newspapers, stroll over the grounds, and, if pinched by appetite, stay their stomachs with bread and butter, and toddy made of choice old spirits. (314)

In this description, the North appears to be a formal place, one marked by disingenuousness. It feels unnatural somehow, removed both from unaffected relations between people and from the biological process of consuming food. By contrast, the Southern manner is described as being much warmer, and far more harmonious with human nature. It is a presentation of simplicity, albeit one that brings to mind Lucinda Hardwick McKethan’s comments that ‘in the literature of the Renaissance onwards, the pastoral mode became most often not a celebration of simplicity but instead a pretension to simplicity for reasons involving sophisticated political and social alliances.’53 In this instance, the privileging of simplicity not only serves to position Southerners in an idyll, but also to

52 Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 18
cast a veil across the capitalist economic system that Southern slaveholding society was very much engaged with. In Swallow Barn, Southern social relations are presented as unforced and informal, with dinner guests encouraged to act as if they are at home. Food is not ritualized, but taken as a natural consequence of hunger. In short, Southern hospitality is represented as a natural code of manners (however contradictory the idea of a natural code may seem to us), helping to create a harmonious region and thereby functioning as part of the Southern pastoral idyll. There would, of course, be no idyll without congenial residents, and so, just as Virginia is idealized, so too is the manner of its inhabitants. Something similar takes place in The Partisan Leader, as, to take a relatively trivial example, a youth loyal to the Northern Van Buren is positioned as removed from this kind of pastoral simplicity when he is described as conceited and having ‘little to recommend him to the favor of the fair’ (53). As a consequence of this perceived sense of cultural difference, combined with the economic divide between the two regions, the South’s resistance to the potential growth of Northern power in Congress (due to the expansion of non-slaveholding states and the disparity between rates of migration to Northern and Southern states), and its adherence to the doctrine of States’ rights, were further entrenched.

It is suggestive to read the presentation of Southern manners by Kennedy and Tucker alongside an anecdote related in American Notes. While travelling in the South, Dickens describes being hosted by a man from New England, who ‘lay down on our sofa, and pulled the newspaper out of his pocket, and read it at his ease’ (217). We should be aware of the cultural implications resulting from the fact that the man from New England is acting in accordance with what Swallow Barn intimates are distinctively Southern traits. Dickens continues by noting that he does not include this anecdote to be judgemental, but rather for reasons of descriptive accuracy, before adding that ‘I should undoubtedly be offended by such proceedings at home, because they are not the custom’ (217). Since his ‘experience of American manners famously turned him against democracy’, how far we believe Dickens’s claim that this account involves no authorial judgement is debatable. Regardless, from this sketch we can see that the South is, in terms of etiquette, far closer to the North than it imagines itself to be. Furthermore, although Southerners idealize aristocratic manners supposedly descended from the Old World, the South has habits which would offend were they to be shown in Dickens’s London. In fact, it is unlikely that a European socialite of the period would have noticed any discernible difference between an American from south of the Mason-Dixon Line and his or her Northern equivalent. For all of the South’s ideological objections to the contrary, then, it is much more closely related to the Yankee than to Sir Lancelot. How, though, to square Dickens’s anecdote with Trollope’s comments cited above about the great difference between the two American regions? In reading these two English authors, we come across completely different views

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of the cultural relations between North and South. This could be explained by time – twenty years
had elapsed between the writing of the two narratives – but something else seems to be in play here.
Trollope’s work is informed by the arguments of Southerners, Dickens’s by a sketch of them. By
this I mean that Trollope observed Southerners as they portrayed themselves and sought to engage
with them on their own terms, while Dickens, in the tradition of his novels, observed them with both
their hypocrisies and contradictions intact.

Kennedy’s support for aristocratic manners in *Swallow Barn* is coded by location. Though
he accepts the Southern self-image of nobility in a European tradition, he never actually supports the
patrician institution in other nations. For example, he writes of Mr. Chub, a migrant from Britain,
that ‘he fell under the ban of the ministers, and tasted his share of government mercy. His house was
burnt over his head, his horses and hounds […] were “confiscate to the state”, and he was forced to
fly. This brought him to America in no very compromising mood with royalty’ (65). Kennedy is
critical here of the idea of monarchy and the British system of government; the implication is of the
king as a tyrant, and of Parliament as unscrupulous bailiffs. It might seem difficult for Europeans to
imagine an aristocratic system without a monarch, but it is important to remember that for Kennedy,
and the South more widely, there was no contradiction between a patrician sensibility and
republicanism. Kennedy manages simultaneously to distance the South from the aristocracies of the
Old World and to reaffirm its republican credentials in this passage, which in turn allows the
Southern aristo-republic to appear superior to any contemporaneous alternative. Though much of the
inspiration for the romantic feudal South was drawn from England, in Kennedy’s novel the South is
perceived as having greater levels of freedom and operating as, almost perversely, a land where the
aristocrat could be free from oppression.

For all Kennedy’s approval of the aristocratic character of the South, however, he does
allow a little criticism of the Southern pretension to aristocracy to find its way into *Swallow Barn.*
Frank Meriwether’s sister, Prudence, is described as having ‘an awful idea of the perfect
respectability, I might almost say splendor, of her lineage, and this is one of the few points upon
which I know her to be touchy’ (49). This criticism is far from barbed; it is merely a gentle pricking
of pretentiousness. It is still worth noting, however, that in doing this Kennedy is writing in a mode
that can be identified in Southern literature more widely, established by more eminent writers like
William Gilmore Simms and James Kirke Paulding.55 Despite the belligerent defences of their
society that Southerners would often mount, it was no unusual thing for a Southern writer to critique
the society that he or she would simultaneously try to promote. In fact, this is one reason to read
antebellum Southern writers today. As Gray has suggested, ‘the interest their work holds is, as a

55 Examples of this tendency towards limited cultural self-critique can be seen in such fictions as William
Gilmore Simms, *The Sword and the Distaff; or, ‘Fair, Fat, and Forty’. A Story of the South at the Close of the
Revolution* (1853) and James Kirke Paulding, *Westward Ho!* (1832).
result, nicely double-edged; since, however tough their specific, local criticisms of Southern life may be, that criticism is subverted by their original willingness to accept some part of the South’s own image of itself. As we have seen, Prudence is gently mocked for an overdeveloped sense of pride in her lineage, although elsewhere in the narrative Kennedy implicitly agrees with all manner of aristocratic sentiments. It is perhaps because her pride relates to ancestry that Kennedy does not condemn her more fully for her touchiness on the subject. Were it not something so ingrained in the Southern consciousness, perhaps a more probing examination of her manners would have been undertaken.

Although it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the work of Kennedy and Tucker will be aligned with the writing of Charles Dickens, the latter has perhaps not been particularly visible up to this point. This will alter as the chapter progresses, but there is an important reason for his relative absence so far, connected to the issue of States’ rights. Trollope, as we have seen, engaged fully with Southerners on their own terms, writing of his support for the existence of a confederacy of Southern states alongside the existing Union. Trollope wrote in *North America* that ‘to me it has always seemed that to mix up the question of general abolition with [the American Civil] war must be the work of a man too ignorant to understand the real subject of the war, or too false to his country to regard it’ (132). For Trollope, the Civil War was principally about the South’s right to self-determine, and about the sovereignty of states. By contrast, Dickens did not spend a lot of time writing about the issue of States’ rights, preferring to write instead on what he perceived to be the underlying issue of the antagonism: slavery.

‘Over-contented blacks’: Slavery in Antebellum Plantation Literature

‘During the three-quarters of a century following the war for independence, American slavery, although increasingly confined to the South, underwent massive expansion.’ The institution of American slavery was so insidious, its effects and influences so far-reaching, its importance in a multitude of political and social dimensions so obvious, it must be prioritized in any study of the antebellum South. As Peter Kolchin has noted: ‘slavery undergirded the Southern economy, Southern politics, and, increasingly, Southern literary expression.’

Slavery, as we saw in Part One, occupied a fraught, paradoxical place in the Southern pastoral imagination from the time of Jefferson. It has already been noted that, by contemporary values, he would be judged a racist, and yet it is also apparent that his writings would have identified him as a liberal by the standards of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Virginia. We have seen previously how Jefferson wrote of freeing slaves and of their eventual return to

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56 Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 45.
Africa. However, Southern interpretations of Jefferson worked rather differently, with conservatives drawing from his actions, if not always from his writings, an ideology of white racial supremacy:

Having assailed the natural rights premises of the reformers, the conservatives went on to argue that emancipation was impractical. What better proof was wanted than Jefferson’s own conduct! He never liberated his slaves, but ‘perpetuated their condition by the last solemn act of his life; which is sufficient… to put to flight all the conclusions that have been drawn from the expressions of his abstract opinions’. His scheme of emancipation was only a ‘day dream’. He never went before the public as its advocate.59

Indeed, ‘when the Virginia legislature passed a law allowing private manumission of slaves, Jefferson […] one of the wealthiest men in the state, made no move to take advantage of the statute.’60 This is yet another example of the contradictions of Jefferson which allowed every Southerner, regardless of position or opinion, to consider him- or herself legitimately part of the Jeffersonian tradition. It is not difficult to see, considering not only the retention of his own slaves but his written opinions on the physiology and psychology of African Americans, how Jefferson could attract as many conservatives who believed in the inferiority of the slave, as progressive figures who wished to see an end to slavery. What is apparent is that the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and the sponsor of an American yeoman ideal, a farming meritocracy, became the posthumous standard bearer for a quasi-aristocratic political elite who lived in luxury from the proceeds of the labour of people of colour.

This was the South that Charles Dickens visited, and on returning to England he took aim squarely at slavery. The final chapter of American Notes is concerned with the institution, though it would be foolish to assume that Dickens’s ideas about race were straightforward. By the time he made his journey to America, Dickens had already written Oliver Twist (1838), complete with the villainous Jewish stereotype, Fagin (perhaps subsequently atoned for at some level by the character of Mr. Riah in Our Mutual Friend [1865]). His response to the Indian Rebellion of 1857, too, could hardly be called restrained, claiming that were he commander-in-chief in India he would ‘strike that Oriental race with amazement […] to blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the earth’.61 However, Grace Moore notes that, ‘for a Victorian, support for the emancipation of North American slaves was by no means incompatible with strong opinions on the inferiority of non-white peoples.’62 On the credit side, Dickens had connections to leading abolitionist Charles Sumner, ‘who would remain attached to him for the rest of his life’.63 The cases of Fagin and the Indian Mutiny, however, show that although Dickens took a notably liberal position on the issue of American

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59 Petersen, The Jefferson Image, p. 49.
60 Cobb, Away Down South, p. 19.
slavery, this was not a position that he held in all instances concerning race. Dickens was a man of
his time, created as much by imperial Britain as by the Republican philosophy he admired in the
United States, and it is important to consider him as the complex figure he was, rather than being
selective with the evidence and assigning him a character less troubling to us in the twenty-first
century.

Although his imagination of race seems at times to have been coloured by concerns of
empire, across the Atlantic Dickens certainly came down squarely on the abolitionists’ side, and
dedicated a large portion of *American Notes* to a denunciation of slavery in the United States. He
begins the relevant chapter of the book by suggesting that ‘of the atrocities of [the slave] system, I
shall not write one word for which I have not ample proof and warrant’ (250). Dickens is not, then,
pulling his punches so as to avoid offending his hosts. In using the word ‘atrocities’, he implies that
the institution of slavery generates, and also legitimizes, acts that are extraordinarily evil.
Predictably, both Tucker and Kennedy, as members of the society that fostered the institution,
framed slavery rather differently. For example, *Swallow Barn* presents a scene of Virginia in which
the black labourers are looked after well, or indeed spoiled, by their white overlords. In the very first
reference made to African Americans in the novel, they are described as ‘over-contented blacks’
(19). This phrasing evokes a feeling of indulgence, and from the beginning conjures up the idea that
black people are not victims of an exploitative socio-economic system, but more in the mould of a
favoured pet or pandered-to child. There are also many more descriptions of such favoured
treatment throughout the novel. On arrival at Swallow Barn itself, Littleton sketches how the
running of the estate and the leisure activities of slaves come into conflict on occasion:

> I observe the family linen is usually spread out by some three or four negro women, who
chant shrill music over their wash-tubs, and seem to live in endless warfare with sundry
little besmirched and bow-legged blacks, who are never tired of making somersets, and
mischievously pushing each other on the clothes laid out to dry. (29)

This scene is presented as rather humorous, setting up a clash between the delicate linen and the less
pristine younger slaves. More troublingly, though, we might agree here with Alexander Saxton, who
observes that slave children at Swallow Barn precisely convey a sense of paternalism, given that
they are ‘little bright-eyed animals, comic, sometimes lovable, always troublesome; yet less than
human because incapable of maturing beyond the mental and moral limits of childishness’. Saxton
is right in one key regard; the emphasis, despite the presence of working slave women, is on the
childishness of the slaves, both in their turning ‘somersets’ and in their mischief-making. The reader
cannot help but wonder about the ideological motivations of this converting into carnival of the
punitive slave economy. Kennedy implies that the employment of slaves is a difficult matter for

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Southern whites, one that involves great indulgence and is as much a hindrance to the latter as it is a benefit. The passage also suggests that the Southern pastoral idyll is accessible in a limited way for African Americans as the children play, and it is here that Kennedy deviates from Jefferson whose yeoman ideal, being tied to the possibility of land ownership, necessarily excluded black people. Crucially, though, in this scene we can still see work going on and it is black hands, not white, that are doing it.

While still in the introductory epistle, Kennedy gives us our first detailed portrait of a black man. He is described as being ‘an old free negro’ (21). There is something extremely suggestive about the decision to make the character of Scipio free, rather than a slave. While not exactly a demographic impossibility, it would have been massively improbable that the first black person a visitor met in the South during this period would have been free. Hugh Brogan has claimed that ‘by 1860 […] there were nearly four million slaves […] and only 488,000 free blacks.’ 65 Thus the traveller would have been at least seven or eight times more likely to meet a slave than a free black person in 1860 – almost thirty years after Swallow Barn was written, a time when the ratio would have been even less favourable. By introducing a free black character this early in the narrative, Kennedy implicitly challenges hostile accounts of the extent of slavery in the South and magnifies the possibilities for African American freedom in the region. However, before we learn that Scipio is black, we are told by Littleton that he follows at ‘a most respectful distance behind me’ (21). Even in freedom, then, black must defer to, and serve, white in this novel.

Perhaps the most important black character in Swallow Barn is Carey, the slave of Frank Meriweather. The relationship between the two is presented less as that of master and servant and more as one between equals. Carey is responsible for the care of the horses, and Kennedy writes that ‘he and Frank hold grave and momentous consultations upon the affairs of the stable, in such a sagacious strain of equal debate, that it would puzzle a spectator to tell which was the leading member in the council’ (36). Just as with his novel’s account of slaves’ leisure time and of the number of people involved in the institution, Kennedy subverts the expectation of the master-slave relationship by suggesting that, while this relationship exists, it is far from an inflexible hierarchy. Rather, the implication is that the connection is one of mutual exchange beneficial to both parties. This presentation goes some way towards countering the idea that a master had all his slaves at his mercy and in a state of docile submission. Littleton documents a conversation between Frank and Carey to further this point:

Meriweather gets a little nettled by Carey’s doggedness, but generally turns it off in a laugh. I was in the stable with him, a few mornings after my arrival, when he ventured to expostulate with the venerable groom upon a professional point, but the controversy

terminated in its customary way. ‘Who sot you up, Master Frank, to tell me how to fodder that ’ere cretur, when I as good as nursed you on my knee?’

‘Well, tie up your tongue, you old mastiff,’ replied Frank, as he walked out of the stable, ‘and cease growling, since you will have it your own way;’ - and then, as we left the old man’s presence, he added, with an affectionate chuckle - ‘a faithful old cur, too, that snaps at me out of pure honesty; he has not many years left, and it does no harm to humour him!’ (37)

In this brief altercation, the idea that Carey is timid and submissive is dismissed, as is the idea that Meriweather and, by extension, all masters necessarily force their slaves into a meek and passive existence. When his authority is challenged by Carey, rather than responding with discipline and ordering or administering a beating, Meriweather retorts good-humouredly and allows his slave to have his own way. Again, modern readers of the novel may find themselves questioning the likelihood of such an event taking place and be sceptical about Kennedy’s presentation of the South, yet while the passage might on the surface suggest a relationship of equals, Kennedy in fact implies that there is a more complex power relation going on. Not being able to tell the master from the slave suggests that there are a master and slave to be told apart to begin with. Also, the language used in this verbal exchange suggests profound inequality of status. Although Carey challenges Frank’s judgment, he refers to him as ‘Master Frank’, and while it cannot be argued that he is wholly deferential, he is at least respectful in his dissent and uses some language of deference. By contrast, Frank refers to him as a ‘mastiff’ and a ‘cur’, not speaking to or of Carey as an equal but using bestial imagery to describe the slave and comparing him with a dog rather than showing him the courtesy one Southern gentleman would show another. Such disrespect is hardly confined to Frank Meriweather, either, and the readiness with which white characters in *Swallow Barn* use animal imagery to describe the slaves is troubling, if unsurprising. In one of the more unsavoury comparisons, Mark Littleton (Kennedy’s own pen name, recall, as well as that of the fictitious narrator of *Swallow Barn*) makes reference to ‘a little ape-faced negro’ (107). The narrator also suggests that ‘sometimes these monkeys were asleep for hours on their steeds’ (138). Just as Meriweather utilizes canine metaphors, Littleton ‘employs primate images to dehumanize the slaves he encounters’. Such attitudes are widespread and undermine any pretence of mutual respect within the model of slavery that the novel offers. Later in the narrative, Frank says of Carey that, ‘rather than disturb the peace, I must submit to his authority’ (448), a sentiment which would only have avoided shocking a contemporaneous audience because it is in essence false: the existing power structure remains intact. Slaves can be allowed latitude without disturbing the social

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hierarchy, since it is always Meriwhether who determines the extent of such liberty. Also, finally, of interest is the choice of the word ‘generally’ in the lengthy passage from Swallow Barn quoted above. The reader is never actually allowed to see what happens on those less frequent occasions when Frank does not respond to such challenges from Carey with good humour.

Tucker also attempts in The Partisan Leader to challenge liberal understandings of the relationship between master and slave, but in his case by, improbably, stripping out slavery’s racial content. Rather than seemingly invert the relations between white and black as Kennedy does, Tucker builds on the ideas of States’ rights to create an entirely different, regionally coded paradigm of slavery. We can begin to identify this in a scene in which Captain Douglas and Mr. Trevor receive a response to the former’s resignation from the Union army:

As soon as Mr. Trevor read it, he exclaimed, ‘Thank God! You are now a freeman.’

‘I am truly thankful for it,’ replied Douglas, ‘though I feel as if I shall never lose the mark of the collar which reminds me I have been a slave. But, until within a short time past, I have never felt that I was.’

‘When the bondage reaches to the mind,’ said Mr. Trevor, ‘it is not felt.’

‘And was mine enslaved,’ asked Douglas, ‘when my thoughts were as free as air?’

‘Their prison was airy,’ replied the old gentleman, ‘and roomy, and splendidly fitted up. But look at the President’s letters, and see the penalties you might have incurred, had your freedom of thought rambled into such opinions as many of your best friends entertain.’

This suggested transposition of slavery onto the white race brings to mind Poggioli’s notion of ‘an inverted pastoral’.68 If the reader considers the effect of this reversal of slavery on an antebellum Southern reader, we might see how, as Bakker suggests, ‘sometimes this denial or inversion of pastoral even evokes a shudder’.69 In this text the North is positioned as a tyrant, and the Southern slaveholder is cast into the role of slave. Tucker implies that the process of subjugation has already begun, by stressing that the South is being punished, unconstitutionally, for its freedom of thought. In this way, paradoxically, The Partisan Leader seizes upon the language of abolitionism and turns it against itself so as to invoke a sense of outrage on behalf of victimized Southern slaveholders. By arguing that in the slave system each race is performing the task that it is fit for, Tucker paints abolition as an unnatural philosophy that would subvert the existing order and remove Southern whites from the position of dominance which they considered themselves born to, also casting Northerners as would-be slaveholders. The vision is precisely one of a pastoral order under threat. Roger Sales has argued that in much English pastoral poetry, ‘all the problems [are] caused by an

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69 Bakker, Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance, p. 2.
alien, urban radicalism.\textsuperscript{70} We can clearly see Tucker adopting a similar position, but here it is abolitionism, rather than Jacobinism, that is the brand of radicalism to be feared.

*Swallow Barn* tries repeatedly to refute the suggestion that physical punishment of slaves was administered regularly as a matter of course. The exchange between Frank and Carey is one example of this. Another occurs in the chapter ‘My Grand Uncle’, in which an incident with a malfunctioning mill causes a problem between Edward Hazard, a Southern landowner and ancestor of the aforementioned Ned, and one of his slaves. After he instructed a slave to be silent, his worker continued to offer an opinion on the cause of the problem:

> It is said that my grand uncle looked at the black with the most awful face he ever put on in his life. It was blood-red with anger. But, bethinking himself for a moment, he remained silent, as if to subdue his temper.

> There was something, however, in the simple observation of the negro, that responded exactly to my grand uncle’s secret thoughts; and some such conviction rising up in his mind, gradually lent its aid to smother his wrath. How could he beat the poor fellow for speaking the truth! (135-36)

This scene could almost be seen as a direct rebuttal to mid-nineteenth century abolitionists such as David Walker and William Lloyd Garrison. While the passage does not presume to claim that all slaveholders are responsible people, or suggest that no abuses of slaves occur, its presentation of a reasonable man restraining himself rather than simply giving into his anger seeks to demonstrate that the institution of slavery does not make slaveholders more brutal as a matter of course.\textsuperscript{71} By contrast, Tucker is remarkably quiet on the question of physical punishment, offering no substantive refutation or defence, perhaps instead hoping to imply its absence by his silence. However, there is one moment in *The Partisan Leader* in which the reader perhaps gains an insight into the world of discipline. During the Southern insurrection against Van Buren’s North, a slave is singing as he happens upon a sentry post, and is challenged. The final lyrics to his song are ‘My massa whip me, cause I love you’ (151). While this hardly provides a catalogue of evidence, it could be an unconscious revelation, and is as close as we get to a black voice giving testimony as to how he is treated. This, then, goes some way towards refuting the line that Kennedy takes in *Swallow Barn*. It implies that physical discipline could be imposed for any reason, regardless of a slave’s abilities as a labourer. Transgressing the wishes of the master, even (or perhaps especially) in matters of the heart, is reason enough for a whipping. We can see, though, from both novelists’ relative silence on the issue of punishment, that the concerns of the slaveholder were greatly different from those of the slaves themselves, since ‘slaves used this criterion above all others in rating their owners: a “good”


\textsuperscript{71} Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, claimed that slavery led to moral deformity in white Southern society, evoking ‘the voluptuousness of holding a human being in […] absolute control’. See *Emerson’s Antislavery Writings*, ed. by Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 17.
master was one who rarely or never subjected his people to corporal punishment, while a “bad” master was one who did so incessantly, cruelly, and for trifling or non-existent offences.72 Considering that punishment was an issue of prime importance for slaves, and that it barely features in the two novels under discussion here, it becomes clear just how far removed the white Southern elite were from the concerns of those they held in bondage. We might also see this, once again, as pastoral literature obscuring the harsh realities of an agricultural labourer’s life.

Since both novels attempt to close ranks around the issue of violence, we need to read outside them in order to see with more clarity that which they conceal. Dickens responds to the issue of violence not by focusing on the effects on victims (which Southerners had experience in rebutting and, effectively, dismissing) but rather by analysing the motives of, and effects on, the perpetrator:

The ground most commonly taken by those better men among the advocates of slavery, is this: “it is a bad system; and for myself I would willingly get rid of it, if I could; most willingly. But it is not so bad, as you in England take it to be. You are deceived by the representation of the emancipationists. The greater part of my slaves are much attached to me. You will say that I do not allow them to be severely treated. But I will put it to you whether you believe that it can be a general practice to treat them inhumanly, when it would impair their value, and would be obviously against the interests of their masters.”

Is it the interest of any man to steal, to game, to waste his health and mental faculties by drunkenness, to lie, forswear himself, indulge hatred, seek desperate revenge, or do murder? No. All these are roads to ruin. And why, then, do men tread them? Because such inclinations are among the vicious qualities of mankind. Blot out, ye friends of slavery, from the catalogue of human passions, brutal lust, cruelty, and the abuse of irresponsible power (of all earthly temptations the most difficult to be resisted), and when ye have done so, and not before, we will inquire whether it be the interest of a master to lash and maim the slaves, over whose lives and limbs he has an absolute control. (251-52)

Here, Dickens refutes the idea that slaves would not be physically punished because they are materially valuable to their owners. He begins by pointing out that there are many human actions that have no innate value to their perpetrator. It is significant that Dickens should choose to mention the imbibing of alcohol, since ‘the colleges of the South remained jokes until the twentieth century. Instead of science and Greek, the young gentlemen learned to hold their liquor, or at least not to mind getting blind drunk.’73 While Dickens makes no mention of the college system in American Notes, his line of argument allows us to draw a parallel between one Southern institution – slavery – and another, its education system. The colleges of the South operated in such a way as to be nearly valueless, especially in comparison with their Northern counterparts. One might attribute the South’s failure to improve its universities to its excessive pride in its own culture, its pretension to superiority through pastoral simplicity, and it is the harmful feelings (such as excessive pride) engendered in slaveholders themselves, rather than a catalogue of injuries to their victims, that Dickens chooses to focus on here. After establishing that humanity does not necessarily act in its

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72 Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877*, p. 120.
best interests, Dickens shifts our gaze to psychological reasons why, highlighting a callousness towards others that results from slavery. His point is that slavery, by giving one individual such power over another, fuels the darker side of our nature and makes brutality inevitable. The effect of this shift in focus to the perpetrators is to make one question the veracity of the Southern statements on violence against slaves, not least because it is couched in biblical terms such as temptation. While there are pious individuals, many more are prone to giving into temptation, be it drink, gambling or brutality. Cobb implies that this was no invention on Dickens’s part but was based on historical fact, writing that ‘slavery weakened the planter not only by freeing him from labour but by tempting him to immoral and abusive behaviour.’

The presentation of Southerners as reliable stewards of the pastoral landscape and the slaves who manage it has little sway over Dickens. Problems arise, though, when we triangulate our study by juxtaposing *Swallow Barn* and *The Partisan Leader* not only with Dickens but with other British texts. Trollope, in *North America*, actually presents slavery in much the same way that Kennedy and Tucker do, arguing that ‘the slave as a rule is well treated – he gets all he wants and almost all he desires. The free negro as a rule is ill-treated and does not get that consideration which alone might put him in the worldly position for which his advocate declares him to be fit’ (182). The difference between the positions of Trollope and Dickens indicates that although Southern self-interest (due to the immense value of their human property) had some bearing on the slavery debate, the question could never be reduced simply to people defending the indefensible in order to protect their own assets. Neither Trollope nor Dickens stood to gain anything from slavery and, as Englishmen, could comment on the institution without the need to guard their own interests, yet they ended up on opposite sides of the argument. While the economic benefits to the South are obvious, the differing responses of the English writers under study suggest that the slavery question was genuinely bound up with many other considerations concerning the morality of the institution, the practicality of emancipation, and the perceived nature of African Americans and their future relations with their former masters. Reading Dickens shows us the holes in the arguments of the Southerners; reading Trollope shows us that they were not alone in believing those arguments had merit.

One of these Southern arguments was that relationships between white and black in the region were more equal and, indeed, fraternal than outsiders would characterize them. However, the exchange quoted earlier between Meriwhether and Carey in the stable in *Swallow Barn* undoes Kennedy’s temporary pretence that white and black are more equal than alleged by slavery’s critics. What we have instead in the novel, then, is a portrayal of a society in which white Southerners are caring and considerate owners of slaves, in the mould of a pastoral shepherd, while blacks play the role of sheep and are beneficiaries of their care and generosity. As Christopher Collins suggests, an implication of this pastoral analogy is that the propertyless workers are mere human livestock who

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74 Cobb, *Away Down South*, p. 28.
are raised, fed, and bred by the shepherd to provide reliable labor […] the “good” slaveholder is similarly a “good shepherd”’.75 In one example of this supposed generosity, Mark Littleton describes how he ‘distributed largesses, with a prodigal hand, amongst the negroes’ (57). He goes on to suggest that ‘the rogues gave me their parting benedictions;— for I always had a vagabond fondness for the blacks about the establishment’ (57). This testimony evokes a relationship of asymmetrical exchange between the two races. The slaves serve the whites, who in turn act as stewards over them, indulging them with gifts at their discretion, all done with a sense of mutual affection on both sides. Terence Whalen suggests that Tucker does something similar in The Partisan Leader, by implying that ‘the master-slave relationship is essentially familial’.76 Rather than focusing on strife, this novel elucidates the affective connection between slaves and their masters:

Yet they, thus considered, are one integral part of the great black family, which, in all its branches, is united by similar ligaments to the great white family. You have the benefit of the parental feeling of the old who nursed your infancy, and watched your growth. You have the equal friendship of those with whom you ran races, and played at bandy, and wrestled in your boyhood. If sometimes a dry blow passed between you, they love you none the less for that; because, unless you were differently trained from what is common among our boys, you were taught not to claim any privilege, in a fight, over those whom you treated as equals in play. Then you have the grateful and admiring affection of the little urchin whose head you patted when you came home, making him proud by asking his name, and his mammy’s name, and his daddy’s name. These are the filaments which the heart puts out to lay hold on what it clings to. Great interests, like large branches, are too stiff to twine. These are the fibres from which the ties that bind man to man are spun. (142-43)

Bracketing questions of slavery’s coerciveness, Tucker presents an idyllic vision of race relations to stress how mutually beneficial the current system is. The thrust of his argument is that the slaves and their masters are too emotionally connected, too intertwined, for any genuine mistreatment or ill-feeling to exist between the two races. Anything of that sort is simply the result of certain individuals not being taught in the fashion that white slaveholding society would expect. There is also an implicit condemnation here of abolitionism, which in this paragraph begins to look as if it would sever familial links between the races, and leave them strangers to each other.

Despite Swallow Barn’s status as a romance, Kennedy still finds time to insert a lengthy vindication of slavery, in the chapter ‘The Quarter’. It is perhaps for this reason that Kevin J. Hayes suggests that the popularity of the novel, and the amount of scholarly attention it has received, have declined because ‘some passages of the book are hard to receive with anything but scorn today.’77

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75 Christopher Collins, Authority Figures: Metaphors of Mastery from the Iliad to the Apocalypse (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p. 22.
This section leaves the plot of the novel behind, and instead focuses explicitly on slavery through the eye-witness account of Littleton. He begins by reiterating that Frank Meriweather is kindly and just with his slaves, before making mention of his relations with overseers:

He has constituted himself into a high court of appeal, and makes it a rule to give all their petitions a patient hearing, and to do justice in the premises. This, he tells me, he considers as indispensably necessary; he says that no overseer is entirely to be trusted: that there are few men who have the temper to administer wholesome laws to any population, however small, without some omissions or irregularities; and that this is more emphatically true of those who administer them entirely at their own will. (451)

Here, a distinction is set up between the slaveholder on the one hand and the overseer on the other. It is this distinction that allows Kennedy to acknowledge the abuses in the slave system without laying responsibility at the door of the Southern quasi-aristocracy. By admitting that overseers can potentially overstep the bounds of decent society, the perspective is changed so that now it is not the institution of slavery itself that is cruel, but rather specific individuals. The implication is that Frank Meriweather administers his overseers and slaves to prevent abuses of the system, and by this means evil is redistributed from this system itself to those few aberrant slaveholders that do not take such an active interest in promoting fairness.

Some Southerners, such as Jefferson Davis, the future President of the Confederate States of America, made political capital out of this distinction between slaveholders and professionals involved in the institution: ‘Unlike the care of slaves, he insisted, the traffic in them was something that he and his neighbours deplored. But then, he added, it was nothing to do with them: for “traders […] are usually northern men, who come among us but are not of us.”’ 78 Similarly, overseers (often also portrayed as non-Southerners) had an undesirable social position, since ‘conventional wisdom, sustained by scholarly judgment, dictates that overseers were social pariahs who seldom conducted themselves professionally and rarely fulfilled their employers’ expectations.’ 79 In this division between professionals and noble slaveholders, Davis simultaneously manages to defend the institution in the South and undermine the moral superiority of the North. A contemporary observer, of course, may note that, without the demand for slave labour in the South, the traffic in slaves that Southerners like Davis considered ‘deplorable’ would not have existed, nor would the vocation of overseer. Also, it must be noted that

The cotton boom also enabled slave owners in the non-cotton-producing states to profit from a commodity they did have in abundance: slaves. During the half century preceding the Civil War, slave owners moved hundreds of thousands of ‘surplus’ slaves west, mostly from non-cotton-producing to cotton-producing states […] the long-distance domestic slave trade, which reached significant dimensions just when the international slave trade to

78 Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 42.
America was coming to an end, not only replaced that international trade but also replicated (if on a reduced level) many of its horrors.80

As is clear, the 1808 ban on importing slaves into the United States meant that the internal slave trade was of immense value to many of those same Southerners who condemned it as primarily a Northern business. However, in the antebellum South such defences of the institution’s caring nature as mounted by Kennedy, Davis and others also had strong currency.

Mark Littleton’s defence of slavery in Swallow Barn continues by making reference to existing Northern preconceptions about Southern slavery:

I came here a stranger, in great degree, to the negro character, knowing but little of the domestic history of these people, their duties, habits or temper, and somewhat disposed, indeed, from prepossessions, to look upon them as severely dealt with and expecting to have my sympathies excited towards them as objects of commiseration. I have had, therefore, rather a special interest in observing them. The contrast between my preconceptions of their condition and the reality which I have witnessed, has brought me a most agreeable surprise. I will not say that, in a high state of cultivation and of such self-dependence as they might possibly attain in a separate national existence, they might not become a more respectable people; but I am quite sure they could never become a happier people than I find them here. (452-53)

This section of the text stages in effect a conversion narrative, in which Littleton, having gone to the South as a critic of slavery, leaves Swallow Barn with a new-found appreciation for the institution. However, while distinctions between the two figures sometimes collapse, it is important to remember that Kennedy is no more Mark Littleton than Jonathan Swift is Lemuel Gulliver. This is no genuine conversion, but rather Kennedy’s use of a fiction that Littleton has been on a journey through the South to refute the abolitionists’ suggestion that the condition of the majority of slaves is miserable. Indeed, his claim that ‘from what I can gather, it is pretty much the same on the other estates in this region’ works toward establishing the presentation of slavery in Swallow Barn as the norm, and asserting that abuses of the system are far from commonplace – arguing, in fact, that ‘the unfavourable case is not more common than that which may be found in a survey of any other department of society’ (453). Bakker notes that by the end of the novel, ‘Mark Littleton is quite ready and even glad to return to the active life of the city’, potentially bringing into question how seriously we should take this idea of a pastoral idyll. However, the strength of the idyll’s attraction fluctuates throughout Swallow Barn.81 When we consider ‘Littleton’s commitment to his newly formed views’ on slavery, then he starts to share some of the characteristics of a key figure in pastoral: the visitor from a more sophisticated, yet degraded world ‘outside’ the idealized rural world who encounters, with surprise and wonder, a happy, simple and functioning society.82

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80 Kolchin, American Slavery 1619-1877, p. 96.
81 Bakker, Pastoral in Antebellum Southern Romance, p. 48.
82 Jones, Unwelcome Voices, p. 140.
the idyllic qualities of *Swallow Barn* are often contestable, they are at their most believable when most closely connected with slavery. Perhaps this is unsurprising, since it has been claimed that one of the reasons for releasing a revised edition was for Kennedy’s novel ‘to reflect his own antiabolitionist views’.  

The problem for Kennedy, however, when we read *Swallow Barn* alongside *American Notes*, is that Dickens actually was a stranger who travelled to the South, and he left with far more sympathy for the slaves than Kennedy’s imagined voyager. Upon returning to England and compiling his travel narrative, Dickens wrote in *American Notes* that ‘slavery is not a whit the more endurable because some hearts are to be found which can partially resist its hardening influences; nor can the indignant tide of honest wrath stand still, because in its onward course it overwhelm a few who are comparatively innocent, among a host of guilty’ (251). By giving us the views of an actual traveller, rather than a fictitious one created by a native of the slave states, Dickens effectively problematizes Kennedy’s literary device. In this exercise of comparative, transatlantic reading, the narrator of *Swallow Barn* becomes suspect, and we become wary of anything he might have to say regarding slavery since it does not concur with accredited eye-witness testimony. However, once again, reading Trollope complicates a simple binary opposition between English sentiment, as exemplified by Dickens, and the Southern writers. Trollope, also a genuine traveller, writes in *North America* that the slave dwellings he visited in Kentucky were ‘preferable in size, furniture and all material comforts to the dwellings of most of our own agricultural labourers’ (190). While this may have been written more to draw attention to the plight of rural labourers at home, it nevertheless has the effect of querying whether Dickens is straightforwardly shining a light upon the true condition of slavery. Trollope’s representation does allow us to look more favourably on the Southern narratives than we might otherwise be inclined to today. In the twenty-first century, we know all about the abuses of slavery: they are all too well-documented. But perhaps, if an outsider such as Trollope could travel to the United States and look favourably on the conditions of slaves, then conditions may have varied significantly between estates and plantations, and perhaps the views offered by Kennedy and his contemporaries are, while historically subjective and based on now-outdated assumptions, fundamentally authentic? We must, of course, be aware of Trollope’s own ideological position when considering his evidence, and indeed some of his pronouncements on race are far from progressive; but scholars wishing to use his work as a mirror on Southern society should be encouraged by the fact that he was no Southern apologist. He criticizes the aristocratic pretensions and nepotism of the region, recalling that ‘while Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Pierce, and Mr. Polk were Presidents, no officer or board of officers then at West Point was able to dismiss a lad whose father was a Southerner, and who had friends among the government’ (105). Trollope, then,

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was certainly capable of criticizing the South when it occurred to him, and one might surmise from its absence elsewhere in his text that the estates he visited provided him with no reason to condemn the treatment of slaves.

Kennedy turns to defend the institution of slavery by arguing that the institution is not one of benefit for the white community, but is founded on black dependency. He asserts this in strong terms, proclaiming that ‘the negro is [...] essentially parasitical in nature. I mean that he is, in his moral constitution, a dependant upon the white race’ (453). This is, in essence, the paternalistic defence of slavery, one which states that though slavery may be an evil (more on this later), emancipation would be a far worse fate for the black community than continued servitude: what Kennedy calls ‘that most cruel of all projects – the direct, broad emancipation of these people’ (454). While we may consider this a peculiar kind of Southern self-deception, in reality this view had many supporters outside the South, even in Britain, which had outlawed slavery and the slave trade long before the American Civil War. In *North America*, Trollope seems to agree unequivocally with these arguments of black dependency:

> The Negroes who have been slaves are not fit for freedom. In many cases, practically, they cannot be enfranchised. Give them their liberty, starting them well in the world at what expense you please, and at the end of six months they will come back upon your hands for the means of support. Everything must be done for them. (180)

After reading the work of Trollope and other visitors to the South, we may have to amend, to some degree, our thoughts about how Southerners viewed their slaves. The idea of white superiority was not simply a political smokescreen, employed only by a minority and exclusively as a consequence of proximity to slavery. Rather, it was a well-held opinion, believed across regions, nations and political positions. In this instance, Trollope’s is a parallax view which reveals that, while the Southern states were ideologically removed from other regions and nations at the time, they were not so distanced as we might imagine.

After establishing that emancipation would be cruel, to counter further arguments Kennedy changes tack and considers the institution of slavery temporally:

> Taking instruction from history, all organised slavery is inevitably but a temporary phase of human condition. Interest, necessity and instinct, all work to give progression to the relations of mankind, and finally to elevate each tribe or race to its maximum of refinement and power. We have no reason to suppose that the negro will be an exception to this law. (454)

By taking this line, Kennedy refutes the argument that slavery will exist in perpetuity. Instead, slavery becomes a transitional stage through which black people must ‘ascend’ to the levels of sophistication prevalent in white communities. Again, this language shows African Americans as immature beings, with slavery functioning as a natural gestation period for their cultural
development. Gray refers to this as a ‘patriarchal’ structure of feeling, as opposed to the populist. He outlines the distinction thus:

Within the patriarchal structure, the Negro slave could be granted at least a subordinate place, and could therefore be regarded as a human being – one with ‘a lower order of intellect’, perhaps, ‘of another and inferior race’ but capable, nevertheless, of being educated to a degree and taught the blessings of civilization. Within the populist structure, however, he had no specifically human role to play; for a system predicated on a belief in the independence and self-reliance of its every member had, by definition, to exclude slaves and reduce them to the status of goods and chattel. Naturally, these two ways of viewing the slave […] led to conflicts of practice and, indeed, contradictions in principle.84

Being a skilled politician, Kennedy’s rhetoric in Swallow Barn is clearly in keeping with a patriarchal model, and consequently ensures that it is at least somewhat palatable for the majority of Americans, unlike populist arguments whose political currency was generally limited to the South itself. He then goes on to say that slavery is ‘theoretically and morally wrong’ before arguing that ‘we should not be justified in taking the hazard of internal convulsions to get rid of them; nor have we a right, in the desire to free ourselves, to whelm them in greater evils than their present bondage’ (455-56). By framing the issue this way, Kennedy accomplishes two things. Firstly, by recognizing the immorality of slavery, he wrests the moral high ground away from the abolitionists. It is no longer a question of morality because all sides are agreed that, in Cobb’s précis, slavery was ‘an unwanted legacy of British colonialism of which they would gladly be shed if only some practicable means of doing so could be devised’.85 The issue thereby becomes, instead, one of policy and the most pragmatic way forward. Secondly, Kennedy is able to present the white South as self-sacrificing rather than exploitative, further trading on the image of a patriarchal slaveholding class. Dickens is somewhat quiet on the matter of American slavery’s economic exploitations, perhaps because of the legacy left by the British Empire in many other parts of the world, but it is telling that he refers in American Notes to some slaveholders as having ‘come into possession of [slaves] as so many coins in their trading capital’ (250). Although this one comment is far from providing an extensive array of evidence, it is important to remember it when we consider how Kennedy, by contrast, shows a South that does not retain slavery because it is lucrative, but rather out of a sense of duty to its black communities. The implication is that the region would gladly relinquish it, were it practical and humane to do so. Kennedy has Frank Meriwether address the Northern United States, and declare that ‘you gentlemen of the North greatly misapprehend us, if you suppose that we are in love with this slave institution – or that, for the most part, we even deem it profitable to us’ (458). Indeed, Brogan asserts that ‘the drawbacks of slavery from the point of view of the whites

84 Gray, Writing the South, p. 43.
85 Cobb, Away Down South, p. 19.
were so glaring that it sometimes seems astonishing it lasted so long.'\textsuperscript{86} To use Meriwhether’s words again, ‘as matters stand, it is the best auxiliary within our reach’ (458). The pastoral idyll cannot, of course, contain anything immoral, and despite using the idyllic as a veil for some of slavery’s more egregious elements, at this moment Kennedy moves away from a pastoral presentation of the South in his defence of slavery.

Meriwhether also briefly mentions retribution as a reason for delaying abolition, stating that ‘we should not be justified in taking the hazard of internal convulsions to get rid’ of the institution (456). In a long list of reasons to defer abolition, this is glossed over and less fully explored, but it is clear that the white South feared reprisals were the slaves ever freed. Tucker is much more equivocal about the issue than Kennedy, and in \textit{The Partisan Leader} he compares attitudes of slaves in the South with servants in the North so as to generate alarm in Southerners:

‘His manners’ said Mr. Trevor, ‘are exactly suited to his situation. Their characteristic is proud humility. The opposite is servile sulkiness, of which, I suspect, Douglas, you have seen no little.’

‘I have seen nothing else,’ said Douglas, ‘among the servants in the North. If the tempers of our negroes were as ferocious, and their feelings as hostile, we should have to cut their throats in self-defence in six months.’

‘I am glad,’ said Mr. Trevor, ‘that you have not learned to sacrifice your own experience to the fanciful theories of the \textit{Amis de Noirs}, at least on this point. The time, I hope, will come when you will see, if you do not already, the fallacy of all their cant and sophistry on the subject of domestic slavery.’ (71-72)

Tucker’s appeal to Southerners, like so much effective propaganda, plays on their fear: specifically, the fear of black retribution. The South had a far larger black population than the North (‘only in New York and Pennsylvania did blacks number more than 10 percent of the total population for any sustained length of time […] in contrast, the black population in the southern states seldom fell below 30 percent and often topped 40 or even 60 percent’\textsuperscript{87}), and ‘guilty slave holders could not believe that their victims would not take a horrible revenge at the first opportunity.’\textsuperscript{88} To inspire this panic, Tucker offers an undesirable view of the conduct of free black people in the North. Combining this with an appraisal of Southern conditions, he then uses this portrayal of the free black population to predict a violent ending to emancipation. The implication is clear: abolitionists claim to be sympathetic to slaves, but in reality their freedom would result in the slaughter of Southern whites. It is safe to say that the intended audience here is not an undecided Northerner: Tucker wishes to harden feelings already prevalent in the South.

We have seen that Kennedy’s justification of slavery usually manifests itself in pleasant sketches and appeals to reason. By contrast, Tucker’s defence of slavery seems to be borne out of a

\textsuperscript{86} Brogan, \textit{The Penguin History of the USA}, p. 284. 
\textsuperscript{88} Brogan, \textit{The Penguin History of the USA}, p. 289.
philosophy of belligerence. From the beginning of *The Partisan Leader*, Tucker describes the institution in such a way as to question both the wisdom and the honesty of Northern abolitionists. Early on in the novel, a character exclaims that

that’s the way with the poor negroes that the Yankees pretended to be so sorry for, and tried to get them to rise against their masters. There’s few of them, stranger, but what’s happier than I am; but I should be mighty unhappy, if you were to catch me now, and make a slave of me. So when the Yankees want to set the negroes free, and to make me a slave, they want to put us both to what we are not fit for. (12-13)

Here, Tucker employs a number of aggressive tactics designed to defend the institution by attacking its critics. Firstly, he attempts to subvert the reader’s initial expectations: while sympathy for African Americans would usually be felt precisely because of their condition as slaves, by describing them as ‘poor negroes’ the effect is to display them as victims not of slaveholders, but of abolitionists. Secondly, by arguing that the ‘Yankees pretended’ to sympathize with the African American situation, Tucker calls into question the veracity of the North, and effectively suggests that the motives of the abolitionists are not humane, but politically manipulative. Ever since the Missouri Compromise of 1819, the South had believed that ‘a plot was afoot among the tyrant majority of free states to destroy the South’. Lastly, the implication that each race is doing what it is ‘fit for’ suggests that there is a natural order to things in the South, which the North’s agitation threatens to disturb. This again links to a trait of the pastoral tradition, where ‘the apparently natural social order of feudal Arcadia becomes, in these texts, the natural social order of a supposedly stable present.’ However, instances of armed struggle such as ‘the aborted Denmark Vesey slave uprising in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822 and the bloody Nat Turner insurrection of 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia, exposed the fallacy of the masters’ conviction that their bondspeople were content and happy’. History would suggest that Tucker’s perspective, which asserts that in the South each race performs the tasks that it was born to, was, predictably, a view that belonged solely to those already socially empowered. This is reminiscent of Gifford’s observation that English pastoral had been criticized for ‘creating a false ideology that served to endorse a comfortable status quo for the landowning class’.

Reading Dickens’s portrayal of the South in *American Notes* reveals that attitudes such as Tucker’s were not uncommon. Dickens writes of one particular journal that ‘the leading article protests against “that abominable and hellish doctrine of abolition, which is repugnant alike to every law of God and nature”’ (254). This kind of rhetoric can hardly be considered measured, and would seem to imply that Tucker’s brand of sabre-rattling was fairly unexceptional. Unlike *Swallow Barn*,

91 Smith, *Debating Slavery*, p. 9.
which, particularly in its revised edition, has been seen as a defence of slavery by a responsible statesman aimed at defusing tension by appealing to both the South and moderates in the North, *The Partisan Leader* is directed squarely at the South.\(^9\) Its goal is not to convince with moderate language, but rather to stiffen resolve with incendiary rhetoric. Gray has suggested that economic and social pressures on the South at the time meant that ‘the region responded by turning in upon itself and adopting what could perhaps best be described as a posture of belligerent defence’.\(^9\) It is accurate to describe *The Partisan Leader* as an example of this confrontational retort, and to say that if it has any message for the North it is not one of willingness to compromise, but rather one stressing the inflexibility of the Southern position and its determination to fight its own corner. In the projected history of *The Partisan Leader*, the South not only goes to war with the North, but defeats it with the help of Britain. The novel is essentially propaganda designed to instil in Southerner and Northerner alike the belief that secession will be successful. Recalling Roger Sales’s point that pastoral is ‘a propagandist reconstruction of history’, however, we can also position *The Partisan Leader*, with its aggressive counter-history, squarely in a pastoral tradition.\(^9\) The fictional date ascribed to the novel allows Tucker to posit a hypothetical idyllic past as a speculative future. The entire setting of the novel is, in effect, a wish-image; Tucker’s novel seems very reminiscent of Auden’s comments concerning the New Jerusalem fantasy:

> The forward looking Utopian […] necessarily believes that his New Jerusalem is a dream which ought to be realised so that the actions by which it could be realised are a necessary element in his dream; it must include images, that is to say, not only of New Jerusalem itself but also images of the Day of Judgement.\(^9\)

In *The Partisan Leader*, Tucker not only shows images of New Jerusalem (his speculative Virginia), but also of the actions that bring it about. War with Van Buren’s corrupted federal government acts here as the Day of Judgement.

Eric H. Walther has noted that *The Partisan Leader* ‘described an effete and decadent Martin Van Buren […] effectively destroying constitutional restraints’.\(^9\) Indeed, it is interesting that Walther should use a word such as ‘effete’, which carries implications for masculinity, since Tucker’s critique of the corrupted North is suggestively gendered; he chooses, for example, to question the propriety of Northern women by saying that ‘A woman exposed to notoriety, learns to bear and then to love it. When she gets to that, she should go North; write books; patronize abolition societies; or keep a boarding school. She is no longer fit to be the wife of a Virginia gentleman’ (88-93).
This critique accomplishes two things. Firstly, it appears to feminize the North, and through Tucker’s eyes we see it as ‘a matriarchal world perceived with, and distorted by, a mixture of humour, hatred and fear’. However, Tucker is also appealing to a prejudice dominant in the South as to the suitable role for a respectable woman. Gray summarizes that ‘white women had to be idle, else they would not have needed slaves [...] so that they could parade before the world perpetually in fine dresses, jewels and carriages – the fruits of slavery, advertisements of their menfolks’ success’. Tucker’s entreaty attempts to instil in Southerners a sense that they are morally superior to their Northern counterparts and this is accomplished by tainting Northern women with the sin of activity. This is what Trollope means when he says in North America that ‘in the South labour has ever been servile – at least in some senses, and therefore dishonourable’ (23). Rebecca Sharpless has noted that ‘slave-owning women were the least likely to work outside’, although she acknowledges that those who migrated westward might often find themselves performing some tasks outdoors. In fact, the slave system created a society in which labour was seen as unfit not just for white women, but for white people more generally, and it is at this point that we begin to see, contrary to Southern claims of a classically inspired democracy, the creation of a white underclass known as ‘white trash’. To see how this development completely contradicts Jefferson, we can again turn to Sharpless, who says that ‘the wives of yeomen worked outside, gardening, milking, and caring for chickens’. It is the wives of the yeomen who are degraded by labour, and it is the yeoman class itself, the heroes of the original Jeffersonian ideal, which goes on to comprise Southern ‘white trash’. Slavery’s victims, then, include not just African Americans, but also economically marginalized white Southerners, who are denied their privileged place in the Southern pastoral idyll as theorized by Jefferson.

While Jefferson was a slaveholder and, consequently, in his own practice came into conflict with his own yeoman ideal, we must note the South’s stunning divergence from his political philosophies here. The sage of Monticello advocated a system of democracy through small farms worked by individuals and families, to ensure that all citizens had a vested interest in the state. By the 1830s, however, this aspect of the Jeffersonian tradition had been largely erased in the Southern consciousness. The South still claimed Jefferson for itself, but generally as a champion of States’ rights and as an opponent of federalism. There was no conceptual space for the yeoman. What is significant is that while this shift occurred in the thinking of the Southern political elite, it does not

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98 Gray, Writing the South, p. 61.
101 While ‘white trash’ may seem like a modern idiom, the Oxford English Dictionary cites the phrase in use in the antebellum South as early as 1831.
seem as if the Southern yeomen themselves felt particularly marginalized: ‘As a rule, the plain folk were not a class-conscious bunch who resented the power of the planter class. Rather, they admired planters’ economic and political success and aspired to move up the southern social hierarchy.’  

However, in Part Three of this thesis we will trace a graver social and ideological crisis for the yeoman in the postbellum South, and his further fall from the key role he occupied in Jeffersonian pastoral.

Hugh Brogan writes that ‘for more than a generation the South had been bringing its religion, culture, politics and trade into line. The same test was applied to everything, even to thought: was it consistent with slavery, did it build up the defences of a slave society?’ In this light, we have seen that, even in criticizing the institution, Kennedy in *Swallow Barn* argues only for changes which would help sustain it. Kennedy’s thought, just as Brogan has implied, is governed by the maintenance of slavery. Indeed, Scott Romine argues that ‘the antebellum literary mind devoted its principal energy toward preserving a pastoral vision of chattel slavery.’ Plantation literature of the antebellum period presents the slave system as both underpinning and representative of a Southern pastoral idyll, and works hard to uphold the institution. This monomania was not limited to literary expression, but also present in the actions of Southerners in other fields who devoted major energy to aligning everything in their society with slavery. For example, ‘Southerners were able to direct the use of steamboats in ways that usually bolstered their slave society and plantation culture. Southern ingenuity, ultimately, had to preserve rather than challenge slavery.’

As this chapter has sought to show, slavery was not simply a struggle of North vs. South. The difference of opinion between Trollope and Dickens suggests that the divide went much further, with ideological conflict spanning the whole transatlantic community. As Romine has argued, ‘southern social theorists presented this vision [of slavery] in a tough-minded, sophisticated, coherent, and intellectually rigorous manner.’ For the South, though, slavery was also embattled as the means by which they could keep the pastoral fantasy alive, the only way in which such a community could be sufficiently prosperous to resist the increase in manufacturing and industry that marked the nineteenth century. For abolitionist sympathizers like Dickens, such arguments were never sufficient. The final section of this chapter, however, will demonstrate that slavery’s alternative of a strong industrial base, and the modern cities to which it would give rise, was not necessarily considered palatable by those who decried ‘the peculiar institution’.

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103 Smith, *Debating Slavery*, p. 33.
107 Romine, *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community*, p. 66.
‘[A] thousand iron-shod devils’: The Machine in the Antebellum South

Discussion earlier in this chapter has established how the North was, contrary to popular Southern opinion, still predominantly an agrarian society in the antebellum years. However, industry was on the rise in the Northern states, and though industrial forces did not yet have the political power that Southerners perceived, in the North ‘towns were growing more rapidly than at any other point of their history’. The town of Lowell, Massachusetts was particularly held up as a beacon for industry; and one thing that could not be ignored by the South, whose rural economy was so dependent on the fluctuating price of cotton (which, ‘while rising and falling, remained generally high throughout the antebellum period’), was that the North was prospering economically. This was frequently attributed to a growth of the factory system and in urban development.

Mechanization, as we saw in Part One, had not always proved problematic for the South. Leo Marx writes that

From Jefferson’s perspective, the machine is a token of that liberation of the human spirit to be realized by the young American Republic; the factory system, on the other hand, is but feudal oppression in a slightly modified form. Once the machine is removed from the dark, crowded, grimy cities of Europe, he assumes that it will blend harmoniously into the open countryside of his native land.

It had, of course, been the invention of a machine (Eli Whitney’s cotton gin) that sparked the increase in cotton production which made the slave system economically viable in the first place, and, although mechanization was indeed not widespread in the South, the ‘most advanced agrarian technology’ was in use by the planter aristocracy on their plantations. However, in the Southern imagination during the antebellum period the machine had become intrinsically linked with the factory system and with the crowded urban dwellings of both Europe and the emancipated North. Southerners ‘drew parallels between the chattel slavery of the South and the wage slavery of the North’. By the time that Swallow Barn and The Partisan Leader were being written, the South was far from amenable to the machine. It thereby concealed from itself, wilfully or otherwise, the knowledge that it was in fact ‘the widespread introduction of steam power in British industry in the late eighteenth century [that] sharply lowered the cost of spinning cotton into yarn and weaving that into fabric, [creating] a burgeoning demand for American cotton’. The profitability of King Cotton was founded materially upon both mechanization and a global factory system, yet this had

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little effect on the shaping of Southern ideology. Marx notes that ‘outside the South the pastoral ideol
has little or no practical value as a political weapon against industrialism.’ In reading pre-
Civil War Southern authors, however, it becomes apparent that within the region the reverse was
true, since the pastoral ideal did serve to mobilize resistance against the region’s industrialization. In
reality, there were areas of Southern industry which could challenge Northern dominance: for
example, the Black Heath Company which mined coal in Virginia ‘could boast the deepest shaft
(seven hundred feet) to be found in the whole country, and it made use of safety lamps and other
equipment of the most advanced models’. However, in spite of the actual state of Southern
industry, we can determine from its marginalization in antebellum Southern literature, and the
relative force of industrial and agricultural tropes, the immense power of the pastoral ideal as a
political tool in the South.

In *Swallow Barn*, the machine is already present within the pastoral ideal. However, it is
always presented in terms that are at least partially ambiguous. Early on, in the chapter entitled
‘Family Portraits’, Kennedy offers this scene:

> Every thing at Swallow Barn, that falls within the superintendence of my cousin Lucretia is
> a pattern of industry. In fact, I consider her the very priestess of the American system, for,
> with her, the protection of manufactures is even more of a passion than a principle. Every
> here and there, over the estate, may be seen, rising in humble guise above the shrubbery, the
> rude chimney of a log cabin, where all the livelong day the plaintive moaning of the
> spinning-wheel rises fitfully upon the breeze, like the fancied notes of a hobgoblin, as they
> are sometimes imitated in the stories with which we frighten children. (39-40)

In reading this extract, we might surmise that Kennedy is displaying the tendencies which Marx
assigns to Jefferson. Marx notes that Jefferson’s interest was ‘aroused by a mechanized grist mill – a
piece of machinery peculiarly suited to a rural society’. We might be tempted to see that logic at
work here, since machinery is still present at Swallow Barn despite its being an idealized space; and
it is significant that this work takes place in a log cabin, that symbol of the American frontier, rather
than within a larger factory system. However, closer inspection muddies the waters somewhat.
Lucretia, the mother of these innovations, is positioned as something of an eccentric character, and
is also described as being ‘vain-glorious’ (39). The language of the passage quoted above also
reveals how attitudes towards industry have permeated the Southern unconscious. The chimney,
styled as ‘rude’, seems to intrude into the scene from behind the shrubbery, distorting the
picturesque natural scene. The description of the spinning-wheel is also telling, focusing primarily
on its auditory output. First it is described as ‘moaning’, which is then compounded with the
addition of the word ‘fitfully’, giving the sound an irregular and erratic quality. The spinning-wheel

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might have a practical use which allows it to appear within the pastoral scene, but it does not do so unobtrusively: it announces itself with a jarring, discordant strain. However, that the machine is finally compared with a ‘hobgoblin’ complicates matters even further. The figure of the hobgoblin is a disruptive one, but is also brought into being largely by fearful fancies rather than by posing any substantial threat. Kennedy’s figuring of the spinning-wheel is unclear here. Is it something that people fear with no good reason that provides ‘excellent carpets for the house’ (40)? Or, looking at the linguistic choices, is the spinning-wheel the whim of an eccentric woman that disturbs the natural environment? While Kennedy’s intent remains open to interpretation, it is quite obvious that even if the passage is intended as a show of support for the use of machines in the South, it is not support that is unqualified.

When we triangulate our study, however, a more positive sense of American industry emerges from our British texts, specifically in relation to Lowell. Dickens suggests in *American Notes* that the Merrimack River ‘that moves the machinery in the mills (for they are all worked by water power), seems to acquire a new character from the fresh buildings of bright red brick and painted wood among which it takes its course’ (75). From this description, we can tell that the lumber mills of Lowell actually complement and revitalize the American landscape, rather than acting as an intrusion. Dickens also takes note of the workers, saying that they ‘had the manners and deportment of young women: not of degraded brutes of burden’ (76-77). He then goes on to note the conditions in which the mill-girls work, claiming that ‘there was as much fresh air, cleanliness, and comfort, as the nature of the occupation would possibly admit of’ (77). This positive presentation of Lowell is then contrasted with the industrial cities of Britain, and Dickens offers no support for Southern objections to Northern industrialism. Comparing the industrial infrastructures of the American North and Britain, Dickens claims that ‘the contrast would be a strong one, for it would be between the Good and Evil, the living light and deepest shadow […] the difference between this town and those great haunts of desperate misery’ (80). Here, we sense that Dickens has some sympathy with Jefferson’s position on manufacturing, as outlined by Marx in *The Machine in the Garden*. It is not the lumber mill itself, an instantiation of mechanization, which is the evil figure in the industrial regime, but the European factory system. Once removed from the confines and dirt of the British city, the machines at Lowell, as Marx summarizes Dickens’s position, ‘blend harmoniously into the open countryside’ of the US. Trollope, too, visited Lowell, and described the town in *North America* in equally glowing terms. Impressed by all he saw and unable to dispute the assertions made about the town, he claims that ‘Lowell is the realization of a commercial Utopia’ (148). In this instance, the anti-industrial position of the South gets no support from Trollope. We should note, then, that the British authors viewed the industrial centre of Lowell as fully consistent with – rather than antagonistic towards – a pastoral ideal, and removed from the

perceived horrors of the industrial town in their own country. In this, they (like the Northerners) are echoing the pragmatic strain of Jefferson’s philosophy which argued that the US could incorporate mechanization into its economy without the country becoming dangerously Europeanized. From reading the British authors, it becomes clear that the South is intellectually isolated, and that its conception of Jefferson has warped by this point, since, despite examples from within the United States of its harmonious (and beneficial) blending with the natural American landscape, industry still has no place in the Southern pastoral imagination. Antebellum Southerners retained ‘the conviction that industrial labor robbed a person of his humanity and rendered him or her a wage slave of little social worth’.\(^{118}\)

The most memorable example of technology in *Swallow Barn*, and one that is both reminiscent of Dickens’s description of Lowell and also highlights Southern technophobia, features in the chapter entitled ‘My Grand Uncle’. The grand-uncle in question is said to have been ‘always busy in schemes to improve his estate, and, it is said, threw away a great deal of money by way of bettering his fortune’ (130). Given this introduction to the character, it is not difficult to foresee how the ‘improvements’ to his estate will turn out as the chapter progresses. The central scene of this sketch involves a water-powered mill. In auditory terms, at least, this seems not dissimilar to Lucretia’s spinning-wheel. When it is first set to work, Littleton claims that ‘the mill clattered away as it if had been filled with a thousand iron-shod devils, all dancing a scotch reel’ (133). The sense here is of a cacophonous din, but note again Kennedy’s linguistic choices. The word ‘devils’ adds nothing to the description of the sound; a thousand iron-shod ballet dancers would presumably create an equally unpleasant tumult. However, through use of this word, the mill begins to be linked with the dark and the satanic. Predictably, its machinery does not run smoothly. The trauma of mechanization is presented once again in auditory terms: ‘Presently, a dismal screech was heard, that sounded like all the trumpets of Pandemonium blown at once; it was a prolonged, agonizing, diabolical note that went to the very soul’ (133). Once again, the machine, through its auditory output, intrudes hellishly upon and shatters the pastoral idyll. The connection between Southern trepidation and the sound of machines is well-documented, with Ronald L. Lewis observing that ‘the roar of a blast furnace or din of a cotton factory were more likely to jar the Southern imagination than to capture it, given the South’s traditional identification with the pastoral ideal.’\(^{119}\) We can also discern evidence of another transatlantic literary connection here, since the Pandemonium to which Kennedy is referring is the capital city of Hell, as designated by John Milton in *Paradise Lost* (1667). The number of Kennedy’s allusions linking the machine to the hellish is growing, then; indeed, once the mill has been destroyed, Edward Hazard suggests that the grand-uncle ‘must have

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been under the influence of the moon when he conceived it, and of Satan when he brought it forth; and he rejoiced that the winds of heaven had obliterated every monument of his folly’ (142). The implications are clear: that the machine, and industrialization more generally, are satanic in origin or character, and threaten more godly agrarian occupations. The mill itself is even destroyed in biblical fashion, being washed away after a tempest reminiscent of Noah’s flood in Genesis. That deluge washed away the sinners; in this Southern re-creation, God settled for excising the monument raised by the sin.

By contrast, it is noticeable that the machine is almost completely absent in the South that Tucker presents to us. Right from the beginning of The Partisan Leader, Tucker attempts to show a Virginia that is almost untainted by industry. He writes that ‘of manufactures there was no appearance, save only a rude shed at the entrance of the valley, on the door of which the oft repeated brand of the horse-shoe gave token of a smithy’ (3). The first time we see the valley, then, we encounter a scene which is practically free from manufacturing, barring a dilapidated shack which is actually utilized by a blacksmith, signifier of an ancient profession and artisanal labour that is, unlike the factory hand, compatible with this pastoral landscape. The modern finds no way to intrude into this valley. There is a mill, but this, too, just helps to stress industry’s absence here. The rivulet that powers the mill is said to be ‘increased by the innumerable springs which afforded to every habitation the unappreciated, but inappreciable luxury of water, cold, clear and sparkling, [which] had gathered strength enough to turn a tiny mill’ (3). This, again, seems reminiscent of Raymond Williams’s account of the evocation, in pastoral, of the land that does not require working. In this instance it is the bountiful, Edenic quality of Virginia, rather than any mechanical contrivances of man, that serves to power the small mill. We have seen in Swallow Barn the way in which machinery creates sound which intrudes upon the scenery; it is telling, then, that Tucker evokes a valley that is silent. He writes that ‘of sounds there were none’ (4). This is a region undisturbed by the machine in the garden, a topos that is all the more noteworthy since the reality was that the South already had a small industrial base during this period. Indeed, later on in The Partisan Leader, even Tucker has to acknowledge as much, noting that ‘the lead mines were just at his back, beyond the Alleghany’ (187). This latter description occurs in a description of how the Virginians, following secession, will be able to fully utilize the land for their defence and future prosperity. It is apparent, then, that there is a gap in Tucker’s writing between the idealized Virginia – as shown in the first panoramic image of the valley – and the pragmatic Virginia we see subsequently, in which any industry that benefits the state may be co-opted. Even then, no detailed attention is paid in the narrative to these industrial structures and processes, and they are acknowledged only briefly.

120 Genesis 7.6-24
To advance this discussion of the politics of technology in the South, we should turn to the respective literary treatments of modern transportation. Dickens referred throughout his fiction to trains and railways in satanic and monstrous terms, and does so again in *American Notes*. After a journey by railroad in the US, he describes it as ‘the mad dragon of an engine with its train of cars; scattering in all directions a shower of burning sparks from its wood fire; screeching, hissing, yelling, panting; until at last the thirsty monster stops beneath a covered way to drink’ (186). This not uncommon figure in Dickens’s writing has an odd symmetry with the trope of the machine that we have seen so far in *Swallow Barn*, but this is unusual when compared to typical representations of modern modes of transportation in American literature. Marx, for example, has noted that ‘the railroad is the chosen vehicle for bringing America into its own as a pastoral utopia’. While this claim has some truth, it also highlights the importance of a regionally inflected study of American literature since it does not seem fully borne out by antebellum Southern writing. In these novels by Tucker and Kennedy, advancements in transport technology are generally viewed as undesirable. Robert H. Gudmestad has suggested that ‘Southerners immediately realized the value of the steamboat for conquering the swift currents of the western waters and embraced the new technology’. However, the reader of *Swallow Barn* would be forgiven for thinking the opposite. In the novel, Frank Meriwether makes the following remark:

‘I don’t deny that the steamboat is destined to produce valuable results – but after all, I much question – (and here he bit his upper lip, and paused an instant) – if we are not better without it. I declare, I think it strikes deeper at the supremacy of the states than most persons are willing to allow. This annihilation of space, sir, is not to be desired.’ (72)

The supremacy of the state is, as we have seen, indissolubly linked for the South with the pastoral ideal. Meriwether acknowledges the practical value of the steamboat in his statement that it will produce ‘valuable results’, but then goes on to deny its beneficial qualities by claiming it would take away more of value than it would add. Improved transport links shorten journey times, thereby causing the ‘annihilation of space’ that Meriwether professes to be undesirable. As John L. Hare indicates, easier ‘transportation would make for easier exchange of goods and ideas, and the states would lose their claim to distinctiveness’.

The fear expressed here by Meriwether is, in some ways, anticipatory of arguments voiced against globalization in recent decades. The idea that a shrinking world will lead to greater standardization and to a diminution of local characteristics thus has resonances for later, as well as contemporary, readers. In his note to the reader, appended to later, revised editions, Kennedy

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123 Hare, *Will the Circle be Unbroken?*, p. 24.
laments that ‘the old states, especially, are losing their original distinctive habits and modes of life’ (9). However, the text’s objection to the steamboat is not solely on cultural grounds. Meriwether suggests that the annihilation of space is in conflict with the supremacy of the state, and, while this refers to damage to local customs, it seems that a greater threat is imagined to States’ rights and political supremacy. Shorter journey times and spatial condensation will knit the Union more tightly together, possibly leading to greater federation. The steamboat in *Swallow Barn* is thus not Marx’s means of conveying Americans to a pastoral utopia; rather, it acts as an unwanted intruder, threatening the sovereignty of the state and, in doing so, destroying the very foundation of the pastoral idyll. This thesis will return to the politico-cultural significances of the Southern steamboat in Part Three, when it considers perhaps their most famous literary representations in the work of Mark Twain.

Another of the key ways in which *Swallow Barn* resists industrialization is through a contrast between the large town, seen as the centre of manufacturing and industry and almost exclusively Northern, and the countryside. Mark M. Smith has theorized that ‘the absence of large towns in the South was a necessary consequence of the insurrectionary risks such concentrations of slaves would pose to southern society’. Kennedy draws the distinction in the following way:

> Eager appetite and that conscious health which grows upon out-door exercise, and which brings cheerfulness to the spirit as physical beauty brings pleasure to the eye,- these tell more visibly upon a party in the country, than they ever do in town. You will never know your friend so well, nor enjoy him so heartily in the city as you may in one of those large, bountiful mansions, whose horizon is filled with the green fields and woodland slopes and broad blue heavens. (95)

We should note, again, the link here between the landscape and ‘character’. The country and the town are positioned as polar opposites, and predictably the country is presented more positively. The country has qualities which town dwellers can never enjoy, due to the very nature of an urban existence and the implied moral as well as physical distance from the land. Romine has argued that this presentation of the plantation effectively positions it as a-historical, arguing that ‘Kennedy’s still-life aesthetic produces a kind of pastoral inertia, aligning nature and social ritual against the ideological pressures of the outside world.’

However, a different picture begins to emerge when, once more, we read the text closely alongside British authors. In *North America*, Trollope presents the Northern towns much as a Southerner might have done. He writes, for example, of the condition of the migrant Irish labouring classes in the Northern states:

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125 Smith, *Debating Slavery*, p. 73.
126 Romine, *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community*, p. 78.
The labouring Irish in these towns eat meat seven days a week, but I have met many a labouring Irishman among them who has wished himself back in his old cabin. Industry is a good thing, and there is no bread so sweet as that which is eaten in the sweat of a man’s brow, but labour carried to excess wearies the mind as well as the body and the sweat that is ever running makes the bread bitter.

There is, I think, no task-master over free labour so exacting as an American. He knows nothing of hours, and seems to have that idea of a man which a lady always has of a horse. He thinks that he will go for ever. (82)

Here Trollope implies that conditions in the Northern towns are little better than those for the labouring (that is to say, principally the slave) class in the Southern states. It is reasonably certain, from the mention of ‘free labour’, that this is a predominantly (if not exclusively) Northern criticism. The metaphor of the horse makes one think immediately of the relation between a worker and an employer, in contrast with that of a slave and master. We have seen from the work of the Southern writers that, in the South’s self-idealization, the bond between a master and slave is perceived as closer than that more abstract relationship between worker and employer produced by market conditions. With no bond more profound than that of money linking them, the Northern industrialist is freer to force his employees to work longer and harder. Without the ties that regulate conduct between a master and a slave, the Northern industrialist is able to completely wear out his workforce and replace it with new labourers at no cost to himself – at least in the Southern imagination. From the extract, it is clear that Trollope has some sympathy with this view, comparing the Irish labourer with a beast of burden which can be overworked and broken. His remark that the Irishman eats meat daily hints at increased prosperity compared with life in the Old World. However, some of these labourers appear to be wishing for a return to the relative poverty of nineteenth-century rural Ireland. Trollope’s presentation seems to give credence to the Southern idea of Northern wage-slavery, and the South also receives some support from a more unlikely source.

Although Dickens can see no similarity between the American town and the industrial heartland of England in terms of architecture or inhabitants, he recognises affinities in the nature of their industry, signified by the ‘great quantity of smoke’ he finds in Pittsburgh (172), an area that has clearly begun to resemble the factory landscape of Great Britain which Jefferson had hoped to avoid, and which Southerners were determined to keep at bay. As Dickens moves across the United States, he remarks of another town that ‘the buildings are smoky and blackened, from the use of bituminous coal, but an Englishman is well used to that appearance, and indisposed to quarrel with it’ (186). It may seem somewhat odd that Dickens would make such remarks about the towns and cities of the US, given his comments about slavery. It was slavery, of course, that maintained the economic viability of the agrarian South in the face of increased manufacturing and mechanization. However, Dickens did manage to look both ways at once on the subject of industry; even his description of Lowell contains some slight criticism. Before he begins to sing the praises of the town, he notes the ‘mile after mile of stunted trees’ (74), partially a product of the New England
climate, but also partly a consequence of the lumber industry. While the plantation certainly has elements that seem to be out of time, the reactions of British writers travelling in the US (and their ventriloquizing of Southern opinions and fears) serve nevertheless to position this idyll as a reaction against nineteenth-century industrialization, and thus as a viable ideological current very much of its time.

To understand the way in which Dickens can simultaneously oppose the South on slavery and yet agree with it at a substantive level about the degrading effects of Northern industry, we need to remember that the Southern conception of industry in the US was not based on material reality, but rather on preconceptions about industry in Europe. For the European visitor, Lowell may be cleaner and more palatable than Birmingham or Manchester, but to the Southerner, Lowell simply was a replica of those red-bricked metropolises. The fact that Dickens was British means that his support for the industrialization that was occurring in the Northern states would always be qualified, and constantly refracted through his pre-existing knowledge of the state of industry in his own country. To develop this point, we must briefly turn away from his American travel narrative and towards his fiction, since the most compelling study Dickens offers of an industrial town comes in *Hard Times* (1854). The novel is set in the fictional district of Coketown, an emblematic industrialized region in Northern England. In this lengthy extract, he describes the town itself:

Coketown, to which Messrs. Bounderby and Gradgrind now walked, was a triumph of fact; it had no greater taint of fancy in it than Mrs. Gradgrind herself. Let us strike the key-note, Coketown, before pursuing our tune.

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red had the smoke and ashes allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.127

Although this text was written following Dickens’s return to Britain from the US, it offers perhaps the best textual evidence of the jaundiced way in which he conceived the industrial system; and there is some continuity between this paragraph and the negative descriptions Dickens offers of American cities. The effects of industry have been left on the walls of Coketown, which is reminiscent of the legacy of ‘bituminous coal’ which he refers to on his US travels; while the never-ending plume of smoke invites comparisons with his description of Pittsburgh. In *Hard Times*,

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Dickens writes that ‘you only knew the town was there, because you knew there could have been no such sulky blotch without a town’, and such a negative imagination might be traced in his reaction to urban America, too.\textsuperscript{128} Coketown brings to mind Gifford’s ‘city and its vices’, the social space that is inhabited after the fall from the pastoral Eden.\textsuperscript{129} Its differences from some other of Dickens’s urban and industrial representations bring into question any simple distinction between progressive authors on one hand, and conservatives on the other, showing that the pastoral mode during this period was not simply the property of the mindless reactionary.

It is while identifying these contradictory impulses in Dickens that he becomes highly valuable for this thesis, because he simultaneously manages to engage both with the Northern response to slavery and with the Southern response to the only viable alternative. Though slavery was abhorrent to Dickens, his experience with industry in England made the factory system equally detestable, and he wrote as passionately about the evils of that system as he did about the ills of American slavery. In Hard Times, Dickens goes so far as to have one of his characters compare industrial labour with ‘the peculiar institution’, crying, ‘oh my friends and fellow-countrymen, the slaves of an iron-handed and a grinding despotism!’\textsuperscript{130} Here we can easily detect a parallel with the arguments of slavery’s apologists, who claimed that industrial labour amounted to ‘wage-slavery’. Dickens manages to straddle the Mason-Dixon Line, ideologically speaking, and by placing his work alongside that of Kennedy and Tucker we can learn a great deal about the intellectual underpinnings of the South prior to the Civil War. It would be easy to dismiss Southern complaints about industry as an effort to maintain the institution of slavery at any costs; however, on reading Dickens we discover that Southerners were not alone in conceiving nineteenth-century American industry in destructive and monstrous terms, but that in doing so they were drawing on intellectual traditions that were shared with English authors. They were also not alone in conceiving the relations between employer and employee in the industrial system as akin to a form of slavery in all but name.

In this chapter, we have seen how Jefferson served as an inspiration for both North and South during the first half of the nineteenth century. Primarily, though, Jefferson was appropriated as a champion of the South, and his associations with that region came to outweigh others. This would not last as war drew near, however, and as the slavery question came to define all other issues Jefferson’s vacillations on the institution would lead to his removal from a privileged place in Southern political philosophy. As Petersen writes, ‘Seeing the inescapable antagonism of Jeffersonian philosophy to

\textsuperscript{128} Dickens, Hard Times, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{129} Gifford, Pastoral, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{130} Dickens, Hard Times, p. 123.
slavery, these radicals discharged the one to save the other.\textsuperscript{131} Although this intellectual desertion of Jefferson was far from uniform, on the eve of war Jefferson’s stock had undoubtedly never been lower in the South; nor, indeed, had it ever been higher amongst the abolitionists and Republicans in the North. In Part Three, I intend to show how this situation would once again change, and how Jeffersonian pastoral would continue to mutate, not least in its temporal schema, following the conflict.

\textsuperscript{131} Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 168.
Part Three

The Idyll of the Old South in Postbellum Literature
Although the South embraced the Civil War, conflict would turn out to be disastrous for the region. Its casualties would total ‘at least 260,000 rebels [while] the number of Southern civilians who died as a direct or indirect result of the war cannot be known’.\(^1\) The War effectively ended with General Lee’s surrender at Appomattox in 1865, and five days later Abraham Lincoln, the man whose election had done so much to inflame the passions of Southerners, was killed by an assassin’s bullet. This ensured that the devastation did not end with the War, because this act made Southern Reconstruction all the more difficult: ‘The problems of peace would have perplexed even [Lincoln]; his successor was to make them much worse. With Lincoln died the remote chance of a good peace. Booth condemned the South to generations of squalid backwardness and the races in America to a long, unhappy struggle which is not over yet.’\(^2\) This interpretation, which had gained a lot of currency prior to a scholarly rehabilitation of the seventeenth President in the second half of the twentieth century, potentially ‘oversimplifies the postwar political situation by placing all blame for obstructing congressional reconstruction on one man, Andrew Johnson’.\(^3\) There were reasons, though, that this unflattering comparison with Lincoln came about:

where Lincoln had been supremely confident in himself, Johnson [was] a bewildering cauldron of insecurities and resentments; where Lincoln had radiated calm and reasoned eloquence in a crisis, […] Johnson was prone to bluster and hyperbole, which was fine in the senate but not in the executive; and where Lincoln was a marvellous hybrid of intellect and street-savvy politicking, able to woo and charm his opponents, Johnson was overly volatile and melodramatic.

And, last but not least, Johnson drank. Not a lot, but enough.\(^4\)

While we might feel that Johnson received more than his fair share of blame for the failures of Reconstruction, we must wonder at the irony that the death of the man whose election was a catalyst for secession would come to be seen a central cause of the South’s stagnation following the Civil War. The War was ideologically devastating, too: ‘Union victory in the war destroyed the southern vision of America and ensured that the northern vision would become the American vision.’\(^5\) While this is an oversimplification of the ideological shift that took place following the conflict, there is undoubtedly a grain of truth to it.

Of more immediate relevance to this thesis, however, is the idea that ‘the first gun fired at Fort Sumter smashed the old Union and with it the political design of Thomas Jefferson’.\(^6\) The

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contradictions in Jefferson’s thought that have been identified in Parts One and Two, and the fact that both sides seemed equally able to claim him as a champion, meant that he came to be blamed by some for the conflict. When attempting to explain how this situation that led to war could have come about, ‘formulations differed, but the general sense conveyed by the literature of revision was that of an irreconcilable conflict, ending in civil disaster, between two major traditions of politics fostered by Jefferson’.\footnote{Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 210.} We have already seen how Jefferson’s ambiguities caused him to be viewed by some Southerners in less glowing terms on the eve of the Civil War, and indeed ‘Southern ambivalence toward Jefferson did not end at Appomattox. George Fitzhugh was still condemning in 1867 Jefferson’s “powder-cask abstractions” as the cause of the devastation around him.’\footnote{Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 214.} However, the South would warm to Jefferson once again in the postbellum period, as changing socio-economic considerations, and the obsolescence of the need to preserve slavery at all costs, served to rehabilitate his doctrine. This is, arguably, because ‘the Civil War did not fundamentally alter the ideology of the Democratic party. Such leaders as the party had in the Reconstruction era […] preached the return to Jeffersonian principles.’\footnote{Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 251.}

There are a number of potentially valuable connections which may be developed if we position this rehabilitation of Jefferson, and the writing of the postbellum South, within a globalized framework. Specific cultural processes, like the warping of the Jeffersonian ideal, come into sharper relief when using texts from other cultures as a prism through which we can interrogate their assumptions and attitudes. Of immediate interest is such a rereading of the South’s most canonical writer, Mark Twain. Contemplation of an author with a far less stable geographical identity, a figure culturally and temporally at a significant remove from the sage of Monticello, certainly offers new perspectives on the changing face of the Jeffersonian ideal, revealing much about its mutation across the latter half of the nineteenth century. We should not confine our reading of Twain and other postbellum Southern authors within national borders, however, but should instead be willing to develop a transatlantic approach that will offer us an insight into such shifting perspectives.

It is surprising, for example, and of immediate relevance to scholars interested in the Southern United States and changes to the Jeffersonian ideal in the postbellum period, that more has not been done to link the work of Mark Twain and Thomas Hardy. There are, as this chapter will demonstrate, a number of revealing thematic correspondences and divergences between their writing. Despite this, criticism that proposes comparing the two writers is rather exiguous. Edgar H. Goold, Jr. limits himself to suggesting that ‘Mark Twain’s notion of what was fit to print shows that he practiced and advocated the decorous Mid-Victorian realism of a Howells or a Thackeray rather than the stronger,
naturalistic variety of Thomas Hardy or George Moore.' In his article (on Twain), Goold mentions Hardy just once, at the end, in order to place the two writers on either side of a binary opposition between realistic and naturalistic fiction. Hardy is a naturalist, Twain a realist, and the comparison is developed no more thoroughly than this assertion. In his essay, ‘The World as Text in Hardy’s Fiction’, Jonathan Wike, making reference to the similarities between Hardy’s work and North American writing of the period, suggests that the idea of the world as text ‘pervad[es] the work of Emerson, Hawthorne, and even Mark Twain, as well as the literature of England’. Wike goes so far as to use the word ‘even’, indicating some surprise (or an awareness that some of his readers may be surprised) at finding comparisons between Hardy and Twain. One of these articles focuses on Hardy, the other on Twain, and their publication is separated by almost forty years; yet they are not cited arbitrarily here. Though they seem unconnected, they represent the most explicit critical comparisons to date of the two authors. This might well be because although there are a number of thematic similarities between them, formally the two authors are highly distinct. Hardy exists within a distinctly English tradition; his novels are formally fairly conservative, written almost entirely in an impersonal narrative voice and with the vernacular, where used, limited almost exclusively to dialogue. Twain, on the other hand, is far more experimental with form: writing both in the first and third persons, at times moving between fact and fiction, and utilizing regional dialect throughout an extended personal narrative (in the case of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn [1884-85]). Twain belongs not to an earlier American tradition that apes English literary stylistics; rather, he shares an Emersonian and Melvillean spirit of literary nationalism. In this formal regard, it would be easy to consider the two writers as too disparate to draw together. However, I propose in this chapter that if one reads thematically within a transatlantic model, one can put Hardy and Twain together to great benefit. In much the same vein as Jonathan Arac’s combining of transatlantic figures for Commissioned Spirits (1979), because Dickens, Carlyle, Melville and Hawthorne all ‘join the writers of journalism and social polemic in establishing a discourse crucial for the new social sciences’, bringing together Twain and Hardy (admittedly a less traditional coupling) in this chapter will allow us to better interpret the former’s staging of the pastoral and the yeoman ideal.

The chapter will also, at the same time, consider The Holcombes – A Story of Virginia Home Life, a novel of 1871 by Mary Tucker Magill. While it may seem strange to juxtapose Magill, a relative unknown today, with two highly canonical novelists, there are good reasons for doing so. Firstly, it is worth remembering that Twain spent a large portion of his life in New England, and so, at different times, saw the South from the vantage point of both insider and outsider. Also, Twain’s

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Southern roots were not from the cultural heart of the South on the Atlantic coast, but rather from Missouri. By contrast, Magill was from Virginia, where colonization of the South began, and bringing her work into discussion with that of Twain will allow us to see cultural and ideological divergences and thereby avoid the notion of a univocal South. Magill also offers us significant continuity across time because she was part of the Virginia ‘aristocracy’, indeed the great-niece of Nathaniel Beverley Tucker (considered in Part Two). She was the granddaughter of Tucker’s brother, Henry St. George Tucker, Sr., the noted Virginian jurist, which gives us direct knowledge of how the Jeffersonian ideal mutated across three decades just within one family. This becomes more useful because, according to Peter Cozzens, it would seem that Magill shared some of her great-uncle’s politics:

Every evening at dinner, James Shields endured epithets from Mary Tucker Magill, at whose home he boarded. ‘Mary allows her tongue full license and says all kinds of bitter sarcasms to General Shields,’ said Mary Greenhow Low. ‘She told him that if they killed all the men of the South, the women would fight, and that when they were destroyed the dogs would bark at them; she never eats in his presence, and [when Shields] asked what she lives on; she replied, ‘on the hopes of soon seeing our army back’; she has cut her hair off and she did it because it was less painful than tearing it out by the roots.13

Because Magill seems to occupy a similar ideological position to Tucker in many ways, looking also at the subtle differences will allow us to identify very localized reactions to socio-economic changes. This chapter, then, will examine writers from both the heart of Southern culture in Virginia and the newer territories further west, and will also attempt to elucidate otherwise hidden meanings in the texts of these authors by comparative examination of how an English author handles similar thematic material.

Hardy is particularly useful for thinking about changes in nineteenth-century Southern society, because the Industrial Revolution in England had been progressing for more than half a century by the time he was born in 1840. He was born not far ‘from Tolpuddle, a few years after the deportation of the farm labourers who had come together to form a trade union. This fact alone should remind us that Hardy was born into a changing and struggling rural society, rather than the timeless backwater to which he is so often deported.’14 As he began his literary career, many years had passed since the first industrial methods of production were applied to textiles in Britain (by such pioneers as Richard Arkwright, James Hargreaves and Samuel Crompton), and by the middle of the nineteenth century these had made their way out of industrial centres into more rural retreats such as Dorset. Hardy, then, grew up in a country that was becoming increasingly industrialized and he would have seen technological progress affect his community at first hand. Hardy’s world was as a consequence disappearing through a relatively slow, gradual process. This means that, compared with the traumatic

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upheaval experienced by American Southerners, modernization in Dorset would have been a less frightening prospect. A letter sent to The Times in 1847, seven years after Hardy’s birth, suggested that if ‘the free circulation of facts contained herein, contribute in the smallest degree, to the improved physical or moral condition of the poor and neglected field-labourer, the publisher will consider that he has been amply rewarded for any trouble or expense [sic] to which he has been subjected’. The letter is entitled ‘The Fate of the Dorset Labourer’ and argues that, at a time when the maximum weekly wage would have been around seven shillings, ‘it is hardly necessary to dilate upon the destitution which must occur at this inclement season of the year upon those compelled to live upon means so inadequate.’ That letters were being written to national newspapers lamenting the conditions in which the working-classes of Dorset lived suggests a desire for some of the benefits of modernity within rural communities. Dorset was, of course, no paradise to its residents; rather, it was a place relatively devoid of economic growth, in which many people lived (and died of starvation and exposure) in dwellings little better than hovels. It is not difficult to see, therefore, why Hardy would be afflicted with mixed emotions regarding industrial progress, or why critics such as Tim Dolin would refer to melodrama in Hardy’s novels as ‘an expressive form of the anomic and restlessness produced by industrial modernization’. Hardy sensed a Dorset that had existed for a multitude of generations, and customs of a regional way of life that had existed since pagan times, disappearing in the face of an irresistible, if sometimes glacial, progress. It is perhaps only natural that he was torn between optimism regarding the obvious benefits to society and the fear that comes from the loss of time-honoured customs.

Mark Twain, on the other hand, had his world changed dramatically and irrevocably by the events of the American Civil War. This period (and the subsequent Reconstruction, the time in which Twain was writing) changed the South beyond recognition, and the healing process following the War was not a smooth one. Hugh Brogan makes explicit the social problems that the South encountered:

Southern bitterness ran deep. Defeat was educative to the extent that it induced southerners to become Americans again (by the twentieth century they would be among the most noisily patriotic of all groups) and persuaded many of them that the section would have to make a serious effort to industrialize: in this way a ‘New South’ might arise.

The inhabitants of the South found themselves in a curious position following the end of the Civil War, reverting in defeat from secessionists to patriots while simultaneously remaining acrimonious towards their former enemies. Not the least cause of this hostility was the apparent necessity of adopting a Northern philosophy to deal with the problems this ‘New South’ inherited. Economic

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16 The Vicar of Preston, ‘The Fate of the Dorset Labourer’.
18 Brogan, The Penguin History of the USA, p. 351.
problems were greatly exacerbated in the aftermath of Northern tactics during the Civil War. For example, when the Union Army had fought on Southern lands, a scorched-earth policy destroyed farmland that had been used to feed the Confederates. Major General Philip H. Sheridan, the man responsible for the destruction of the Shenandoah Valley, insisted on total destruction of the region’s infrastructure: ‘the people must be left with nothing,’ he said, ‘but their eyes to weep with over the war’.

Such a policy had been employed even earlier in Twain’s home state of Missouri: ‘Jayhawking Kansans and bushwhacking Missourians took no prisoners, killed in cold blood, plundered and pillaged and burned (but almost never raped) without stint. Jayhawkers initiated a scorched earth policy against rebel sympathizers three years before Sheridan practiced it in the Shenandoah Valley.’

This policy had disastrous economic effects for the Confederacy, evidenced by the fact that ‘In the four months after Gettysburg, prices jumped nearly 70 percent. “Yesterday flour sold at auction at $100 per barrel; today it sells for $120,” wrote a resident of Richmond.’

Following the War, the socioeconomic dilemma for the South was deepened after ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that rendered slavery illegal. Emancipation, in freeing the slaves, undid the entire Southern economic system. ‘Increased labour costs and high interest rates on short-term credit’ accounted for shortfalls in profits in the Louisiana cane fields.

Even King Cotton itself was affected; as Gene Dattel writes, ‘The postwar conversion of slave labor to free labor – and the concurrent loss of slave collateral and cotton factors – demanded a new financial infrastructure. Into this void stepped new lenders – country merchants and, secondarily, moneylenders and banks. […] The merchants, “once on the periphery of the plantation economy”, moved to “center stage.”’

Previously, a monoculture of cotton production allowed the Southern way of life to remain profitable and survive in the face of an increasingly modernized world. Now, without the low labour costs afforded by a system of slavery, combined with rising prices and increased international competition, the viability of the old lifestyle had passed and more mercantile interests came to the fore. The consequences of Appomattox were, as David Goldfield observes, that ‘A civilization had vanished; an order was undone, the future a blank of uncertainty.’

It is this traumatic upheaval which explains why Twain, and other Southerners, had such mixed feelings regarding the question of progress. As a citizen of the New World, he had no millennia of tradition to orient him, his country having existed as an independent nation for less than a century by the time of publication of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876). Indeed, his home state

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of Missouri, the location for much of his fiction, had only been settled by English speakers following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, and was not admitted to the Union until 1821, a mere forty years before the Civil War. What American heritage the Clemens family did profess was native not to Missouri, but to the East Coast, since his mother ‘was fond of reminding her children that her father had been a substantial slavemaster in the Virginia piedmont before the revolution’, and his father made similar claims.25 Unlike Hardy in Dorset, the Clemens family were not occupying ancient ancestral turf in Missouri; they were on the newly formed American frontier, as settlers continued their westward drive away from the original East Coast settlements.

Missouri, Twain’s home state, did not secede with the Confederacy, despite the fact that it was legally a slaveholding state. Geography thrust Twain into a Southern allegiance due to the location of his home town: ‘Though closer to Keokuk, Iowa, than to St. Louis, Hannibal was linked to the lower South by the Mississippi, and was settled largely by Southerners, who brought their slaves with them.’26 The young Sam Clemens effectively found himself in the position of being a Southern slaveholder in a Southern town in what was officially still a Union state. Many young men from Missouri, including briefly (prior to his desertion) Twain himself, would join the Confederate Army, effectively turning his homeland into a battleground state. It is the consequences of living in a theatre of war, both materially and ideologically, that create the contradictions in Twain; he was a Southerner by affective allegiance, but seeing the South defeated by a superior military, financial and industrial machine would have sent a resonant message about the benefits of industrialization.

Twain’s later migration from the Southern frontier to New England undoubtedly served to shape his literary reaction to Southern defeat; and thus for a very different response to the end of the Civil War we should turn to the Virginian Magill. It is unsurprising, considering Magill’s politics and her hailing from the Tucker family, which, as we have already seen, was committed to the Southern cause, that her novels deal largely with the Old South, the region and its culture usually presented in idealized fashion. Set in antebellum Virginia, The Holcombes is exemplary in this respect. The inscription of the novel gives us an early clue as to its underlying ideological structure:

To
VIRGINIA,
MY NATIVE STATE,
This first effort of my pen
is respectfully dedicated.

If it should prove successful in rescuing from the grave of oblivion the memory of her time-honored institutions, as they existed in the palmiest days of her prosperity, before she was scarred and seamed by the touch of misfortune, the laborer will have received her hire.

We can see a number of things at work here. First, the dedication of the novel not to a person, but to ‘MY NATIVE STATE’, which both establishes the credentials of the author to write such a narrative, and casts the state itself into the role of ‘loved one’. More suggestive still, though, is the sequence which follows on from the initial dedication. Magill expresses a desire that her novel should ‘rescue[e] from the grave of oblivion the memory of [Virginia’s] time-honored institutions’. Whether this implies an actual restoration of many of the institutions and traditions of antebellum Virginia is unclear, but what is apparent is that Magill hopes her novel will at least allow their memory to survive. Implicit in such a gesture is a valorization of that prior time and place, and an assertion that there is something fundamentally good and worth preserving about the Old Dominion before the horrors of the Civil War. From the very beginning, then, we must be aware that what we read in The Holcombes about Virginia, or the South more widely, is highly idealized and reflective of a conservative – indeed, reactionary – political position. It is thought-provoking that at the start of Chapter XIX, Magill’s narrator observes that the children of the area are ‘full of anticipations of a renewal of the “good old times” they had heard their parents talk so much about at Rose Hill’ (158), when in fact ‘a renewal of the “good old times”’ goes some way towards evoking the novel’s own effort: strictly speaking, perhaps, more of a reliving than a renewal, but still gazing upon older times with a sense of fond nostalgia. Of course, as with all pastoral dreams, the popularity of such an idyllic re-creation was in no way diminished because it was based on something of an illusory account of the antebellum South. As Merrill D. Petersen writes, ‘the picture of the Union worshipped by the South was […] imaginary; yet it never lost its appeal.’

It is important that a female novelist appears in this chapter because of the peculiar way in which the Southern cause was so fiercely taken up by Southern women (Brogan notes that ‘Southern women, particularly, remained ferociously loyal to the cause’), and because of the female-authored fiction dedicated to it. Magill herself suggested of Southern women that, ‘as a mother clasps in her loving embrace her new-born child, and rejoices in its perfection of life and limb and that it is all her own, so did they love the “cause” in its new birth’. This quotation is taken from Magill’s preface to her novel, Women, or, Chronicles of the Late War, written in the same year as The Holcombes and featuring the Holcombe family during the time of the conflict itself. Recent scholarship also suggests that, although some women’s fiction was somewhat ambiguous in its ideological position, ‘far more common and popular, however, were the numerous virulently pro-Confederate works published

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29 Brogan, The Penguin History of the USA, p. 351.
30 Mary Tucker Magill, Women, or, Chronicles of the Late War (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1871), p. x.
during and shortly after the war’, of which Magill’s texts are just some examples, along with the work of other female authors like Augusta Jane Evans and Sally Rochester Ford.31

All three of the authors examined in this chapter set their fictions in the past, allowing us to explore how their different cultural positions result in very different versions of a lost pastoral idyll. We need, of course, to be vigilant regarding the varieties and motivations of historical reconstruction in play here. Perhaps we should follow the advice of Robert Murray, a character in The Holcombes, who observes that he ‘would not vouch for the entire truth of any story which has had half a century to grow’ (184). The question of historical re-creation becomes all the more problematic when dealing with a mode such as pastoral, which by its very nature is built upon mythology and presents extremely nostalgic versions of the past. Giving this pastoral trait due consideration, this chapter will be interested not so much in what these texts can tell us of the time in which they are set, but rather what the different versions of pastoral reveal of the time that they are written.

‘Inherited ideas are a curious thing’: Romance and Pastoral in Postbellum Representations of the Old South

Michael E. Price has observed that ‘the pastoral writings of postbellum Georgia authors […] were well within the romantic tradition.’32 Associations between romantic and pastoral traditions are nothing new. In fact, Northrop Frye explicitly linked the two when he wrote, in Anatomy of Criticism (1957), of romantic heroes inhabiting ‘a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the moon’.33 This section of the chapter will aim to elucidate and evaluate the links between pastoral and romantic traditions in the postbellum South. It becomes clear almost immediately in The Holcombes, for example, that the romanticized pastoral we observed in Part Two (in Swallow Barn in particular) still thrives following the Civil War. Now, however, we need to understand it through the prism of the ‘Lost Cause’. As James M. McPherson has noted, the ‘lost cause mentality took on the proportions of a heroic legend, a southern Götterdämmerung with Robert E. Lee as a latter-day Siegfried’.34 Although Magill’s novel was written following the conflict, the representation of the family homestead draws upon the same romantic tropes that we have seen in antebellum literature. Perhaps we should not be surprised: Magill also wrote a number of textbooks for children while living in the secessionist South, which, as Laura Elizabeth Kopp has identified, ‘assured children that there “were a good many soldiers in the

31 Elizabeth Young, Disarming the Nation: Women’s Writing and the American Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 4. For examples of this kind of women’s literature, see Sally Rochester Ford, Raids and Romance of Morgan and His Men (Mobile, AL: Sigmund H. Goetzl, 1863) and Augusta Jane Evans, Macaria (Richmond, VA: West & Johnson, 1863).
34 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, p. 854.
Confederate Army who had all the spirit of these knights of old”35. It is perhaps not unexpected, then, to see Magill making the same connections between the South and a chivalric past in her fiction. This romantic treatment of Virginia becomes clear when Jean Murray, one of the female protagonists of *The Holcombes*, describes her new home:

Rose Hill, the home of the Holcombes for generations past, is situated in the midst of the mountains of the Blue Ridge. The house is comparatively modern, but the place is known through the whole country as one of those old Virginian estates, passing from father to son with almost the regularity of entail. (23)

We can detect more than a trace of the aforementioned Southern obsession with lineage and ancestors in this description of Rose Hill. The fact that the place is known throughout the whole country as an old Virginian estate also serves to link the Holcombes not just with their immediate forebears, but also with ‘the aristocratic Cavaliers, supposedly of Norman descent, who had then settled in the Southern states’, and consequently with aristocratic status back in Britain.36 What is clear is that Magill is looking back here from a more democratic present to a South in which the landed classes ruled. This is an anxious reaction to the historical fact that, following the Civil War, ‘property qualifications for voting and office-holding were abolished for ever’.37

The special prerogatives of the Southern aristocracy were lost following the War, but there appears to be a restorative emphasis on this class in this nostalgic novel. However, Magill introduces a contradiction here when she remarks on the newness of the house, describing it as ‘comparatively modern’. There are two possible inferences which we can draw from this remark. First, is that the house is a grand old Virginian estate which has been kept up to date through work and attention. This could be read as an attempt by Magill to refute Northern accusations that the antebellum South was indolent and decadent. Alternatively, we could see this newness as an unwitting revelation, which would mean that the house is actually modern compared with other Virginian estates. In this reading, there is an interesting tension between the age of the house and the popular perception of the Rose Hill estate. It has already been established in Part Two how important the sense of chivalry and its (imagined or otherwise) links back to the nobility of Great Britain were to the South; indeed, in Magill’s novel Chapter VI opens with the acknowledgement that Mr. Williams ‘brought with him the recommendation, which always carries weight with a Virginian, that he was born a gentleman’ (97), and later Mr. Holcombe links gentlemanly reputation back to inherited family status. In this novel, then, quality of birth is still enough to make one’s honour incontestable. For this society, ‘the blood of a self-regarding nobility transmitted the appropriate qualities. The heart held the intentions to be open

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35 Laura Elizabeth Kopp, *Teaching the Confederacy: Textbooks in the Civil War South* (np: ProQuest LLC, 2009), p. 102.
and honest towards friends and superiors and closed and implacable towards the honorless.\textsuperscript{38}

However, if we assume that the house at Rose Hill is too newly built to have the connection with the colonial period that the locals imagine it to have, then Magill might be seen to be lightly satirizing the notion of nobility amongst Virginians through the use of association fallacy: that is to say, all Virginian gentlemen have old estates which link them back to the English landed classes, Mr. Holcombe is a Virginia gentleman, ergo his estate must be old. There is a gentle irony perceptible here, as Southern ideological constructs win out over external evidence which in some way contradicts them. Magill cannot, nonetheless, break with the importance of genealogy completely, and though she acknowledges that ‘it is often carried to an unfortunate and ridiculous extent’ (97), she still finds the time for a lengthy vindication of Virginian attitudes. If there is some irony in her presentation, then, she undoes this rather democratizing sentiment by suggesting that ‘it must be that the pride of birth, and a name which can be traced back for generation upon generation without its bearing the shadow of a stain upon its fair escutcheon, has something ennobling it’ (97). This sentiment can be discerned in contemporaneous Southern political discourse, as well as literature. Petersen writes that ‘The lure of the past, the sorcery of heroic names and doctrines, was especially marked in the Democratic party. As the party of long memory renewed its strength on the national scene, it again took up the Jefferson fetish.’\textsuperscript{39} It is clear that postbellum champions of Jefferson from the Democratic party shared the same obsession with lineage and chivalry that we can identify in Magill’s novel.

There are further examples in \textit{The Holcombes} of Magill linking Rose Hill to images from chivalric romance:

Surely the old Holcombes must have had an eye for the beautiful in selecting the site of their home. I have never seen a place with so many natural advantages. The grove, out of which we had just driven, fronted the house, and now, for a space of about three hundred yards, spreads a perfectly level lawn, around which, in a circle, runs the carriage-road. The lawn stops abruptly at the foot of a hill, which is terraced in three separate falls, each of which is ascended by steps of smooth gray stone. At the top of the third terrace, upon a sort of table-land, in the midst of noble old forest-trees, oak, chestnut, elm, and locust, stands the house, which, from its proportions, position, etc., might have passed for some olden castle, with its white walls gleaming. As we approached it, the setting sun crowned it with a halo of glory, and the windows, from attic to basement, caught its rays, and sparkled as though a bonfire had been kindled within to do us honor; while in the distance the gorgeous flood of crimson and gold impurpled the background of mountains, which reared their monstrous forms, peak after peak, as far as the eye could reach. (25-26)

This passage is quoted in its entirety because it is clear how the author revels in romantic imagery, adding cliché upon cliché with each clause in these rather lengthy and convoluted sentences, the very

\textsuperscript{38} Bertram Wyatt-Brown, \textit{Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 49.

\textsuperscript{39} Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 250.
stylistic effort of which seeks to convey the structure’s importance. At the beginning of the
description, reference is made to the ‘natural advantages’ of the house, which serves to position the
house as an idyllic space. However, natural features give way to more managed ones as we move
through the extract; there are references to a ‘perfectly level’ lawn which stops ‘abruptly’ at the
bottom of the hill, and a collection of ‘noble’ trees, showing that even the arboreal elements of this
scene evoke ideas of aristocracy. This, then, is not a natural landscape, but one that is manufactured,
and has much more in common with the pastoral idea of the ‘garden’. Despite this, Magill’s
description still seems intent on invoking a natural order, since there is no suggestion here (or for
much of the text) of anybody working to produce and maintain the artificial beauty of the landscape.
We can see, then, the mystification implicit in the pastoral at work: the notion of a land that requires
no working. Regarding the house itself, unsurprisingly the comparison that Magill immediately makes
is with an ‘olden castle’, once again linking the scene to chivalric romance. This effect is further
emphasized when the image of the sun falling below the horizon serves to ennoble the house itself, as
well as creating the image of a roaring fire ready to welcome the weary traveller home. From this
description, we can clearly identify the underlying ideological constructs of the novel, which are
hugely influenced both by classical pastoral and romantic historical fiction (such as that by Sir Walter
Scott); as Frye’s comment might suggest, this Virginian pastoral idyll is unmistakably positioned as
the home for that neoromantic hero, the Southern gentleman. Yet there is something tentative about
Magill’s descriptive mode here. She does not assert the chivalric credentials of her characters and
settings with absolute conviction, instead favouring similes and similitudes (‘might have
passed for
some olden castle’, ‘as though
a bonfire’: my emphases). While this still draws a comparison between
the antebellum South and chivalric romance, we might want to see Magill as also, perhaps
unwittingly, implying a distance, rather than closeness, between the contemporary South and
romance’s idealized world. If this still presents the South in heroic fashion, it would seem that the
traumas of Civil War and Reconstruction have had an effect on Southern ability to assert their
chivalric claims as fully as their forebears had in the antebellum South.

Part Two of this thesis has already explored the Southern fascination with romance. One of
the most obvious examples in \textit{The Holcombes} of this continuing obsession with the romantic is the
faux-medieval joust which occurs in the final third of the novel. What is significant, however, is that
this event is much more in keeping with the courtship rituals of the postbellum South, than with the
antebellum South that the novel is supposedly documenting. As Jane Turner Censer has identified,
‘the courtship of the antebellum period – especially at balls with their highly stylized behavior –
might be viewed as a form of dramatic performance, but such traditional activities were being
eclipsed in the postwar period by more stylized and more scripted dramatic performances, whether
expressed in tableaux, play presentations, or tournaments. Since the joust in *The Holcombes* would seem to be, strictly speaking, more in keeping with the world in which the novel was written than the world it purports to portray, it raises questions about the reasons for such a lapse in verisimilitude. Instead of a historically authenticated representation of the Old South, Magill offers a version mediated by a current cultural practice. The postbellum South’s obsession with romance is evident here, in this tableau of intermingled history and fiction. Rather than simply emulating the physical contest of the joust itself, this tournament is also replete with symbols from the age of chivalry. At one point, Robert Murray offers to be the champion of Mary Holcombe, to which she replies: ‘that would be splendid, if I could only go, and have you for my knight; I would give you a blue ribbon, my color, to tie on your lance’ (201). The joust is a chance not just for spirited young men, but for the whole community, to indulge in a romance-novel fantasy, replete with outdated rituals and a pretension to bygone nobility. It is an example of Eric Hobsbawm’s ‘invented tradition’ (as is the Southern indulgence in chivalric figures more widely), since it consists of ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms or behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity […] with a suitable historic past’.  

The tournament in *The Holcombes*, as well as being ‘one of the medieval tournaments and other “romantic juvenilities”’ that Twain famously derided, is also given a pastoral hue, in much the same way as Rose Hill. Consider the description of the location for the joust:

The place where the tournament was to take place was a beautiful grove a short distance from C---; it seemed almost as if nature designed the spot for some such use as that to which it was now dedicated. It was on the edge of the woods, and the trees grew sparsely, leaving a wide space of level ground, with the waving branches forming an arch above it.

The scene was a beautiful one. Seats had been erected for the spectators on one side, near enough to give a full view of the sport, and the gallant knights, with their fanciful dresses, clustered together at the end of the ground, while the bright scarfs of the marshals flitted around gayly as their wearers dashed about among the trees. (202)

As is the case with Rose Hill, the tournament ground is painted as being at one with nature, and again there is a series of clauses dedicated to idealizing the space. Obviously, there is no reason that the natural world would create a spot specifically designed for jousting, and so we can infer that this is another romanticizing gesture, one which suggests that form and function in Southern life (or, at least, Southern fantasy) are in perfect harmony. Of course, the irony is that, although the narrator claims that nature designed the spot for this very use, workers have still had to erect stands so that people can

actually see the sport taking place, suggesting that this land may not be quite so divinely ordained as one might first be led to believe. This is an unconscious revelation of the work that actually goes into constructing this ‘Arcadia’, and is the only real evidence that such work goes on in the novel – those responsible for labour are generally pushed to the very margins of the text. This revelation perhaps implies an inability on the part of Magill to fully commit to her version of the South as the idyllic habitat of chivalric heroes.

The tournament is not only linked implicitly to English history, since Magill makes such a connection overt in her description of the knights riding through the lists:

They were a gallant company, – most of them sons of old Virginia, whose skill in the science of horsemanship is so justly renowned. Foremost of the band rode a kingly figure – a Saul among his fellows! – who bore upon his breastplate the white and red roses of England prettily blended, and the blue of his shoulder-knot had its counterpart in the ribbons which adorned the dress of Mary Holcombe. It was the Knight of St. George! And happily had he chosen the name, for he wore well the character of a Saxon knight, with his dress of blue and silver and the long, white plume which dropped upon his shoulder mingling with his magnificent beard. (203-04)

It is revealing that Magill chooses to connect her knight with Saxons, rather than Normans who would, of course, have made up the majority of the British nobility and were more often the people from whom Southerners suggested they were descended. It is also clear that this kingly figure is emulating the patron saint of England, St. George (or perhaps, more broadly, the Order of the Garter, England’s highest order of chivalry and one that adopts the imagery and symbolism of St. George), and that he is described as having blended red and white roses upon his breastplate, which is quite clearly a reference to the Tudor or Union rose, a combination of the red rose of the house of Lancaster and the white rose of York created following the Wars of the Roses. This could be evidence of historical intermingling – or even incoherence – on the part of Magill, as she combines a fifteenth-century image with conventions that are more generally drawn from much earlier in the medieval period. It also must be noted that Magill makes explicit a connection between Virginia and England by suggesting that the sons of Virginia are rightly recognized as having great skill in those arts which would have been highly important in England during the age of chivalry. Horsemanship in particular is revered in the novel, and it is only a few pages later that Margaret remarks of “these Virginia boys, who ride like centaurs!” (209). We should not underestimate the importance placed on horsemanship in the South during this period: ‘when the University of the South was founded […] they arranged the school year so that in the winter months the student could “engage in the sports which make him a true Southern man, hunting, shooting, riding.”’ Indeed, lack of elegance on horseback is one of the criticisms aimed at Dr. Burton, the unsuccessful suitor of Margaret. He is described as ‘riding in his own ungraceful style, on a grey horse’ (220). It can be inferred from this that Burton is meant to be

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seen as anything but a gentleman, since in the postbellum South ‘the horse not only symbolized the hero’s adherence to a rigorous moral code of honor, bravery, and gentleness, it also indicated his place in a traditional pastoral aristocracy where the control of horses was a true test of a man’s worth and standing.’

This fascination with heraldry and romance particularly brings to mind Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889). James M. Cox writes that Hank Morgan ‘emerges into the sixth-century Arthurian world and is able to see this feudal pastoral from the presumable advantage of democratic industrialism’. Indeed, Twain’s tale of a time-travelling utilitarian from New England is set up primarily to lampoon ‘the nonsense, barbarism, and romanticism of a society corrupted by its false consciousness, its patently inadequate version of things’. The South in which Dr. Burton cannot be a gentleman is eerily similar to the one that Twain caricatures. It is suggestive that Magill relays the scene of a tournament in such detail, because in *Connecticut Yankee*, Hank Morgan witnesses the inspiration for the Southern courting ritual. He begins with something of a positive statement, declaring that ‘they were always having grand tournaments there at Camelot’.

This quickly gives way to more negative thoughts, though. Morgan describes the spectators as having ‘a happy-hearted indifference to morals’, portraying the tournament crowd not as an object for emulation, but as somewhat barbarous. In Magill’s novel, the worst thing that happens at the joust is that Robert Murray’s horse bolts, leaving its rider in danger; conversely, Twain pushes the gory historical reality to the forefront, talking of how the audience could ‘see a knight sprawl from his horse in the lists with a lance-shaft the thickness of your ankle clean through him and the blood spouting, and instead of fainting they would clap their hands and crowd each other for a better view’. As Lesley C. Kordecki writes, Twain’s ‘voice is a brilliant, particularizing, debunking instrument’, and his comic voice completely demystifies the romances that inspired Southern authors such as Magill.

However, one similarity in how Magill and Twain represent the tournament is that they both disclose its performativity. In *The Holcombes*, we can identify a society that is basically ‘playing’ at being knights, utilizing the romance of such figures while leaving the unpleasant historical realities to

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one side. While Twain gives us the warts-and-all version of a joust, he still makes it clear that there is
a profound artifice at work. Of the women in attendance, Morgan claims that ‘sometimes one would
dive into her handkerchief, and look ostentatiously broken-hearted, and then you could lay two-to-one
that there was a scandal there somewhere and she was afraid the public hadn’t found it out.’50 This
extract implies that this gesture is not natural, but is conspicuously artificial. In both Magill and
Twain, the tournament is a performance, involving not only the jousters themselves but the audience
and wider community as well. The key difference is the way in which Magill does not emphasize self-
consciously such performativity and presents this scene in a relatively carefree way, while Twain sees
the negative outcomes of people looking backwards and generating a sanitized version of previous
societies, rather than looking towards progress and the future.

While there is no jousting to speak of in Thomas Hardy, it is productive for our readings of
the medieval, or faux-medieval, in Magill and Twain to consider two very different responses to this
type of historical gesture in his work. There is, of course, the symbolism of the death of Tess’s horse
Prince in Tess of the d’Urbervilles (1891). After learning of her noble ancestry, Tess falls asleep
dreaming of knights and gentlemanly suitors while driving to Casterbridge. When she awakes, there
has been a collision between her wagon and the mail-cart, and ‘the pointed shaft of the cart had
entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword’, an injury not unlike a lance wound that a horse
might receive in a joust.51 It is this event that sets in motion the tragic events that will follow in the
novel, but we also have to be aware of what is happening symbolically here. It is no coincidence that
it is a mail-cart that collides with Tess and her horse. The British Post Office expanded greatly during
the nineteenth century and underwent a number of major reforms.52 We might see in this crash, then, a
symbolic triumph of the modern over dreams of the past, a sentiment that Twain would no doubt have
approved of.

However, things become more complicated when we triangulate our study, because there is
another angle possible on Southern medievalism if we widen our scope a little and bring Magill and
another Hardy novel into play. While not explicitly connected with jousting, the mummer’s play from
The Return of the Native (1878) is somewhat reminiscent of the scenes from The Holcombes.
Performance is obviously always inherent in a dramatic art form such as the mummer’s play, and
since ‘the hero of the mummer’s play is St. George’ there are immediate parallels between the actors
in this performance and the one acting as the Knight of St. George in Magill’s novel.53 Although they
are acting, the mummers in Hardy are portrayed as securing a productive connection with the past
through the play: ‘they perform their immemorial play [with] their authenticity spoken for by their

50 Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, p. 62.
52 For more on this nineteenth-century expansion, see Chapters 4 and 5 of Duncan Campbell-Smith, Masters of
being spoken through.\footnote{Edward Neill, \textit{The Secret Life of Thomas Hardy: Retaliatory Fiction} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 44.} Employing a comparative reading, we might now want to consider the Southern performance that appears in Magill in a more positive light. Instead of seeing it as mere pretence, ripe for Twain’s corrosive satire, we could instead understand it as providing a valuable connection between a society and its ancestors. As Paul Giles notes, many Americans in the nineteenth century saw American culture as a ‘continuation’ of English culture, and believed that they had as much right to claim English ancestry up to the point of colonization as the English themselves.\footnote{Paul Giles, \textit{The Global Remapping of American Literature} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 82.} While Southern medievalism has conventionally been considered rather regressive, especially in the face of criticisms from a writer like Twain, bringing Hardy into contact with Magill perhaps allows us to conceive of these performative gestures differently and understand them as a positive Southern reclamation of English heraldic culture.

Whether this is a South that is productively looking backward to its ancestors, or one that is dangerously lost in the romance of storybooks, it is important to consider how far the Jeffersonian ideal has altered or warped by the time we reach the postbellum period. We have already seen how, prior to the Civil War, tensions with ideals inspired by chivalric romance meant that the model of all yeomen having a stake in the land and, therefore, in society was modified from that originally postulated by Jefferson. However, there was further significant deviation following the conflict. The extent of this shift in perspective is clear from \textit{The Holcombes}, for example in this exchange between George Holcombe and the African American character known as Mammy:

> ‘Well, Mammy,’ said George, winking at me as an intimation that he was drawing her out, have you got any free negroes around here now?’
> ‘No, thank the lord, Mars’ George; they ain’t many of that trash about now; dey ain’t no better den poor white folks. I ain’t got no use for ’em nohow. Give me a darky what has been brought up by the quality.’ (65)

It is immediately apparent that this exchange relates to free black people. It has already been established that the Jeffersonian ideal of an empowered yeomanry was always colour-coded and, specifically, a white ideal. What is curious, though, is how the perception of the free black has fallen still further between the antebellum period and the time of \textit{The Holcombes}’ composition. In \textit{Swallow Barn}, for example, there are a number of black people who are not slaves. Their purposes in that narrative seem to be to refute the idea that all (or an overwhelming majority of) black people were in bonds, and to suggest that acts of manumission were more prevalent than abolitionists had people believe. In reality, ‘freedmen’s officials with the army generally agreed that the freedmen who worked on their own achieved the greatest economic success and […] had been “prosperous”’\footnote{Carl E. Moneyhon, ‘From Slave to Free Labor: The Federal Plantation Experiment in Arkansas’, in \textit{Civil War Arkansas: Beyond Battles and Leaders}, ed. by Anne J. Bailey and Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), p. 189.}.
In *The Holcombes*, however, the mood has obviously shifted somewhat, and a new comparison between free blacks and the enslaved is made, one that is framed in such terms so as to be highly unfavourable to the liberated community.

Prior to the Civil War, free blacks could be used by Southerners to show that slavery had limits and was not an all-consuming institution. Often, they were presented as visible proof that at the appropriate juncture (in the best interests of the individual slave), a Southern slaveholder would willingly forego economic considerations and release them from their bonds. However, following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, defending slavery in the present tense became a moot issue, and so many of the positive traits of free blacks, as *The Holcombes* exemplifies, disappeared from white Southern discourse. Rather than a symbol within the South of what all black people might eventually become, the free black became a figurative vindication of slavery and the Old South. This is because the free black was seen as vastly inferior to the older, antebellum slaves who were conceived as embracing their belonging to white guardians. In reality, this debasement of free blacks reflected the changes in Southern philosophy necessary to make Jim Crow tolerable, as ‘white Southerners defended, tolerated, and rationalized the systematic abuse and exploitation of black men and women in the name of ensuring their own supremacy, security, and profits’.

The free black had to be positioned as inferior to the ante­bellum slave, in order to disclose the abuses of that new social system that replaced slavery. With this binary opposition established between pre- and post-Emancipation African Americans, then, Southerners could mobilize it to show that the institution of slavery was a wise and noble convention which, until it was foolishly dismantled by outsiders, prevented the degeneration of the black community which (almost inevitably) occurred after 1865. The degraded figure of the free black relative to the slave in *The Holcombes* serves as further evidence of the strenuous work done by Magill and her Southern contemporaries to undo the effects of Reconstruction, at least at a symbolic level, and rehabilitate the Old South.

However, free blacks, despite being the topic of conversation between Mammy and George, are perhaps not the most interesting thing about this exchange. What is even more worthy of attention is just how much this passage reveals about tension between the yeoman ideal and romantic traditions on the one hand, and the material condition of poorer white people on the other. We have already observed how Jefferson’s idea of all white yeomen having some stock in the US republic came under pressure in the South from romantic models of nobility, honour and an obsession with feudal codes of chivalry, as well as from wealthy planters protecting their economic concerns. However, in *The Holcombes* that original yeoman ideal has been stretched to the point of breaking. When condemning free blacks, Mammy’s reference to them as ‘no better den poor white folks’ is telling. Compare this statement with the remarks of Virginian lawyer and politician Abel P. Upshur in 1839:

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First, said Upshur, in slave society every white man was an aristocrat. The whites had status, a kind of rank and privilege, as Burke had said, which made them more zealous of personal liberty and social order than men whose craving for distinction found release only in the competition for office and wealth.\(^{58}\)

The gulf between these antebellum comments and the presentation of whites in Magill’s postbellum novel is considerable. While in the past the yeoman had been under pressure from the material and ideological forces noted above, the social dispensation was still rigidly colour-coded and the white yeomanry was at all times considered to be above all black people. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown has noted, ‘In the American South before the Civil War, those belonging to the circle of honor were much greater in number than in any other traditional society. Democracy, that is white democracy, made that possible’, suggesting that the institution of slavery meant that, at some level, all whites in the South were thought of as, to a greater or lesser degree, aristocratic.\(^{59}\) From the evidence of The Holcombes, however, it is clear that this structure was beginning to break down, with economic concerns, rather than the idealized pastoral model that Jefferson laid out, playing a much greater role in the bestowing of social value.

It is important, of course, that it is the slave Mammy who voices this opinion of poor whites. The fact that a slave character can express these sentiments openly, in the presence of white people, without being censured or reprimanded, suggests that they were in common currency during the postbellum period and were tolerated or even approved of by the planter class. Jeff Forret has observed that ‘many slaves reciprocated the feelings of hatred that some poor whites held for them […] the son of a large slaveholder in Abbeville district, South Carolina, reminisced that his family’s aristocratic slave Griffin, a renowned muleteer and talented fiddler, looked with unabashed “contempt” upon the “po’ white trash.”\(^{60}\) We can see a new hierarchy emerging, then, one which placed wealthy planters (with their pretensions to a noble background) firmly at the top. Then, however, rather than the white yeomanry, the next rung down would appear to have been occupied by the former slave classes, who, having been ‘brought up by the quality’, seemed, at least in propagandistic Southern writing, to have acquired some of the nobility of the planter classes through a kind of social osmosis. At the bottom rung of the ladder were free blacks and ‘white trash’, both seemingly so disconnected from the planters’ chivalric associations as to be beneath even slaves.\(^{61}\)

Some caution is necessary with respect to this passage from The Holcombes as it might represent an attempt at humour on the part of Magill, imputing an overblown sense of pride to Mammy and inviting us to laugh at her expense. However, one cannot help but be struck by the fact that she receives no rebuke from her owners for speaking ill of white people. One would reasonably

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\(^{59}\) Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, p. 61.


\(^{61}\) For the long etymological life of the term, ‘white trash’, see p. 89, n. 101.
expect, in any society which is fundamentally divided along racial lines, such divisions to be firmly established and rigidly maintained by those in authority. Therefore, this is clearly no longer a society in which all white people have an innate or self-evident superiority to all African Americans. By contrast, *The Holcombes* contains no evidence of – in fact it renders inconceivable – planters allowing black people to speak ill of them. What is crucial, here, is economics. In the postbellum South’s revisionary construction of the Old South, power and money are ultimately the things which give anything value, with the intellectual justification for this conferred by the romanticized notion that the wealthy planter class descended from the English aristocracy. Mammy is allowed to slander poor whites in a way that no real antebellum slave would have been likely to, given that the antebellum racial hierarchy was so strongly reinforced that ‘cultural practice expected blacks on the street to give way to all whites, “even of the lowest and most degraded class”’.62 This new-found freedom of speech is acquired precisely because Mammy has greater proximity to the planter class. The Jeffersonian ideal that a small tenant farmer would have the most admirable of qualities and be the backbone of the nation thus seems to be in crisis in the postbellum South. Instead, as *The Holcombes* indicates, there is mystification of the Old South and glamorization of the largest property-owning classes that result in the yeomanry’s stock being much diminished. This is a significant departure from Jefferson, by this point once again a figurehead for the Southern-dominated Democratic party, but is also the logical conclusion of Southern romantic idealism. It is unsurprising to find out that landowners’ negative sentiments towards the poor white classes were fully reciprocated: ‘It is hardly possible to overstate the bitterness felt, in those parts of the South where the yeoman farmers or poor whites predominated, against the planter class.’63 Much of this resentment pre-existed the conflict, but, as David Williams demonstrates in a lengthy but fascinating discussion, was brought to a head by the Civil War:

The yeomen had other concerns as well. Who would care for their families and farms while they were away in the army? Planters had fewer such worries because they had slaves to work their plantations. And taxes were rising on everything except slaves. As the 1861 state elections approached, these issues remained uppermost in the minds of poorer voters. In September, one Georgia farmer addressed an open letter to candidates for the legislature: ‘[…] Is it right that the poor man should be taxed for the support of the war, when the war was brought about on the slave question, and the slave at home accumulating for the benefit of his master, and the poor man’s farm left uncultivated, and a chance for his wife to be a widow, and his children orphans? Now, in justice, would it not be right to levy a direct tax on the species of property that brought about the war, to support it?’ A week later, the editor of the newspaper that printed the letter apologized for doing so because, he said, that kind of talk might cause class division. In fact, such letters did not cause division but simply expressed an underlying class resentment that already existed. Before the war, that resentment had been directed against numerous inequities, only one of which involved slavery. During the first

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year of the war, however, slavery became the focus of class conflict. To poor whites it was the symbol of everything they hated about the planters.64 Though these poorer classes would, eventually, also turn against the freed slaves, we cannot underestimate how antebellum and wartime tensions boiled over and, in the early days of Reconstruction, there was significant class strife between Southern whites, with snobbery on the one side and intense bitterness on the other.65

However, Magill’s treatment of the idea of Southern honour is not without scepticism. Margaret Holcombe is often a figure of fun in the novel, because of her commitment to a sense of duty which she never fully understands and which actually goes against any number of her own desires. As her Aunt, Mrs. Mason, summarizes things: “‘she seems to have built up a wall of fancied duty and fenced herself in with self-appraisal, until she imagines all the world is wrong and she alone right’” (87). Although in the past, as we have seen in the novel written by Magill’s great-uncle, her family’s presentation of Southern honour would have been unequivocal, here there is the potential for caricaturing some of its excesses and for disclosure of a performative aspect inherent within it. Margaret’s obsession with honouring her mother to the extent that she wrongs her living relatives suggests that honour for its own sake, particularly when it does harm to those around you, is not a positive trait but instead rather prideful and perfect subject matter for lampooning. Indeed, this is evident when we consider Margaret’s reaction to the gift of a writing desk:

Mary came running in with a writing-desk, crying, ‘Oh Margie, just look what mamma has brought you! Just the very thing you wanted.’ I said, ‘Take it back, Mary and tell your mamma I would rather not take it; she had better give it to you.’ I did not find the satisfaction in this that I expected, because I did want the writing-desk dreadfully, and really could have cried when I saw Mary with it afterwards. (32)

There is something quixotic about Margaret’s reactions to the overtures of her stepmother. When we know that underneath her façade is a desire to accept this gift, and that she would sooner be kept ignorant and unknowingly accept something she wanted from her stepmother than take the more principled stand and ensure that she accepted nothing from that source (‘I did not ask who sent it, as I wanted it so much; and if she had, I could not have eaten it, of course’ [34]), we might in fact see Margaret as tilting at windmills here. However, Magill only goes some way in mocking the honour of her female characters. While the reader may choose to infer some shift in the presentation of honour from Margaret’s conduct, it is perhaps telling that, by contrast, the honour of Robert Murray, Mr. Holcombe, or of any other Virginian gentleman, is unimpeachable throughout the novel; as Wyatt-

65 For further discussion of how the Confederate myth would serve to heal conflict between the planter class and poor whites in the South, see William Tynes Cowan, The Slave in the Swamp: Disrupting the Plantation Narrative (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 155-60.
Brown suggests, ‘daughters, sisters, and wives were held in high esteem, but it was the men who counted in life within as well as outside the family.’ While Kennedy may, on occasion, have attempted to gently poke fun at some of the extremes to which this Southern trait may go, there is no room for this kind of satire in the defeated South. As Gray has pointed out, in the postbellum South, ‘there was no place for doubts or reservations – even for those drastically restricted kinds of social criticism and historical analysis that one finds in plantation stories from before the war.’ This is not a reaction under duress that is unique to the American South, and there are examples within English pastoral, too, of the honour of the aristocracy being venerated when it is being encroached upon by a powerful new class. Terry Gifford writes of *The Winter’s Tale*, for instance, that ‘to a court in which the newfound wealth of merchants was producing a new aspiring capitalist class in whom grace, honour and loyalty had not been bred in the traditional aristocratic dynasty, the discourse of pastoral retreat served to warn those who might be tempted to challenge their destiny.’ While the circumstances were radically different (Shakespeare was defending an aristocracy whose power was still largely intact), the sense of resistance to economic and ideological threat was comparable: for those who were culturally ‘Southern’, criticizing their antebellum pastoral idyll in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War was unthinkable.

‘I could make anything a body wanted’: Mechanization and the Poetics of Labour in the Postbellum South

‘Although the lost cause ethos responded to the emotional, racial, and political needs of many white southerners,’ argues James C. Cobb, ‘it offered no solutions to the postbellum economic crisis threatening the entire region.’ The solution to that crisis would be establishment of a solid manufacturing base, taking advantage of modern mechanized techniques to improve production. However, as there is very little evidence of the workshop or machinery in the work of distinctly Southern authors, like Magill, the case can be made that literature that deals primarily with the ‘Lost Cause’ also offered very little in the way of a solution to the postbellum economic quandary. This is where Twain, who could create heroes as diverse as Tom Sawyer and Hank Morgan, is particularly useful. Twain’s very public vacillations between Unionist and romantic Southern discourses prevent definitive readings of his position as either a modernizer or traditionalist. His shifts have given rise to debates such as whether he favoured sedition and sentiment over patriotism and progress, and also whether he was always anti-black or eventually became anti-slavery.

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67 Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 92.
70 For further discussion of the subject of Twain and slavery, see Joe B. Fulton, *The Reconstruction of Mark Twain: How A Confederate Bushwhacker Became the Lincoln of our Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
While Twain’s vacillating loyalties have inspired significant scholarly debate, Hardy, by contrast, has become prominent within the English literary canon as a defender of rural tradition, and so, initially, we might again be inclined to see Hardy’s work as more closely aligned with Magill’s concerns. Merryn Williams has suggested that

In our own age, which has at last begun to think seriously about our alienation from nature and its consequences, Hardy comes over as one who wanted to protect and preserve it. He believed strongly that man was a guardian of nature and had a responsibility to look after the animal kingdom (like Gabriel Oak) and to pass it on undamaged to future generations.\(^7^1\)

This is a familiar (albeit somewhat dated) reading of Hardy as a writer lamenting the passing of his native Dorset from a pastoral to an industrial age. This older critical tradition has left its mark on the popular imagination of Hardy, and his name now instantly evokes the world of Wessex, which, prior to Hardy’s intervention, was ‘until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a purely historical term defining the south-western region of the island of Britain’.\(^7^2\) It is this trace of an ancient past in Hardy’s work which leads to his being ‘at once amongst the most constantly read […] and misread of authors’, constructed as a writer who, not unlike Magill, reaches back to the past and a lost Eden.\(^7^3\)

The name of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom offers an easy route into positioning Hardy in terms of preindustrial antiquity. Mary Rimmer asserts that

For much of the twentieth century, […], critics rarely approached him primarily as a Victorian, preferring to associate him with a rustic, isolated world untouched by history, or with a past far enough back to be almost atemporal, as in Lord David Cecil’s assertion that Hardy ‘was stirred primarily by the life he had known as a child’.\(^7^4\)

To see Hardy as oriented primarily towards the past, however, given largely to representation of unchanging rural spaces in novels such as *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), involves ignoring the very modern aspects of much of his work. As Julian Wolfreys has identified, although ‘not a few of Hardy’s novels situate their events at a generation’s remove, or at a distance of a couple of decades at least from the time of their writing […] the experience of reading them is markedly “modern”, self-conscious, their narratives not necessarily being of their time’.\(^7^5\) It is a mistake, then, to see Hardy as evoking the past in purely nostalgic mode. Rather, his novels map a world that seems temporally odd or mixed, in which echoes of the past exist in tension with the remarkably modern. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), for example, Casterbridge itself is described as ‘the complement of rural life
around; not its urban opposite’. Hardy thereby subverts a familiar Victorian binary opposition, since ‘most major Victorian novelists retained [...] the contrast between city and country’. The narrator goes on to say, ‘Thus Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common.’ While marking out a definitively urban space, this passage is explicit in placing Casterbridge in harmony with nature, removing from the town any of the stigma associated with manufacturing centres (exemplified by the criticism of towns like Manchester and Birmingham that we have seen earlier in this thesis). The seeming autochthonism of Casterbridge allows for a novel still set within urban spheres to avoid the Victorian cliché of the modern town as a disturbing place in comparison with a utopian bucolic opposite; this creates as idyllic a townscape as we are likely to find in Victorian fiction, and also is reminiscent of earlier descriptions of industrial centres in Massachusetts (as cited in Part Two). The cause of this could possibly be that, although the novel was published in 1886, ‘the action takes place before the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and prior to the railways coming to Dorchester in 1847.’ Hardy sets The Mayor of Casterbridge some forty years before he writes it in order to create a world in which this unity between town and country is possible, before railways and the emergence of the industrial in Dorset. Hardy looks back to the past to assuage contemporary anxieties regarding, and indeed to rehabilitate, urban space. By the time of Hardy’s final novel, the remorselessly grim Jude the Obscure (1895), such a gesture is impossible. That novel could not exist without industrial progress, as Jude’s decisive movements are linked to the railways.

While Hardy collapses the distance between urban and rural spaces through his presentation of Casterbridge, Twain approaches the relative geographies of townscape and rural scenes rather differently. In Life on the Mississippi (1883), he distinguishes between the more northerly industrial centres of Missouri and areas further down the river:

From St. Louis northward there are all the enlivening signs of the presence of active, energetic, intelligent, prosperous, practical, nineteenth-century populations. The people don’t dream, they work. The happy result is manifest all around in the substantial outside aspect of things, and the suggestions of wholesome life and comfort that everywhere appear.

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78 Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 54.
79 Consider, for example, the difference between Dickens’s presentation of the fictional Coketown in Hard Times and his more positive portrayal of Lowell, Massachusetts in American Notes.
80 Pamela Norris, Editorial Note to The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 293.
81 For more on the importance of the railways to Jude the Obscure, see Michael Freeman, ‘Time and Space under Modernism: The Railway in D.H. Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers’, in The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space, and the Machine Ensemble, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007), pp. 85-100.
82 Twain, Life on the Mississippi, ed. by James M. Cox (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 392. All subsequent references to this text will be given in parentheses.
The opposition created is clear: the industrial North prospers through activity, while the defeated areas south of St. Louis decay in indolence. Writing in such positive terms about the world north of St. Louis, Twain gives little evidence here of the familiar regional anxiety about machines despoiling the garden of the South. By the time Twain came to write his most famous texts, he was a fervent detractor of slavery, Southern pretensions to romantic status, and of the torpor that he saw in the region, as well as an outspoken endorser of the methods of the North being used to rehabilitate his native region. Neil Schmitz goes so far as to describe him as ‘the Southern humourist gone over, not just a deserter, a dissenter, but a literary scalawag, a Southern writer in Unionist discourse and narrative’. While at certain times his cultural ‘Southernness’ emerges and undermines that Unionist discourse, there is in Twain a recurrent sanctioning of greater industrialization and integration with Northern ideals which leads us to ask why much of his most memorable fiction is set in the South in the period before the Civil War, when whites presided over blacks in an undemocratic, quasi-feudal structure.

Without resorting to a purely nostalgic construction of the past, Twain, like Hardy, looks backwards for the inspiration for his fiction. The Wessex that Hardy creates, however, is no Anglo-Saxon fantasy, but is a vivid representation of an economic community that is, despite a patina of nostalgia, little different to a contemporaneous Victorian region. This is nowhere more evident than in the preface to *Far From the Madding Crowd*, where Hardy reflects on his notion of Wessex:

> The series of novels I projected being mainly of the kind called local, they seemed to require a territorial definition of some sort to lend unity to their scene. Finding that the area of a single county did not afford a canvas large enough for this purpose, and that there were objections to an invented name, I disinterred the old one. The region designated was known but vaguely, and I was often asked even by educated people where it lay. However, the press and the public were kind enough to welcome the fanciful plan, and willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria; a modern Wessex of railways, the penny post, mowing and reaping machines, union workhouses, Lucifer matches, labourers who could read and write, and National school children.

From this preface, we can see that it was not Hardy’s goal to create a mythology of an archaic England, nor to fashion a binary opposition in which a rural economic mode is favoured over an industrial one in wholesale fashion. Indeed, Hardy’s endeavours go further than Twain’s application of his postbellum attitudes to a narrative set in the antebellum period. Rather, Hardy’s aim was to document the changes to a traditional region in an era of greater national identity and standardization. As Raymond Williams eloquently puts it, ‘it is not from an old rural world or from a remote region that Hardy now speaks to us; but from the heart of a still active experience, of the familiar and the

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changing. To accomplish this, he ‘disinters’ the name of ancient Wessex, excavating it as if from the soil of his contemporary Dorset. Through this act of exhumation, Hardy creates the means by which an appraisal of preindustrial modes of existence in a rapidly industrializing sphere is possible. This was the contemporary reality for many small, British regional communities, and by not favouring unequivocally either modern industrial or traditional artisanal and manual modes of labour, Hardy manages to represent tensions that take place locally between the two. It is his fiction’s staging of these tensions that can serve us here as a prism for a productive reading of the fate of pastoral in Twain and Magill.

Due to the specificities of Wessex, Hardy’s representations of industry are more in line with instances of rural modernization than the truly modern manufacturing centres that Twain presents in *Life on the Mississippi*. Twain, writing of a South that was attempting to quickly create a profitable manufacturing base following the Civil War, praises manufacturing on a regular basis, yet his admiration is comparatively cold or abstract, often focusing on little more than the number of factories and their profit margins. Hardy is far more evocative in dealing with the transition from manual to mechanized labour, and it is apparent through these differing emphases that the two writers have different models of the economic progress of their respective regions. Twain’s focus on manufacturing centres when the South had been, since independence, the most rurally dependent economy in the United States shows an attempt to break with Southern tradition, and an acquiescence in – if not, as we shall see, a wholehearted embrace of – Unionist ideas and conceptions of progress. Conversely, Hardy’s focus on reform of rural methods of production as opposed to the development of manufacturing centres suggests a more culturally conservative position.

We have already seen in this thesis that labour was often presented negatively in the antebellum South. Leisure was framed as an aristocratic quality, a sign that one had sufficient wealth to live in the manner befitting an English nobleman and that work (on one’s own part, at least) was not required. So pronounced were these Southern leisurely traits that, following the Civil War, an observer noted that ‘freedmen had been taught by the practice of their masters to associate freedom with idleness’. However, there is an identifiable shift in *The Holcombes*. Indeed, there are a few hints that knowledge of farming practice and closeness with the soil have now become prerequisites for status as a member of the Southern elite. At one point, an exchange between Mr. Holcombe and Dr. Burton reveals the latter’s unsuitability as a suitor for Margaret because of his ignorance of the land:

‘Planted your wheat yet, sir?’
‘I am *sowing* it now, thank you.’ (221)

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85 Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 199.
The slightly terse way in which Mr. Holcombe, who, as we know, is a Virginian patrician beyond question, speaks implies that Burton’s question reveals deficiencies in his character. Being a ‘Massachusetts Yankee’ (243), Burton is geographically about as far removed in origin from Virginia as he can possibly be while still being an American (and since this novel was written in the postbellum period, we might be inclined to see his character as a proto-carpetbagger, as the present of the novel’s setting and the present of authorship become confused), and he is also presented as at some cultural and experiential distance from Virginians, too; we have already seen how he is distinct from them due to his inability to ride well, and here his ignorance in rural matters separates him still further from the central characters in the novel. It is knowledge of how the land is worked, here, that imbues a character with aristocratic status, not ignorance of it. Indeed, Burton (who will eventually be described as a ‘rascal’ [276]) is the figure who shows no awareness of correct terminology (in this case, sowing) or process, and it is the gentleman who corrects him. Labour in and familiarity with the land are, in the postbellum South, no longer signs of inferior social status and realms from which the planter aristocracy of the Old South is removed. While no description is ever given of the Holcombe family engaged in any kind of manual labour, by this point there are the beginnings of an association between the formerly leisured Southern aristocrats and the labour that occurs on their estates. The planter class appears to have appropriated for itself Jefferson’s assertion that agrarian labour signifies the chosen people of God.

By contrast, we might expect Twain to have a less ambiguous approach than Magill, or even than Hardy, and to endorse wholeheartedly a shift towards greater productivity, and the machinery that would make it possible. Life on the Mississippi would appear to endorse Southern modernization and efforts to increase the industrial base to a level comparable with the North. Indeed, as Peter Messent notes, ‘part of the story [Twain] tells in the book is of a post-bellum America, pragmatic and technologically progressive.’ It has already been noted that Twain extols industrialization in the north of Missouri, his home state, and beyond, and criticizes underdeveloped sections of the South. The North that Twain presents is free of the faults he finds with the Sir Walter Scott-enchanted South. The key phrase in a passage from Life on the Mississippi, quoted above, concerns a binary opposition between ‘dreaming’ and ‘working’, between a merely idealistic conception of a better life and the Unionist conception of the practical realities involved in social improvement. The reader might observe in Twain’s criticism of the South a hint of a reproach that is often levelled at pastoral, specifically relating to the tendency of this literary mode to divorce the dream of the idyll from the work that would make it so. In this instance, Twain comes down on the side of the North (and, if we extend the previous argument, against an unrealistic pastoral), suggesting that its endeavours yield a ‘happy result’, something that he would never say about the Southern approach to labour and industry.

On returning to the South later in life, Twain reserves his compliments in *Life on the Mississippi* for those towns which have taken to modernization:

A thriving place is the Good Samaritan City of the Mississippi: has a great wholesale jobbing trade; foundries, machine shops; and manufactories of wagons, carriages, and cottonseed oil; and is shortly to have cotton mills and elevators. Her cotton receipts reached five hundred thousand bales last year – an increase of sixty thousand over the year before. Out from her healthy commercial heart issue five trunk lines of railway; and a sixth is being added. (218)

Southern towns that established a post-war industrial base such as Memphis, or Helena in Arkansas which Twain singles out as having ‘$1,000,000 invested in manufacturing industries’ (231), are conceived positively in his economic imagination. Twain writes of ‘the wholesome and practical nineteenth-century smell of cotton factories and locomotives’ (284). Socially, however, he still reserves some criticisms. Arkansas City, ‘born of a railway’, is described as a town of shanty dwellings (not dissimilar to those properly rural spaces inhabited by the Dorset labourers in Hardy) and poor roads (229). Helena, complimented in one breath, is condemned in another as having ‘whole streets of houses [that] had been invaded by muddy water, and the outsides of the buildings were still belted with a broad stain extending upwards from the foundations’ (230). Although Twain suggests that with the Deep South ‘begins the pilot’s paradise’ (285), due to scenic beauty and navigational challenge on board steamboats, a close reading of *Life on the Mississippi* reveals that his paradise is actually criticized far more frequently than the more industrialized and practical Northern regions. The catalogue of praise for Northern regions, combined with the more reserved approval of Southern towns, suggests that Twain is concerned that, at a cultural level, the South has not engaged sufficiently with Northern ideals. A greater emphasis on industry and manufacturing was a positive beginning, but the roads were still poor, and a more industrious attitude (to complement the new focus on the industrial) was necessary to undo the harm that had been caused by romance, and to help Southern society progress and reach the levels attained by the workmanlike North.

Scholarship that is interested in international exchanges must note that, in targeting the aforementioned harmful effects of romance, Twain looked beyond the South itself, and began to visualize transatlantic connections with the American South rather differently. Where previously it had been clear that a key attitude of the South toward Britain had been one of desire to distance itself from the industrial towns of the workshop of the world, now Twain presents a different view of Britain: not as a world leader in industry and a great modern power, but as historical Britain, a Britain that does not progress, a Britain that dreams and whose taste for romance has infected the South and is responsible for the latter’s distaste for modernity. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain aligns the South with Britain as sharing in the insidious corruption of a Yankee industrial spirit:

Keeping school in a castle is a romantic thing; as romantic as keeping hotel in a castle.
By itself the imitation castle is doubtless harmless, and well enough; but as a symbol and breeder and sustainer of maudlin Middle-Age romanticism here in the midst of the plainest and sturdiest and infinitely greatest and worthiest of all the centuries the world has seen, it is necessarily a hurtful thing and a mistake. (286)

Twain’s words here show his belief that fascination with romance has hampered Southerners. However, while his literature frequently makes this case, it is also clear that in a number of ways Twain is at the mercy of such romantic figures himself, and despite his support for the industrious spirit of the New World seemed curiously drawn to a romanticized Europe, and to foreign travel more widely. As Arthur Pettit puts it, Twain was both ‘an outspoken patriot and a disillusioned expatriate who spent a quarter of his adult life abroad’. 88

In truth, Twain always seems to be responding to contradictory ideological and cultural forces. To explore this further, we should turn to Hank Morgan’s self-description in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court:

I am an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the State of Connecticut – anyway, just over the river, in the country. So I am a Yankee of the Yankees – and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose – or poetry, in other words.89

The key word here is ‘poetry’. It is linked clearly with the word ‘sentiment’, and while it might be possible to consider a character devoid of sentiment (with all the negative connotations that surround the word) in positive terms, it is nearly impossible, within the Western literary tradition, to read similarly a figure devoid of poetic feeling. T.J. Lustig draws out the relation between Twain’s own feelings and the character of Hank Morgan:

According to Paine, Twain told his illustrator, Dan Beard, that ‘this Yankee of mine is a perfect ignoramus; he is a boss of a machine shop; he can build a locomotive or a Colts [sic] revolver . . . but he’s an ignoramus, never the less’. Twain did not necessarily share Morgan’s conception of civilization and clearly felt that a world inhabited by people who make trains and guns would be insufficient. On occasions, he was as keen on the ‘soap and civilization’ formula as his protagonist. But for him, as for Tom Sawyer, the conveniences of ‘modern civilization’ did not make up for the loss of ‘outlaws’ like Robin Hood.90

Despite the more positive attitudes towards industry that we have already seen him display in Life on the Mississippi, Twain, in Lustig’s account, also charts a negative correlation between industrial modernity and poetry – something also identifiable in the work of Hardy and, indeed, reflective of a common nineteenth-century sensibility. Letitia E. Landon, for example, wrote in 1832 that the English people would always ‘turn away from the hurry and highways of life, and [their] place of refuge will

88 Pettit, Mark Twain and the South, p. 7.
89 Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, p. 10.
still be the green paths and pleasant waters of poesy’. Landon figured poetry as a release valve for an industrializing society; it was profoundly anti-modern and acted not simply as a recreational antidote but as an imaginary alternative to modern productive practices. Like the pastoral, which was always something of a retreat for urban dwellers, poetry, too, was positioned as a form of withdrawal, in this instance from the cities that sprang up in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. In Poetics: An Essay on Poetry (1852), on the other hand, the journalist and author E.S. Dallas set out a subtly different view of poetry and the poetic. In a section entitled ‘The Law of Harmony’, he suggests that ‘as all pleasure is a concord produced while the mind is in a state of activity, so poetic pleasure is a concord produced while that activity is charged more or less with imagination’. While a theory of pleasure does not directly apply to manual labour, John Stuart Mill had suggested that poetry could indeed be seen in more practical employment, remarking that ‘poetry is either nothing, or it is the better part of all art whatever, and real life too’. This notion takes poetry away from professionalized or specialized writers, and liberates it, so that poetic qualities might be seen as animating any number of endeavours. If we combine this more expansive conception of poetry with the suggestion put forward by Dallas that poetic pleasure is caused when activity (or, indeed, work) is creative, then the labour of a traditional craftsman could be seen as ‘charged […] with imagination’ and thus be considered poetic. Mill shows us that nineteenth-century models of poetry were changing. The conservative views of the pre-Victorian Landon are challenged by the later writers cited here, and poetry is framed as discursively and experientially more dispersed than is evoked by Landon’s definition of ‘poesy’, or poetry in its traditional written form.

Familiarity with such debates regarding poetry is necessary in order for us to understand the implied poetics of labour in postbellum Southern pastoral. In attempting to better grasp the various and, at times, complex responses to work in the writing of Twain and Magill, Hardy will again be useful in a mediating role, due to his explicit engagement with similar subject matter. Consider, for example, the following important exchange from The Mayor of Casterbridge. Henchard and Farfrae are often positioned in opposition to each other in this novel, and one of their differences is their response to machinery. Henchard mocks the machine, while Farfrae takes a much more measured view:

‘We are looking at the wonderful new drill,’ Miss Templeman said, ‘but practically it is a stupid thing – is it not?’ she added, on the strength of Henchard’s information.

‘Stupid? O no!’ said Farfrae gravely. ‘It will revolutionize sowing hereabout! No more sowers flinging their seed about broadcast, so that some falls by the wayside and some

among thorns, and all that. Each grain will go straight to its intended place, and nowhere else whatever!"

‘Then the romance of the sower is gone for good,’ observed Elizabeth-Jane, who felt herself at one with Farfrae in bible-reading at least. ‘He that observeth the wind shall not sow,’ so the preacher said; but his words will not be to the point any more. How things change!'

‘Ay; ay… it must be so!’ Donald admitted, his gaze fixing itself on a blank point far away. ‘But the machines are already very common in the East and North of England,’ he added apologetically.94

While it is clear that Farfrae is referring to agricultural machinery, it is noticeable that, along with the ‘East’, Hardy chooses to make reference to the ‘North’ here. Much of the North of England – Sheffield, Tyneside and Manchester, for example – was already massively industrialized by this time, and Farfrae’s ‘apologetic’ tone connotes understanding of the negative perception many Victorians had regarding these industrial cities. However, he usually comes out of his exchanges with Henchard well; there can be no denying that, narratively, he comes to a more pleasant end, and his commercial success (often at the expense of his rival) lends legitimacy to his position on machinery here. The practicality and usefulness of the machine are advocated by the practical and useful man of the novel. However, the description here is still not unequivocally positive, as both Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae are aware that the ‘romance’ of traditional methods is potentially erased by the application of new technologies (an idea that will be returned to below). Yet in spite of this apparent afterthought, with its element of negativity, it is important to note that, overall, appearances of technology here are rather benign. As Andrew D. Radford has acknowledged, ‘Hardy reacts sensibly and humorously to the cultural anxieties about the alleged deleterious effects of late-Victorian life.’95 The growing domination of the machine in the nineteenth century means that, by contrast with the craftsmanship of the past, modern labour, which is so dependent upon mechanization and thus does not entail the creative or imaginative elements of artisanal work, has little of the poetic about it. This has significant implications for this thesis’s consideration of Southern pastoral, because, as Leo Marx argues, ‘it is industrialization, represented by images of machine technology, that provides the counterforce in the American archetype of the pastoral design.’96

The precision of modern industry and the deskilling of labour threaten to undo the Southern pastoral schema, just as Twain’s Morgan, the embodiment of the technological prowess of nineteenth-century America (especially the Northern states), is acknowledged as being utterly devoid of poetry. Twain himself articulates the debate in more personal terms in Life on the Mississippi when describing his increasing prowess as a river pilot:

94 Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, pp. 144-45.
Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling little feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river! (95)

This scene is particularly reminiscent of the episode in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* mentioned above. Much like the Dorset rural labourers with the seed drill, the young Clemens has gained something of practical use which will allow him to make a profitable career on the Mississippi. Since, practically, this is only to Twain’s benefit, his ambiguous tone here must stem from sentimental concerns. In this account, indeed, the river becomes mechanized and predictable, and any sense of it as a magical or romantic space is lost. The romance of mystery is, in effect, lost with the advantage of mastery. As Richard Gray has argued, ‘an attitude founded on a kind of innocence and illiteracy was replaced once he became a pilot by a more knowledgeable, and in a sense more useful, but sadly disillusioned one.’ The reader may, though, wish to see this shift in rather more disturbing terms, and view the pilot’s navigational practice as looking ‘uncannily like that extreme development of a specialist bodily function produced by techniques of industrial mass production spreading across America’. The extension of industrial logic and the loss of poetry seem to be connected here. Of course, Twain continued to appreciate the beauty of the river, and so his assertion that the poetry was lost is not completely true – ‘Life on the Mississippi is, after all, full of rather florid passages describing that grace and beauty’ – but clear tension is emerging between aesthetic and instrumentalist models of the world. If we recall the point made by Empson (mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis) that pastoral stages the intrusion of the complex into the simple, then this episode from *Life on the Mississippi* is still recognisably a pastoral moment, as Twain describes how the kind of work involved ‘robs piloting of its simplistic virtues’. By other models of pastoral, however, the industrialization of the Mississippi casts doubt upon the very future viability of this cultural strain in the South.

Meanwhile, there is very little evidence of similar tensions in *The Holcombes*. At first glance, we might wonder how such a lacuna could occur in Magill’s novel, considering that it was created during the period of Reconstruction, when we might expect some of the anxieties of the age to find their way into the novel’s pages. This is a consequence of the novel’s near-total withdrawal into the past. However, although machines do not make much of an explicit impression in *The Holcombes*, with the setting being an antebellum Virginian homestead, there is a moment when the façade slips, and Mr. Holcombe eerily seems to speak to us not from the time of the book’s setting, but the era in

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97 Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 104.
99 Gray, *Writing the South*, p. 104.
which it is written, remarking upon ‘this prosaic age’ (259). From one perspective, this is not inconsistent with pastoral mythology, in which there is a constant reaching back for a golden age that never actually existed; thus, postbellum Southerners would idealize the Old South, a character like Mr. Holcombe might well idealize Revolutionary Virginia, and so on. However, this reading would be inconsistent with the project of the rest of the novel. It is far more likely, given Magill’s blanket idealization of the antebellum era, that this is a momentary revelation of a postbellum consciousness. Apart from the occasional unconscious slip of this type, however, Magill’s retreat into a pastoral world is comparatively complete, and she engages with the reality of the postbellum South much less directly than Twain. Her engagement is generally more indirect, such as the retrospective intrusion of several postbellum conventions, including the aforementioned faux-medieval joust, into her recreation of the antebellum South.

While there are some mixed responses to technology in the work of both Twain and Hardy, in Magill, by contrast, there is very little explicit engagement with the topic at all. Since *The Holcombes* is a novel focusing on Virginia home life, and simultaneously a retreat into a Golden Age, machines and manufactories are generally absent. However, despite the lack of any obvious industrial sphere in the novel, there are examples where metaphors have a flavour of the factory about them, thereby fracturing the surface of the historical record Magill is attempting to portray with traces of the post-war settlement. One instance is when, discussing red hair, Jean Murray suggests that underneath a gas lamp it looked as ‘burnished copper almost to red-heat’ (26). Although this novel is primarily interested in a feminine sphere, in which the industrial seemingly has no place (at least according to the sensibility of a Southern writer), what is unavoidable is the contemporary freight carried by metaphors that insert themselves into situations where they have no immediately obvious application.101 The reference to burnished copper is not an isolated incident. Another example would be when the actions of Dr. Burton are described using language that relates to machines, while his plot itself takes on a mechanistic quality when described as being ‘out of gear’ (231). Burton’s scheming is the greatest source of peril in the novel, and here we can see the slightest hint of technophobia, the fear that his plans pose the same danger to the happiness of the Holcombe family as a malfunctioning machine. While the reader may be tempted to follow Gifford’s description of pastoral and see *The Holcombes* as a postbellum ‘retreat from politics into an apparently aesthetic landscape that is devoid of conflict and tension’, the mask slips and we can identify traces of an industrial unconscious, and therefore conflict and tension with the modern world, in the work of even such a conservative author as Magill.102 This hints at the growth in industry and the emergence of an industrial working-class in the postbellum South, as migrants arrived ‘looking for ways of realizing the mineral wealth of the

102 Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 11.
South – the coal of the mountains, the oil of Louisiana, the iron of Alabama’. It should also not come as a surprise, since ‘planter-industrialists in the Upper-South [...] accommodated industry to the postbellum agrarian social order’, and so this modernization would not only have been accomplished by incomers, but also by some of Magill’s peers.\textsuperscript{104}

The South, which of course already had mineral resources before the Civil War, was, at material and infrastructural levels, more open to the industrial sector during Reconstruction. However, this was not always reflected ideologically or symbolically. In keeping the factory at the margins of her text, Magill is replicating the ideological design of many inhabitants of the postbellum South: ‘in an age marked by tremendous industrial and urban concentration, they kept the vision of a simple society, predominantly agrarian, individualized, decentralized, free-moving, and free-trading.’\textsuperscript{105} While that which is modern is engaged with directly in the novels of more progressive writers like Twain, Magill looks (much like contemporaneous Southern politicians) wholly backwards, and it is only in the occasional unconscious moment that the present is allowed to intrude.

While most modern, technologized forms of labour are pushed to the margins, the most obvious work which we see taking place outside the home in \textit{The Holcombes} is the lengthy section dedicated to the gathering of the harvest at Rose Hill. What is immediately noticeable is the extent of the harvest and how it affects everyone in the community. It is clear that it reaches even the lady of the house, since ‘Jean laid down her work, and looked up at her husband in surprise. She had never thought of her having any duties to perform at harvest’ (108). Jean is also shown as having to face the fact that the redeployment of the labour force to the fields means she has fewer slaves available to her, ‘and thus, in many little ways, she was constantly reminded that harvest was progressing’ (110). More intriguing, though, is the skill that is attributed to the slaves who work the land:

Each cradler had two binders; and the rapidity of their movements Jean thought wonderful: The golden grain was swept by the unerring scythe; the wide sweep of the arm baring an incredible space at each throw, so that the beautiful field, which at their coming, had nodded a welcome with its millions of heads, soon showed for a great distance before them nothing but the short stubble, forming a ground-work for the richly-piled sheaves which dotted it from one end to the other. (110)

This is a long way from some of the other representations of slaves which we have seen. It is far removed from the slaves encountered in \textit{American Notes}, for example, who sabotage machinery and take no pride in their work. It also amounts, inadvertently, to a post facto concession to slavery’s detractors, since the ability to till the land with such skill that is described here would seem to undermine one of the important conceptual foundations of ‘the peculiar institution’: that the slaves

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{103} Brogan, \textit{The Penguin History of the USA}, p. 361. \\
\textsuperscript{105} Petersen, \textit{The Jefferson Image}, p. 255.}
were better off under the care of white masters because their presumed lack of high-level abilities meant they could not possibly take care of themselves in an emancipated labour market. In this depiction, we see not unskilled labour but precise workmanship; the description of the scythe as ‘unerring’, as well as the narrator’s fascination with its movement, suggests a real valorization of the skills of the slave labourer.

In this representation of slaves working the land, we get a sense of an array of workers labouring skilfully in the service of a benign landowner, which is reminiscent of what Paul Giles has identified in nineteenth-century British authors such as Walter Scott and John Ruskin as a ‘medieval dream of order, based around a Tory sense of feudal hierarchy’. Giles, however, draws a distinction between this valorization of the past founded upon a medieval system of order, and that of ‘more radical medieval partisans [who] were more nostalgic for what they took to be the anarchic charms of the medieval era, its valorization of the individual craftsman and its happy ignorance of science and the machine age’. This latter variant would celebrate the artisan whose labour retained its poetic qualities, while at the same time eschewing the more hierarchical structures involved in feudalism. Giles goes on to suggest that Twain castigated all forms of medievalism, yet there are clear traces of this more radical nostalgia in his work’s attention to modes of labour that are disappearing with the onset of the modern age. Again, comparison with Hardy can serve prismatically to illuminate this retrogressive tendency. In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy similarly explores one such occupation soon to vanish from the Wessex landscape:

“The traveller with the cart was a reddleman – a person whose vocation it was to supply farmers with redding for their sheep. He was one of a class rapidly becoming extinct in Wessex, filling at present in the rural world the place which, during the last century, the dodo occupied in the world of animals. He is a curious, interesting, and nearly perished link between obsolete forms of life and those which generally prevail.”

The comparison with an extinct animal is evocative, since it evokes not only a sense of loss, but of irretrievability and inevitability, a sense, heightened in a post-Darwinian world, that the reddleman, part of Wessex culture far beyond living memory, once lost, is lost forever. Later in *The Return of the Native*, Hardy, significantly, connects the vanishing profession of reddleman to a crisis of poetry:

“Reddlemen of the old school are now but seldom seen. Since the introduction of railways, Wessex farmers have managed to do without these somewhat spectral visitants, and the bright pigment so largely used by shepherds in preparing sheep for the fair is obtained by other routes. Even those who yet survive are losing the poetry of existence that characterised them when the pursuit of the trade meant periodical journeys to the pit whence the material was dug, a regular camping out from month to month, except in the depth of winter, a peregrination among farms which could be counted by the hundred, and in spite of this Arab

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existence the preservation of that respectability which is ensured by the never-failing production of a well-lined purse.109

Again, then, there is a sense of further incompatibility between the modern and the poetic; the reddleman has lost what Hardy considers to be his poetic way of life through the onset of modern technology in Wessex, once again in the form of the railways. Though most of the novel is set some decades in the past, here Hardy writes from his own present of a profession that will soon be extinct. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain performs similar socio-economic obituaries:

But after a while the steamboats so increased in number and in speed that they were able to absorb the entire commerce; and then keelboating died a permanent death. The keelboatman became a deck hand, or a mate, or a pilot on the steamer; and when steamer berths were not open to him, he took a berth on a Pittsburgh coal-flat, or on a pine-raft constructed in the forests up toward the sources of the Mississippi. (51)

Later, he also makes reference to another trade that seems to have disappeared:

And where now is the whittler? Does he still vex the foreign tourist with his universality and his never-tranquil jack-knife, or is he gone down into the shades forever, with the vanished woodyard-man of the Mississippi? He does seem to have passed utterly away and left no heir. (300)

In exactly the same fashion as Hardy presents the reddleman, Twain shows the disappearing figures from the Mississippi valley as if they are also confronting extinction. The keelboatman dies a ‘permanent death’, the whittler has ‘passed utterly away’: neither of these is remotely retrievable. They are rendered extinct due to socio-economic and technological changes, and belong to a South that is no more. For all Twain’s lauding of Southern progress, the demands of a capitalist labour market always lead him to nostalgia for more simple figures and times, and in Twain there is ‘always a tendency to find “freedom” at exactly the place where we no longer are’.110 There are clear similarities between this and the presentation Magill makes of the Old South, a pastoral idyll forever lost following Emancipation; although it should be observed that Magill’s near-total fantasy of withdrawal from the present means that her fiction never takes on the almost fatalistic mood that we sometimes get in Twain (and Hardy).

Yet, once again (and unlike Magill), neither Twain nor Hardy is satisfied with taking up a simplistic position with regard to these traditional occupations. Twain’s positivity regarding steamboats is such that his thoughts about the profession of keelboatman passing away will never be uncomplicated, and we will see later how Twain makes reference to the onerous manual labour of the keelboatman and his impractically long journey time, for a round trip from the upper rivers to New Orleans, of around nine months. Hardy, too, complicates his own romantic notions by presenting a

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109 Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 79.
pronounced negative side to the reddleman, managing to avoid a simple pastoralizing narration that mystifies or even glorifies impoverished living conditions. This is apparent when we consider the blood colouring of the reddleman, making him the figure that ‘was a sublimation of all the horrid dreams which had afflicted the juvenile spirit since imagination began’, implying that the appearance and transient living condition of the reddleman would cause trepidation in children.\footnote{Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 79.} His work is described as an isolated trade, and one that would prompt suspicion in others:

> It was sometimes suggested that reddlemen were criminals for whose misdeeds other men had wrongfully suffered: that in escaping the law they had not escaped their own consciences, and had taken to the trade as a life-long penance. Else why should they have chosen it?\footnote{Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 80.}

For all the poetry of the trade, then, it is hardly presented in encouraging terms, and Hardy is surely attempting no recruitment effort. Diggory Venn, though portrayed as the hero in the novel, has fallen to the trade from his ‘proper station in life’.\footnote{Tony Slade, ‘Introduction’, in Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. xxxi.} Though he ends the novel as a fully integrated member of the Egdon Heath community, ‘his assimilation into the community is enabled […] by his willingness to turn dairy farmer’, and he leaves the profession behind.\footnote{Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 80.} Though the hero occupies such a position for most of the novel, he belongs to it no more than Chambers in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894) and Edward VI in *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881) belong to their temporary situations, and, indeed, it is ‘the major characters’ unstable class positions, with their accompanying frustrations, that drive the action’ in *The Return of the Native*.\footnote{Geoffrey Harvey, *Thomas Hardy: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 67.} In the work of Twain and Hardy, there would seem to be a shared belief that progress and poetry are incompatible; also, and more importantly perhaps, that neither of these terms is solely positive nor negative. For both writers, modernity seems to be the result of a socio-temporal Darwinism: due to the necessary linearity of time, once things are improved upon as regards efficiency, occupations that predate them fail to survive. Though progress is primarily constructive in reducing the burdens of labour and increasing prosperity, there is still a sense of grief for what has been lost, of mourning for a way of life that has, in Twain’s words, ‘died a permanent death’. Fiona Stafford has argued that some British writing of the 1820s can be thought of as pastoral elegies, not because they mourn an individual, as a traditional pastoral elegy such as Milton’s *Lycidas* (1638) does, but ‘because they utter a more general lament for a world under threat – a community in which a rich cultural heritage seems in danger of disappearing’.\footnote{Fiona Stafford, ‘Pastoral Elegy in the 1820s: The Shepherd’s Calendar’, *Victoriographies*, 2, 2 (2012), 103-27 (p. 120).} Analogously, then, we might understand the work of Twain and Hardy not so much as a pastoral retreat (as we might understand *The Holcombes*), but as a version of pastoral which shares some of these elegiac qualities, aimed again not at individuals but more broadly at vanishing elements of society.

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\footnote{Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 79.}
\footnote{Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 80.}
\footnote{Tony Slade, ‘Introduction’, in Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. xxxi.}
\footnote{Fiona Stafford, ‘Pastoral Elegy in the 1820s: The Shepherd’s Calendar’, *Victoriographies*, 2, 2 (2012), 103-27 (p. 120).}
Twain’s reference to the keelboatman is important, because one of the greatest social upheavals of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic was in transportation. The most explicit referencing of transport in Twain is to the steamboat, which is figured in such a way as to belong both to the historical and the modern eras. Andrew Dix concurs, writing of ‘the disparate ideological meanings of Mississippi steamboating in Twain’, before suggesting the first of two positions that Twain adopts: that the steamboat belongs ‘to a pastoral landscape violated by the brute force of technology’. This view does not easily square with the Twain we have witnessed, who embraced technological advance as a social benefit and necessary component of Reconstruction. Dix is no less accurate for all this, however; the lack of consistency, predictably, is on the part of Twain, who, despite the practical advantages of the railways, writes in *Life on the Mississippi* of their growth in terms resembling a lament:

First, the new railroad stretching up through Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky, to Northern railway centres, began to divert the passenger travel from the steamboaters; next the war came and almost entirely annihilated the steamboating industry during several years, leaving most of the pilots idle, and the cost of living advancing all the time; then the treasurer of the St. Louis association put his hand into the till and walked off with every dollar of the ample fund; and finally, the railroads intruding everywhere, there was little for the steamers to do, when the war was over, but carry freights; so straightaway some genius from the Atlantic coast introduced the plan of towing a dozen steamer cargoes down to New Orleans at the tail of a vulgar little tug-boat; and behold, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, the association and the noble science of piloting were things of the dead and pathetic past! (137)

Pettit’s remarks about Twain believing that the economic solution is for the North to bring its industry to the Southern states miss a crucial element of Twain’s attitude: that he is happy with the march of progress until it alters the South that he remembers, infringing upon his own nostalgic conceptualization. As Messent notes, ‘Twain is stretched in two incompatible directions […] positive about the future, he looks longingly to the past.’ This is apparent here as two forms of technology collide, one which he romanticizes, while the more practical and successful railroads are demonized and seen as a cause of cultural destruction rather than transformation. Pettit later closes this logical lacuna by remarking that the tragedy is that ‘in the process of updating themselves southerners would lose the pristine beauty of the preindustrial south Mark Twain longed for and mourned’. One cannot avoid the contradiction here within Twain: he embraces progress in the form of ‘the wholesome and practical nineteenth-century smell of cotton-factories and locomotives’ (285), and yet this technological trajectory killed the steamboats and a key part of the life he sentimentalized and idealized. Twain makes no attempt ‘to resolve this contradiction: the glamour of the past is dismissed

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at one moment and then recalled with elegiac regret the next, the pragmatism and progress of the present is welcomed sometimes and at others coolly regretted.120

The Janus-face Twain presents to technological modernity comes into still sharper relief if we consider modes of transport in Hardy’s novels. By contrast with what we see in Twain, transport in much of Hardy’s fiction is preindustrial in nature, and consequently, on the surface at least, seems to have more in common with Magill, where transport revolves around horsepower on dirt-roads. Thomasin Yeobright in The Return of the Native returns to her aunt on the back of a van pushed by Diggory Venn, for example, while Tess Durbeyfield travels in a spring-cart ‘for the railways which engirdled this interior tract of countryside had never yet struck across it’.121 As already noted, the railways play a crucial part in Jude the Obscure, however, facilitating the movements of the principal characters. Sue takes the ‘up-train’ to escape her marriage with Phillotson and enter into her socially controversial union with Jude.122 The railways exist as a thoroughly modern presence in Hardy’s novels. In an almost quasi-feudal manner, characters in the earlier novels are tied to the land, and fleeing from their condition is no easy task. Landlocked characters have to walk large distances to escape, or are at the mercy of those who own private means of transportation. The modernization of transport (including the creation of a timetabled, public rail system) allows characters like Jude and Sue to escape negative situations and in the novel serves as a call for a subsequent modernization of social attitudes. The difference between these two presentations is clear: while Twain laments the effect of the railways on the South that he remembers, he cannot see (as Hardy does) the potential for reform and modernization that comes with such advancement. The reader might recognize this as an example of Gifford’s ““pastoral” as pejorative”, with Twain’s sentimental portrait as complicit as Magill’s in romanticizing the South of his youth.123

Though Hardy’s characters can relocate geographically, however, they cannot escape oppressive class demarcations, as shown when Jude, a working man, is rebuffed by the university at Christminster:

Sir: I have read your letter with interest; and judging from your description of yourself as a working-man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course. That, therefore, is what I advise you to do.124

Industrial transport exists in Jude the Obscure as an emerging modern element in a still traditional, and inflexibly hierarchized, society. Unlike in Twain where the railways destroy a Southern icon in the steamboat, in Hardy they operate as a primary step in the democratization of a culture. Though

120 Gray, Writing the South, p. 105.
121 Hardy, Tess of the d’Urbervilles, p. 93.
123 Gifford, Pastoral, p. 10.
124 Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p. 120.
society may still be restrictive, innovations in transport give the residents of Wessex (and by implication, contemporary Dorset) greater freedom than they have enjoyed previously, even if, as with the example from \textit{Jude the Obscure}, actual movement within a class-striated society remains difficult and unlikely.

Despite this difference in the respective authors’ presentations, however, the idea of railways as a democratizing force is useful for studying Twain, since his account of steamboats in \textit{Life on the Mississippi} contradicts both Hardy’s democratic figuring of transport and the Unionist and democratic discourse Twain would later endorse in \textit{A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court}. Howard Horwitz has suggested that piloting in \textit{Life on the Mississippi} exists in both an industrialized and a romanticized sphere, in order to justify Twain’s elevated notions of the profession’s nobility. He remarks that ‘Twain exaggerates aesthetic authority in order to justify and insure social authority’.\footnote{Howard Horwitz, \textit{By the Law of Nature: Form and Value in Nineteenth-Century America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 89.}

In practice, this means that in seeking to establish the authority of the pilot beyond question, Twain is forced into use of the language of social hierarchy and imagines the pilot as a king. Twain does present the steamboat pilot in an industrial context, but it seems this is as much through unintentional revelation as though authorial design. In reading Twain’s descriptions, it would be easy to arrive at a misinterpretation that, like many older readings of Hardy, ignores socio-economic realities of labour in favour of a romanticized vision of piloting. Twain explicitly describes the pilot as ‘in those days, […] the only unfettered and entirely independent human being that lived in the earth’ (122). Messent has described this section of \textit{Life on the Mississippi} as ‘powerful and heartfelt writing [that suggests] Twain’s own deep ambivalence about the progress he would later celebrate in the book and his own attraction to romantic forms’.\footnote{Messent, \textit{The Cambridge Introduction to Mark Twain}, p. 63.} Twain goes on to say:

\begin{quote}
In truth, every man and woman and child has a master, and worries and frets in servitude; but in the day I write of, the Mississippi pilot had \textit{none}. The captain could stand upon the hurricane deck, in the pomp of a very brief authority, and give him five or six orders while the vessel backed into the stream, and then that skipper’s reign was over. The moment that the boat was under way in the river, she was under the sole and unquestionable control of the pilot. (122)
\end{quote}

Twain here betrays the fact that the pilot exists in an economic system, despite the patina of romance he casts over the position. Brian McCammack suggests that ‘Twain harbors a romantic view, through nostalgia and founded on his admiration of competence, of the essentially realist steamboat pilot.’\footnote{McCammack, ‘Competence, Power, and the Nostalgic Romance of Piloting in Mark Twain’s \textit{Life on the Mississippi}’, pp. 10-11.}

Though Twain officially rejected the Southern obsession with rank and title (as we have seen), he seems preoccupied here with the status that is granted to him and other steamboat pilots through their occupation. Twain reports that ‘there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our
village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman’ (64), and, of all available vocations, ‘Pilot was the grandest position of all’ (67). This longing for the position of pilot amongst the young men of the Mississippi towns results in an undemocratic appraisal of their own position in society: ‘I think pilots were about the only people I ever knew who failed to show, in some degree, embarrassment in the presence of travelling foreign princes. But then, people in one’s own grade of life are not usually embarrassing objects’ (123). This is a major departure from the Unionist discourse with which we have come to associate Twain thanks to later texts such as Connecticut Yankee. He prefaces his later Republican allegiance by formulating a new, unconventional aristocracy: ‘Your true pilot cares nothing about anything on earth but the river, and his pride in his occupation surpasses the pride of kings’ (79-80). Twain effectively constructs a fictitious new kingdom on the Mississippi in which the pilot acts as a kind of maritime monarch. The democracy of the landlocked Union is replaced on the steamboat by the autocratic rule of the pilot, who answers to no-one; the captain, traditionally the executive of a vessel, is displaced in power on the steamboat by the pilot, de facto if not de jure. If the reader were uncertain that this pride applies to Twain as an individual, all doubt is removed when he admits that ‘when I found that the regiment of natty servants respectfully sir’d me, my satisfaction was complete’ (78). If this does not necessarily express a rejection of democratic ideals, it offers nevertheless a clear sense of Twain taking enjoyment in a hierarchical structure and in reasserting quasi-feudalism through the medium of transport, the very force that serves to eliminate it from Hardy’s Wessex. This idealization of the steamboat pilot as almost a ‘prince of the river’ does not sit comfortably in an ideological framework that also involves criticizing the South for dreaming and, by contrast, extolling the North for being practical and hardworking, though we should not be overly surprised: Twain’s criticism of the Southern enchantment with castles did not prevent him from owning one himself, ‘complete with nineteen rooms, six servants, indoor garden and fountain, outdoor towers and turrets’.

‘As free as any cretur that walks this earth!’: Postbellum Representations of Southern Slavery

Although in this chapter we are considering texts written in a time following the emancipation of slaves in the US, slavery was still very much a concern for the South in the postbellum period. As Gray has identified, ‘the old order kept its grip on the Southern imagination; and, in particular, the patriarchal image still held sway, still defined the terms in which many Southerners preferred to see themselves.’ Despite Emancipation, many Southerners still saw the relationship between the races as one of stewardship, a situation in which the black population needed, in its own interests as well as in those of the majority community, to be controlled. Eventually, as former Confederates returned to office, this resulted in laws which limited the rights of black people and, under new rubrics,

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128 Pettit, Mark Twain and the South, p. 57.
129 Gray, Writing the South, p. 89.
reintroduced many aspects of the slave system into the South of the late nineteenth century. In order
to identify the material and ideological foundations of the postbellum South, it is essential that we
continue to examine here how our selection of postbellum narratives re-stages the era of slavery itself.

This is an area in which studying Magill’s novel will be particularly revealing. Consider that
‘in 1865, African Americans figured more prominently in the letters and diaries of elite women than
ever before or perhaps ever again, and almost all of the white women were distinctly unsympathetic to
blacks’ hopes and aspirations.’ As Magill was a woman of the white elite, of adult age at the close
of the War and writing her novels not long afterwards, these texts will be of particular interest to
determine how (or, indeed, whether) the unsympathetic tendencies identified by Censer in letter- and
diary-writing play out in her fiction. She writes in the preface to The Holcombes that

It is not my design, in the following pages, to enter the arena in defense of departed
institutions, or to provoke political animosities. I have, on the contrary, chosen that period in
the history of my State when these discussions had but little place in family interests. In short,
it has been my endeavor to present to the world a faithful picture of a Virginia home as it was
before the late war.

However, this novel does repeatedly defend the ‘departed institutions’ of the South, with, for
example, slaves who themselves support slavery incorporated throughout the narrative. Magill cannot
even finish the preface before she begins to provoke the very ‘political animosities’ that she claimed
were not her design:

And then, too, we remember that the most widely circulated pictures of life in our Southern
States are taken from ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’; and like libels upon our people, it ought to be
sufficient to arouse the slumbering genius of the South to arise and assert her claims to a
position in the nation as a refined, hospitable, cultivated, and benevolent people.

There is a contradiction in these two extracts. In the first, Magill insists that it is not her goal to write a
political text, and that her aim is merely to present a ‘faithful picture of a Virginia home’ in the
antebellum period. However, in the second it is evident that old wounds caused by Stowe’s novel (and
other discursive productions of abolitionist intent) are yet to heal. There is an effort here to refute the
image of the South created by Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852), which itself, of course, constitutes a
political move. The suggestion that ‘the slumbering genius of the South’ should rise also seems a call
for Southern writers to create a different South in the popular imagination, and sounds like a demand
for some kind of positive propaganda, if not for a kind of discursive secession.

Given these reactionary politics, it is necessary for any worthwhile study that we examine in
detail Magill’s treatment of her black characters in The Holcombes. In the preface, she remarks that
on the whole she has tried to avoid drawing on real people in her characterization, so that ‘no one will

be able to blush with indignation’ (vi). However, she acknowledges that she has taken a different approach to the production of her black characters:

I say I have avoided personalities, and yet I plead guilty, so far as that humble race is concerned who have been so intimately connected with our domestic relations for centuries. With regard to them, I will say, that each portrait has been drawn from nature,—that great fountainhead of truth. (vi)

On first consideration, this could be thought of as quite a positive gesture, an attempt to represent accurately those who occupy the social margins. Nevertheless, once we examine the portrayal of the Holcombe family slaves, any positives that might be derived here are lost. Rather than being fully fleshed out, we see that instead the black characters in The Holcombes are all stereotypical and fashioned to varying degrees according to the conventions of minstrelsy, a comic cultural mode of the period that ‘obscured [race] relations by pretending that slavery was amusing, right, and natural’. Magill’s argument, then, that these characters are ‘drawn from nature’ reveals much more about the author, and about the racial imagination of white society in the South, than it does about black identity in the antebellum period. We could conceivably see this as a tactically regressive political move by the author, a deliberate ploy to present Southern stereotypes of black people not as grotesque, but as realistic characterizations. However, it is more likely that, rather than being an act of intentional distortion, this presentation shows the way in which white Southerners saw their slaves, and how such insidious stereotypes permeated consciousness.

In this defaulting to ‘types’, there is also something else happening. A character like Mammy (who embodies almost every characteristic that we would now identify with the stereotype of that name), for example, seems to underscore key tenets of Southern ideology. By showing the connection that Mammy has with the ruling white family, Magill makes her stand ‘as a symbol of racial harmony within the slave system’. Slaves at Rose Hill all fall neatly into one of the stereotypes that ‘abounded in late Nineteenth Century American fiction: [such as] happy pickaninnies and […] motherly Mammy’. The presentation of most slaves as loyal and easily managed expresses postbellum white complacency, since, ‘noting the absence of major slave rebellions in the Confederate South, former masters reminisced about stereotypical “faithful darkies” and historians pointed to the slaves’ ingrained – or in some cases inherent – docility.’ Magill’s novel is as nostalgic in its presentation of black characters as it is in almost everything else. The creation of African American characters like Mammy adds to a notion that had tremendous currency in the South:

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that of faithful servants who valued their relations with their white masters. This serves, implicitly, to undercut the righteousness of the Northern cause; Emancipation is redefined as, in effect, saving people from an institution from which they do not require liberation. It should be noted, though, that ‘this wishful contention ignored not only widespread evidence of the wholesale flight of slaves to meet the union advance but the eagerness of the former slaves to celebrate their freedom.’

There is also evidence in *The Holcombes* of other negative attitudes which Southern whites held towards black people. Mary Holcombe, sister of Margaret, writes that when Jean Murray goes out to the slave quarters, ‘she did look so pretty and nice in her soft, blue dress, and with her pretty, light hair, among the black people. They looked blacker, and she looked whiter than usual’ (39). It is clear, here, that racist attitudes regarding the appreciation of beauty are still prevalent despite the Civil War and Emancipation. The belief that white people had a standard of beauty far above that of black people was long established in the South (‘During the antebellum period, questions about race were never far from questions about beauty’), and the implication is that Jean becomes more beautiful here precisely because she is in contrast with the black people in her service. The latter are not described as ugly in explicit terms, but the description implies that Jean’s prettiness is especially marked on this occasion of racial mingling. Each race is described as seemingly more pronounced in its characteristics in the presence of the other. As well as such conflations of whiteness and beauty, there are examples of the countervailing association of blackness and ugliness later in the narrative, as when Jean writes a letter to her brother and invites him to ‘imagine a very ugly old woman – yes, she is certainly […] with the blackest face you ever saw’ (44). Once again, a black character is described in terms which emphasize the colour of her skin, in close proximity to a judgement on beauty. In this instance, it is a negative judgement on Mammy’s features rather than a positive assessment of Jean Murray’s, but the effect of bolstering white supremacy is much the same.

It is clear, then, that in the postbellum South there was the continuation of a ‘formula developed during the nineteenth century that marked beauty with moral, racial, and hygienic purity, and hinged these purities on visual clues from the body and its possessions, and the demonstrated care taken of them’. Beauty and ugliness seem to radiate from white and black people respectively, and are even transmitted to inanimate objects that are associated with them. For example, at Christmas in *The Holcombes* there are two trees, one for the slave population and one for the family, and although the family’s attention is focused upon the slaves’ tree, there is an acknowledgement that the family’s was ‘really so much more beautiful’ (77). Not only is beauty in *The Holcombes* based on existing,

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135 Cobb, *Away Down South*, p. 82.
137 For more on the conflation of blackness and ugliness, see Farah Jasmine Griffin, ‘Textual Healing: Claiming Black Women’s Bodies, the Erotic and Resistance in Contemporary Novels of Slavery’, *Callaloo*, 19, 2 (1996), 519-36.
racially derived notions (as Arthur Riss says, ‘during the antebellum period […] Blacks were represented as the antithesis of the beauty of the Anglo-Saxon’¹³⁹), but there is evidence that such ideas are transferred onto surrounding objects. Whiteness is now not simply synonymous with human beauty, but implicitly with all beauty. Considering the descriptions discussed earlier in this chapter of the exquisite natural landscape in *The Holcombes*, then, it is clear that the pastoral paradigm is, at this point, as colour-coded as ever, and that this is, tacitly at least, a white environment. While Southerners may have neglected the Jeffersonian ideal with regard to the valorization of the yeoman, it is clear that his conception of a nation in which citizenship is contingent on whiteness still exists. This colour-coding extends in *The Holcombes* even to the supernatural. At the funeral of a slave, the black preacher asserts that on the day of resurrection, “we shell all arise white en pure en clean, like an angel of God in heaven” (246). Virginia is a white landscape, and so too, it would seem, is heaven, even as conceived by black Virginians. This suggests that in return for their bondage on Earth, slaves ‘earn’ whiteness in the afterlife, which reveals that Magill sees the difference between black and white as so all-encompassing that there is no room for blackness even in her conception of heaven.

Where power lies is never remotely in doubt in *The Holcombes*. Early on in the narrative, the eldest daughter, Margaret, asks her father for greater responsibility in raising her younger siblings. One of the things she notes in her argument is that the younger members of her family are already ‘growing too old to be willing to submit to Mammy’ (14). We can deduce from this, then, that power relations were embedded within society to such an extent that even white infants would not easily submit to black people, despite the authority granted to slaves in the process of raising children. It is apparent that there is a conflict between two hierarchical structures put in place by Southern elites, and that of these two the one based upon theories of racial superiority wins out. This is demonstrated again in how Margaret Holcombe reacts to a show of empathy from a slave:

> Well, it is a great comfort to me to be miserable, if it is by myself. The only person who seems disposed to condole with me is old Aunt Elsie; but of course I cannot let a servant speak to me of papa’s faults. So when she came to my room and commenced groaning in her, ‘poor missus! Poor children! Well, honey, all men is alike,’ I answered, quite fiercely, ‘Aunt Elsie, you must not speak so of papa, he is not like any other man in the world; he has a perfect right to bring who he pleases to his own house.’ Then I wondered at myself. (9)

It is clear from this extract that although Margaret agrees with what Aunt Elsie is saying, she cannot allow a bondsperson to criticize her owner, and chastises her in order to protect the status quo. In essence, the slave is denied the right of speaking the truth as she, or indeed as her white interlocutor, sees it if it highlights the faults of another white person. Any shared feeling between the two races is subordinate to the reproduction of social hierarchy, so much so that Margaret would sooner respond in a fierce manner to her elderly slave than be comforted by her. While Margaret is often portrayed as

foolish, and we might be encouraged to see the folly of her actions by the last sentence in this extract, we should also recognize here an authentic reflection of widely held social attitudes, since ‘most Southern children […] adopted their parents’ rationalizations that sometimes harsh punishment of slaves was necessary in order to keep them in line’.

Magill makes serious efforts, however, to suggest that there is something enlightened about the relationship between the races in *The Holcombes*. The characters that are essentially Southern are shown as having a much more tolerant attitude towards their slaves than foreigners, like Jean Murray. She discusses the black population of Rose Hill at some length in letters to her brother, and is struck by just how eccentric they seem to her, noting first that ‘their habits in this respect, by and by, are very funny’ (44-45). As well as finding humour in the apparent oddity of the community, she recounts some slave traditions to her brother and invites him to agree with her: ‘is it not strange?’ (45). Later, she again finds comedy in the Holcombes’ slaves, observing that ‘it was really too laughable to observe the little woolly-heads bobbing up and down on the white snow in search of the little sugar plums’ (63). It is the specifically racialized focus of the description that serves to separate her from the objects of her mirth and makes this scene ethically problematic. These kinds of sentiment are, however, only really expressed in *The Holcombes* by Jean Murray, described as a recent migrant to the South from Great Britain, and it is rare (though not completely unheard of) for them to be put into the mouths of characters that we might think of as having a greater claim to the culture of the South, or as more distinctively Southern or Virginian.

Despite her status as outsider, though, Jean is eventually willing to send her own infant son to Mammy because ‘I can just pack him off to her cabin, and I know he will be taken such good care of’ (149). She also launches into a lengthy, distinctly Southern defence of slavery not long after her judgements surrounding the peculiarity of slaves:

> Will I ever get used to these black people? They are a continual source of wonder to me. The grown ones are bad enough, but the children are worse. They look like monkeys. They have all the characteristics of the negro race unmodified. I wonder if it is mentioned as a fact in their natural history that their features do not grow after six years of age; for it seems to me the lips, noses and eyes of the children of that age have attained their full size, and gradually afterward the body grows up to them. It seems so dreadful for them to be slaves, worth so much money apiece, – as if money could buy a human soul. But, after all, the fault does not lie with this generation, but with those who put them here. We have just to accept and submit to the fearful responsibility imposed upon us by our forefathers; there seems no other way out of the difficulty. To free them now, of course, would be impossible: such a number of ignorant, helpless wretches, thrown upon our country in a condition of freedom, would be a curse to both races. It seems to me that, from the present state of things, the master is a greater sufferer than the servant, – here in Virginia, at any rate. Now. Mr. Holcombe has over fifty men, women, and children. The men do the hardest work in the fields; the women the lighter services, and the cooking, washing, and sewing for the ‘hands’; while the children, until they

are twelve years old, are useless and expensive appendages, having to be supported without bringing any profit into the concern. I have been surprised to see how comfortably they are provided for. Their cabins, though rough, are perfectly weather-tight and comfortable: the fireplaces almost the width of the end of the houses, and the wide chimneys admitting floods of light all around. (45-46)

This passage begins with the Scot being given some of the most unpleasant discourse in the novel, which implies that the slave is not fully human. Firstly there is the comparison with monkeys, and then secondly (and most tellingly) there is the reference to ‘their’ natural history, suggesting that there is a black biology which is fundamentally different to that of white people, which echoes some of Jefferson’s pseudo-scientific comments discussed in Part One of this thesis. Some of these statements are fairly extreme, even in the context of nineteenth-century Southern literature, and so it is unclear whether they are meant to be taken without further attention by the reader or whether they are actually an indictment of the moral obtuseness of outsiders. This could be one final shot at a character who hails from Britain (possibly due to the popularity there of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the failure of the British government to, as many Southerners anticipated, join the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy), and, in the extremity of the comments, be intended to show that Southerners are more enlightened than some other cultures which have acted as their critics. However, once we move past some of the more obviously unpleasant sentiments in the earlier part of this extract, we can see Jean Murray actually playing the Southern apologists’ ‘greatest hits’, producing lines of reasoning which we have already seen proposed, in earlier chapters of this thesis, by Jefferson, Magill’s ancestor Tucker, Kennedy and even the English Anthony Trollope. Firstly, Murray notes that slavery itself is atrocious and acknowledges the moral difficulty in owning a human soul; but then, in a manner not unlike the defence of slavery we saw in the chapter of *Swallow Barn* entitled ‘The Quarter’, the argument shifts from morals to practicality and proposes that slavery is not the fault of the people that uphold the institution today, but rather of their forefathers who brought the slaves to the colonies and, later, the United States in the first place. In a fashion that must by now seem familiar, Murray also reiterates the paternalistic argument that releasing the African American community from its bonds would be a disaster principally for a helpless black population which would no longer have masters and overseers to nurture it. Finally, the argument shifts sentimentally to the idea that the institution is more of a burden on masters than on slaves, and that slaves receive such sympathetic care that freedom is unlikely to benefit them, casting the slaveholder in a sympathetic, almost selfless light.

In what might be thought of as a postbellum attempt to restore credibility to the antebellum pastoral idyll by rehabilitating the model of slavery which underpinned it, there are many sympathetic portrayals of slaveholders throughout *The Holcombes*. One notable example is first-hand testimony

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141 For further discussion of the effect of Stowe’s novel on Anglo-Southern relations, see Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005)
from Mammy herself as to how the Holcombes’ slaves are treated. Consider this conversation she has with ‘brother George’ Holcombe:

‘Law, Mammy,’ said he, ‘how this reminds me of the times I used to come down here and eat your breakfast for you after I had finished my own at the house! I always liked yours the best.’

‘Yes, honey, so you did; but there never was a nigger on your father’s place that did not have enough to spare. And I never lost nothin’ by it. You was sure to bring me somethin’ before the day was out. There never was a stingy one of the name. And your mother, law! She would have give’ the last mouthful she had to keep anybody from bein’ hungry.’ (64)

In this extract, Magill utilizes the character of Mammy to categorically defend the manner in which slaves were kept. The Holcombe family maintains its slaves so well, providing such an abundance of what they need, that the slaves can afford to give up a share of their food to indulge small children with no adverse effect on themselves. This again serves to position the Holcombe family, and by extension other slaveholders, as people not dominated by greed and self-interest, but rather as generous and largely selfless masters and mistresses who are motivated more by concern for their slaves than any economic gain they can take from them.

These attempts at rehabilitating slaveholding families are not isolated examples in The Holcombes. Jean also questions whether or not ‘the peculiar institution’ ought to be given the divine stamp of approval, when she asks ‘may it not be that this was the end which God intended in placing the cursed descendants of Ham in this situation, that they too might receive the good news of salvation in this their land of bondage?’ (49). This might simply be considered an extension of the platitude, ‘God works in mysterious ways’, but the effect here is both to encourage abolitionist critics to consider an afterlife of salvation for a lifetime of slavery as a positive trade-off for slaves themselves, and to put the institution beyond criticism (at least in a staunchly Christian world) by suggesting that it is not the work of man, but rather the will of God and therefore infallible, regardless of any human misgivings. What is revealing about this is how closely a postbellum novel replicates the arguments put forward in antebellum Southern literature. The Holcombes is written following the Civil War, a conflict predicted by The Partisan Leader, which, as has been noted, was written by Magill’s relative, Beverley Tucker. Yet it is noticeable that there is actually little contrast between the two novels in one key respect, and that is their belligerent status. The only thing that alters is the temporality of the respective conflicts shadowing the texts. While Tucker projects a future struggle in which the South must defend its pastoral idyll, Magill’s situation as a postbellum author means that she instead fights a retrospective, albeit symbolic battle. Despite the War being over, there is an attitude of clear defiance in The Holcombes that asserts that, although it may have been lost, the cause

142 This kind of false consciousness has some basis in the historical record. Consider, for example, the pride taken by slaves deputed to errands at the Great House Farm described by Frederick Douglass in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself, ed. by Deborah E. McDowell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 23.
itself was righteous, in effect refighting the War on a figurative level by restating the virtue of the
Southern position. Magill’s pastoral is no diversionary game, then, and brings to mind Gifford’s
comment that ‘when pastoral loses that sense of itself as carnivalesque […] it becomes dangerously
open to exploitation by a culture that might prefer to hide reality in the myth of Arcadia.’\textsuperscript{143}

There is, then, evidence in The Holcombes of an intellectual current in the postbellum South
that stands defiant in defeat and refuses to be censored. Indeed, at one point Magill even turns to
blame the North for many of the problems posed by slavery:

‘We hear of a great many bad masters though,’ said Mr. Murray; ‘it seems dreadful
for a bad man to have the power over so many sentient beings.’

‘I agree with you, perfectly,’ was the answer; ‘but I also know that there would not be
nearly so many bad masters if there had been less legislation on the subject of slavery; if the
feeling of irritation and bitterness were not kept up by the interference which is continually
going on with our domestic concerns by the fanatics of the North –.’ (248-49)

This paragraph once again creates a triangular relationship between the Northern and Southern United
States, and Great Britain. Mr. Murray, the Scot, is still, at this point, a visitor to the United States, but
the text maps out no simple opposition, with Britons on one side and Americans on the other. Instead,
there are three separate positions represented here: the British and the Southerner are both present in
body, while the Northerner, despite his or her physical absence, is present through the reference to
Congress’s legislative meddling. What is apparent is how deep-rooted the differences between North,
South and Great Britain are; the myriad ways in which each is perceived by the other making a clearly
bounded model of America, and indeed of American literature, impossible. In this example, Mr.
Holcombe goes beyond the existing Southern account of Northern iniquity, in which abolition would
be harmful to the slaves and Northerners are wrong to pursue it. Now, instead, the suggestion
becomes that, due to its ideologically driven interference, the North is actually responsible for any
negative consequences to slaves, including those inflicted by Southerners themselves. Writing in the
postbellum period, this inflammatory rhetoric is clearly intended to ennable the Southern cause in
defeat, serving to cast the North not as well-meaning but misguided but, instead, as villainous and
calculating. This reminds us of a point made by Roger Sales, who argues that in the pastoral mode,
‘rural society is not allowed to carry the seeds of its own destruction within itself. Its enemies are
outsiders.’\textsuperscript{144} Again, then, there is evidence of a Southerner figuring her region in literary (and
explicitly pastoral) terms, as Magill attributes the fall of the Southern idyll not to its dependence on
slavery, or failure to match the productive capacity of the North, but to a malicious outside influence.

There are a number of ways in which the problems that the South has concerning race are
pinned on outsiders in The Holcombes. Consider this lengthy exchange as an example:

\textsuperscript{143} Gifford, Pastoral, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{144} Roger Sales, English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics (London: Hutchison, 1983),
p. 72.
It struck me as so strange before I came here to hear Mr. Holcombe speaking of his ‘Mammy’. I never could help laughing at it. ‘Yes,’ he said, one day, when I was amusing myself at his expense, ‘you may laugh at me, but you will have to pay her the most profound respect. She is a perfect lady, I can tell you, and a highly-honored inmate of my household. Why, she is a link between us and the past; she has nursed all the children of the two last generations, and played with our grandmothers, and has paid the last offices to the dead of the family for the last forty-five years.’

‘Why, how old is she?’

‘Well, no one knows exactly, but, putting together some facts, we judge she must be nearly seventy; but she is a hale, hearty old woman yet, and I hope will live to teach us what old times were for many years to come.’

‘But,’ I said, ‘I should think it very disagreeable to have an old negress thinking herself so much better than any one else, and to have to make a fuss over her all the time.’

‘Why, my dear Jean, you cannot imagine a more perfect servant in everything than she is. She recognises her position entirely; the smallest nursling is miss or master; nor does she feel humiliated by it. It is a strange combination of the perfect lady and the perfect servant. Just wait until you see her.’ (23-24)

This extract is included in its entirety for the light it throws on postbellum recuperation of the master-slave relationship. First, we notice that the most obviously negative utterances are made by Jean Murray, not a Southerner but a Scot. It is an outsider who laughs at the maternal connotations of the word ‘Mammy’; it is this same outsider who objects to the notion of the slave thinking herself better than the family, and also who refers to her as ‘an old negress’. By contrast, the Southerner is guilty of none of these sins. He refers to Mammy as both ‘highly-honored’ and as ‘a perfect lady’ on a number of occasions, never refers to her by any racial epithet, and dismisses Jean’s concerns about Mammy holding ideas above her station. However, when we look a little closer, this attempt to equalize and dignify relations between master and slave becomes problematic. For example, the chief virtue which Holcombe attributes to Mammy is that she is completely subordinate to the white owner-class. An infant that can barely raise its head, ‘the smallest nursling’, holds authority over her, and, more to the point, that subordinate position is occupied without resentment. Mammy becomes, then, ‘the perfect slave […] a paradigm of that ideal submission never quite approximated by the most immediate children, wives, subjects, students, or patients’.145 Magill represents this level of subordination, post-Emancipation, without irony, as something to be venerated. This sentimental portrait is further confirmation that, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Old South continued to be racially coded in the Southern imagination. As Gray has written, ‘both the patriarchal and populist models reappeared […] trailing the familiar associations.’146 We should also observe that, for all the care and affection that Mr. Holcombe protests he feels for his bondsperson, he is unaware of exactly how old she is. While this might be a device on the part of Magill designed to mystify the character of Mammy, another, more persuasive reading would point to the fact that records of black slaves were kept

146 Gray, Writing the South, p. 77.
nowhere near as diligently as they were for whites in the South, further emphasizing racial hierarchy. This is reminiscent of Frederick Douglass, who declared:

> I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant.147

The testimony of Douglass (and many other slaves) suggests that this episode in The Holcombes does not magnify Mammy’s authority, but instead, without apology, offers a true reflection of life under slavery. While Magill may draw out something approaching white affection for black in this passage, it is clear that there is nothing that comes remotely near fraternity or equality between the family and Mammy.

The character of Mammy is troubling in a number of ways, not least because of her manner towards other slaves while she is simultaneously being held up as a model bondswoman. When Jean Murray is introduced to the slave population of Rose Hill and is stared at in curious fashion, it is Mammy who cries “‘Begone, you darkies! Dat the way you shows your manners to the new mistress? G’long at once!” And a scampering followed, which cleared the halls pretty soon’ (28). There are several potentially disconcerting issues here. First is the way that Mammy barks out orders which are followed unthinkingly and immediately by the slave population as a whole. Second is the manner in which she gives the instruction to the group, using the pejorative ‘darkies’ to berate her fellow slaves. It is clear from this that the structures which underlie slavery are not simply imposed from without but replicated within the slave community as mapped by Magill. Mammy has a position of seniority and issues instructions as if she were a slaveholder or overseer herself. That, however, is not all, as she also reiterates the racist structures which underpin slavery. This demonstrates that she knows both her ‘place’ in relation to the white people in the household, and the status of all the other slaves, too. We know that this is her belief because, at one point in the novel, she announces that ‘darkies mus’ be kep’ in their places’ (64). It comes as no surprise, then, that when Mammy is propositioned with freedom in Liberia, she resists the idea and says she ‘ain’t overly-fond of niggers nohow’ (65).

Consider how far removed this reaction is from at least some African American responses to Liberia in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, where George says that ‘the desire and yearning of my soul is for an African nationality’.148 Ultimately, the presentation of slaves in The Holcombes is, despite the possibilities of retrospective vision offered Magill by her publication date, typical of that in plantation literature, in that they are ‘largely reduced to invisibility save in the role of happy, loyal, and totally servile retainers who affirmed the wisdom of the New South’s racial ethos’.149

147 Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, p. 15.
149 Cobb, Away Down South, p. 80.
The attitude towards black characters in Magill’s text is clear, then, but there is something rather different at work in Twain’s fiction. Twain is, of course, no staunch defender of the South in the manner of Magill, but he reveals much about how his cultural positioning restricts the range of his regional critique through what he fails to include in his work. As Pettit has noted, in *Tom Sawyer*, ‘Twain stayed away from the black population of St. Petersburg entirely’; choosing to include only Little Jim, a small boy who is tricked into white-washing the fence by Tom. Due to his proximity to the house and no evidence to the contrary, we can assume that Little Jim is a house-slave, and consequently that no field slaves are presented in the novel. Twain’s asymmetrical representation of the slave population would continue with Roxy and Valet de Chambre in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, and with Jim, the house-slave of the widow Douglas, in *Huckleberry Finn* (1884-85). Leo Marx has written that the relationship between Huck and Jim is a pastoral one in its own right, suggesting that ‘this rudimentary society of two, one black and one white, is an American Arcadia, an egalitarian wish-image’. This suggests that, while so far we have seen a colour-coded pastoral in nineteenth-century Southern fiction, Marx believes that in Twain there are the beginnings of a colour-blind pastoral. For Marx, although the concept of racial difference is obviously fundamental to *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck and Jim’s two-man society is one of equals, and their retreat into the pastoral world of the river is as much a retreat for Huck, from a society that would ‘sivilise’ him, as it is for Jim whose goal is freedom from slavery. Marx links not only the situation of the protagonists of this novel with the pastoral, but key plot points, too. Of Huck’s decision to tear up the letter which will condemn Jim to a life of slavery, he writes that ‘it joins the pastoral ideal with the revolutionary doctrine of fraternity’. In this, Marx goes further than even notable defenders of the novel such as Shelley Fisher Fishkin, who argues that one reason accusations of racism have so often been levelled at the novel is that we only ever encounter the figure of Jim through the eyes of the racist child, Huck. While there are obvious lines that can be drawn between *Huckleberry Finn* and pastoral, Marx rather simplifies the political conclusions to be extrapolated from this, however, and we should be careful about overstating the novel’s progressive credentials. In fact, even though the novel is Twain’s most famous anti-slavery fiction, it still barely represents field-slaves, dealing primarily with the slaves of benevolent smallholders as opposed to those labouring in industrial-scale enterprises under the planter aristocracy and their brutal overseers. This primary focus on house-slaves is in spite of the fact that ‘the overwhelming majority of slaves worked in the fields’. We also need to take into account aspects of Twain’s portrayal of blackness, an area in which he is sometimes only marginally more
progressive than Magill. While Huck eventually comes to the moral epiphany that he would sooner risk hell than force Jim back into slavery, Jim is still imagined through the same forms of minstrelsy familiar from pro-slavery fiction, so much so that Eric Lott observes that ‘without the minstrel show there would have been no […] *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*’. Even Fisher Fishkin, who argues that Jim’s minstrelsy has been overstated and that African American folk culture provides an alternative explanation for many of Jim’s character traits, acknowledges that ‘Jim’s voice is, ultimately, a diminished voice’.

Any focus on the pastoral in Twain, then, must take into account this literary mode’s negative elements, for example those which serve to obscure the conditions in which people actually live and work. While Twain was clearly opposed to slavery by the time he conceived his best-known works, there still is no place in them for the experience of the majority of Southern blacks. In *Life on the Mississippi*, for example, reference is made to the river being ‘bordered by continuous sugar plantations’ (105), but once again no explicit description is given of how these fields are worked. The horrors of the Southern labour system are eradicated, but at a cost, for, as Williams says of the pastoral mode, ‘this magical extraction of the curse of labour is in fact achieved by a simple extraction of the existence of labourers’.

The transatlantic model is useful again here because, by contrast, Hardy shows at least some of the realities of manual labour in rural Dorset through his fiction’s presentation of furze-cutters and other agricultural workers. Although labourers in nineteenth-century England were, of course, not slaves, Hardy explores social attitudes towards disenfranchised manual labourers, which still provides us with a productive point of comparison for our reading of Southern authors. In *The Return of the Native*, in the voices of certain characters, a strong anti-democratic tendency can be detected. For example, Eustacia Vye is attracted to Clym Yeobright due to his genteel position, but becomes uninterested in him after their marriage when he begins to engage in manual labour. Yeobright summarizes her attitude towards him perfectly:

‘I suppose when you first saw me and heard about me I was wrapped in a sort of golden halo in your eyes – a man who knew glorious things, and had mixed in brilliant scenes – in short, an adorable, delightful, distracting hero.’

‘Yes,’ she said sobbing.

‘And now I am a poor fellow in brown leather.’

For Eustacia, a man is only as good as his class position. She believes that Yeobright, by engaging in manual labour, is not socially superior as he initially appeared to be, and that his field work brings disgrace on her. The preference for certain occupations over others is shared by Yeobright’s mother, who laments her son’s return from a profitable position in Paris to begin a trajectory which ends with

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155 Lott, *Love and Theft*, p. 5
157 Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 32.
158 Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 251.
him operating as a furze-cutter. This reflects the powerful system of social stratification that existed in Britain at the time, where ‘divisions between classes [...] acted as an effective brake on the development of more widespread trends of social mobility’.\(^{159}\) The social pretensions to higher status of the Vye family might make us think of Southerners aping the British aristocracy in novels like *The Holcombes*. Hardy, however, allows the spirit of equality to flourish in the character of Yeobright, who embraces work of any sort. Returning to Egdon Heath from a genteel life in Paris because he ‘can be a trifle less useless here than anywhere else’, he engages in furze-cutting upon losing his eyesight in preference to sitting idle.\(^{160}\) Yeobright, as a man not ashamed of his regional background or the nature of his work, is used by Hardy to interrogate the reproduction of social inequality implicit in the narrow-minded thinking of his contemporaries. Gifford complicates this progressive reading, though, by making repeated references to the distance between Hardy and his rustic characters in *The Return of the Native*, remarking that ‘there is a patronising tension behind his attempt to dignify the joking, singing, mead-drinking villagers who only have first names.’\(^{161}\) However, as Peter Widdowson suggests, ‘“Wessex”, it is easy to forget, contains a great deal of hard labour: “comical” the rustics of *The Return of the Native* may be, but furze-cutting is clearly not funny.’\(^{162}\) For all the distance between Hardy and his creations, there is never a similar distance between the actualities of rural labour and the labourers themselves. It is these pressing materialities of physical work that counteract any decline into uncritical pastoral of Hardy’s version of rural society. Contrary to this, Twain’s inability to document the harsh realities of the South’s forced field labour results in an idealized conception of the region, in this respect arguably more so than Magill who, though romanticizing the figure of the slave, actually *does* document field labour in *The Holcombes*.

We can, then, see a spectrum of reaction to social change in the work of the three authors I have highlighted here. Magill’s work, fairly typical of Southern fiction in the immediate postbellum period, offers the least ambiguous response, one that the more pejorative conceptions of pastoral most readily apply to. At the other end of the spectrum, Hardy’s vision, seemingly close at times to pastoral, is nevertheless grounded much more in the economic realities of rural Victorian England, which then has the prismatic effect of revealing to us what is absent in the work of Twain and Magill. Censer has argued that ‘postwar women [of the American South] confronted a changing world of fiction, and a fledgling writer looking to make a name for herself could not simply rely on continuing the old domestic novels and frothy romances’; yet that is exactly what we see in *The Holcombes*.\(^ {163}\) While the ambition of Southern fiction may have increased following Reconstruction, Magill seems to have been successful in reanimating during this period the domestic novel, the romance and, of

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\(^{160}\) Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 170.

\(^{161}\) Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 17.


\(^{163}\) Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood 1865-1895*, p. 244.
course, traditional regional pastoral. *The Holcombes* is set almost exclusively in a lost world, and her story seems to have little import for a South focused on the goals of Reconstruction. Rather, its power (and its interest for us today) stems from its force as a *counter*-Reconstruction text, a revived secessionist gesture, or a defiant refighting of the Civil War. However, as Gifford rightly points out, ‘when retreat is an end in itself, pastoral is merely escapist’, and, despite its belligerence, this seems to apply to Magill’s work.164 By contrast, Twain has a much more ambivalent response to the traumas of the nineteenth-century South, one that looks towards the future far more than it looks for inspiration in the past. However, when Hardy’s response to technological and cultural changes is juxtaposed with the work of both of these authors, it is clear that not only is Twain’s pastoral reflex still something of a retreat from reality, but that there are occasional moments in which it is as prone to romanticism and sentimentality as Magill’s.

164 Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 47.
Conclusion

This thesis has tried throughout to stress a number of key points. First, at the most conceptual level, has been the argument in a period of wide-ranging transnational orientation in American Studies for the continued relevance of a specifically transatlantic approach to studying US literature, particularly when considering literature from before the twentieth century. This project, beginning in the Introduction with a review of the history of American Studies, has also had as a goal to consider some of the benefits and drawbacks of earlier, and rival, theoretical paradigms (notably the myth-symbol school). Despite the continuing productivity of these other sources, however, the transatlantic method for study of American literary production within the period under discussion has emerged here as paramount. Although Britain’s cultural influences in America can be seen waning over time, it is evident that, during its first century as an independent nation, the United States was still powerfully influenced by an inherited British culture. It is this fundamental connection between the two nations in the embryonic stages of the US that makes the transatlantic approach so useful. While it is definitely to the benefit of the field that transnational approaches to US literature have recently been widened beyond the traditional Anglo-American dynamic, we should be wary that we do not ignore valuable existing work that makes use of that transatlantic model.

Ultimately, this thesis is positioned conceptually within the kind of transatlantic analytical framework posited by Paul Giles, which seeks to reconsider critically the category of the nation. Giles’s aim is ‘not to abandon the idea of nationalism, but to reimage it as a virtual construction, a residual narrative rather than a unifying social power’.¹ More specifically, he conceives of transatlantic criticism as a way of seeing ‘native landscapes refracted or inverted in a foreign mirror’.² This is achieved by evaluating US literary production from a British cultural perspective, and, of course, vice versa, in order to show its developments in new and unfamiliar ways. Despite suggestions from some reviewers (such as Bryan Wagner, cited in the Introduction) that Giles is too ready to articulate his work almost exclusively within an Anglo-American paradigm familiar from an earlier formation of American Studies, his intellectual self-consciousness in remodelling the transatlantic relationship through the figure of the parallax, combined with his attentiveness to the mutual pulls and repulsions between the respective national situations, allows us to overcome any trepidation that we might have in taking his work as foundational here. To bring together the United States and Great Britain in the period under discussion is not, then, a merely opportunistic conflation, but is to recognize crucial ‘contact zones’, as theorized by Mary Louise Pratt and deployed by such transnationally oriented figures in contemporary American Studies as Wai Chee Dimock and John Carlos Rowe. A contact zone is traversed by numerous material and ideological connections between

² Giles, Virtual Americas, pp. 1-2.
cultures. The sheer number of contact zones that exist between Britain and the US, particularly during the period under study when the relationship was still explicitly postcolonial, ensures that a model of transatlantic literary study remains highly relevant.

As well as arguing at a transatlantic or transnational level, this thesis has also been concerned with pressing the case for sustained regional-specific literary critiques. In this case, the aims have been to avoid some of the criticisms sometimes levelled at transatlantic studies that they deal with stagnant national entities, and, contrastingly, to reduce the focus from the whole of the geographic and cultural United States, thereby concentrating on the South as it was engaged in national and international dynamics. The South itself is not an exactly coherent entity, and as we have scrutinized it closely it has become clear that there were in fact a number of ‘Souths’, rather than one homogeneous region. Again, the transatlantic method provides us with some significant resources for understanding the US as a system of interconnected (but still distinct) regions, because it becomes apparent when we consider the US in relation to Britain that it was when the threat from the former colonizer had passed that the division between North and South entered significantly into the American political consciousness.

Regionally focused studies of American literature are of great value because they help us to avoid thinking synecdochically. This is a genuine concern, considering both the cultural disparity between American regions, and the fact that much literary criticism of the United States in the antebellum period focuses primarily on New York and New England. As we have seen over the course of this thesis, the writing of the antebellum South is very different from that of those more canonical Northern figures like Emerson, Thoreau, Melville and Hawthorne; often, during this period, the politics of Southern fiction are far more conservative, and the region’s literary production is far more willing to imitate and exploit genres then existing in British literature than the Northern cultural nationalists, who were more dedicated to searching for a distinctly ‘American’ mode of writing. Southern literary practices need to be given due consideration to avoid Northern culture having a totalizing effect on our understanding of the antebellum United States. This was something well understood by early practitioners of American Studies such as Leo Marx and, in particular, Henry Nash Smith, who argued for ‘American regional subcultures’ and also referred to the miscellaneous audiences that Mark Twain encountered across different regions of the US. Consequently, this thesis has tried to articulate a transnational model with a regional focus, offering a version of American Studies that works simultaneously at both macroscopic and microscopic levels. It is important that we recognize, as Rowe does, that a comparative American Studies must ‘not only […] address the problems of understanding the many different societies of the western hemisphere and its strategic border zones […] it must also treat comparatively the internal social relations of whatever geopolitical

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units define themselves as nation, state, region, community, or group. Once the importance of working with an awareness of both global currents and local concerns is established, we can then advance beyond static and limiting ideas of the nation, and can conceptualize literary production in terms of a series of interrelations and exchanges across contact zones, whether these connecting points are personal or communal, international or intra-national.

In more specific terms, this thesis has been concerned with the evolution of pastoral mythology in periods of the ante- and postbellum South. Beginning by considering the difficulty in arriving at a concise and exhaustive definition of pastoral – not least because of the inherent differences between the strand of pastoral which presents a ‘New Eden’, and that which projects a ‘New Jerusalem’ – the project has gone on to register a number of pastoral features underlying much of the political thought of Thomas Jefferson, and to explore the causes and consequences of this. Despite much of his philosophy being considered revolutionary by his peers, particularly in comparison with a number of other significant figures in the early history of the US such as George Washington, this vision also has profoundly conservative undertones of a kind that are present in much Renaissance and subsequent British literature, such as Jefferson’s conceptualization of a ‘middle landscape’, that is far more pastoral than it is primitive, as the basis for the new Republic. The similarity between the Jeffersonian perspective on the American landscape and literary tropes from Britain that articulate the countryside as a ‘garden’ suggests that these shared ideas were transported to America during the colonization process. Pro-colonization pamphlets and texts in natural history, for example, spread word to potential migrants back in Britain of the British American colonies (and, later, the US), describing the landscape using the figurative language of English pastoral; hence utilizing contemporaneous sources from that literary tradition can reveal more vividly the later deviations that occur in the US model of the garden landscape. Jefferson’s natural imagination is bound up with contradictory affiliations to, on the one hand, a pastoral idealism that is shared with earlier English writing and appears in the work of figures like Shakespeare, Marvell and Milton, and, on the other, to a more pragmatic realism that underpins Jefferson’s ambitions for America’s place in a rapidly industrializing world. This ambivalence is what causes Jefferson to occupy a position that valorizes the small, yeoman-run family farm and opposes large-scale plantations, while simultaneously seeing some positive applications for mechanization. It is also this ambivalence which allows many figures claiming intellectual descent from Jefferson, such as Vice President John C. Calhoun and Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio, to read him in ways that often seem completely contradictory. One must perform philosophical gymnastics in order to see both the former’s nullification doctrine and the latter’s abolitionism as consistent with Jeffersonian thought.

In considering the pastoral trope of the machine in the garden, the thesis has built on existing work in American literary studies. It owes a particular debt to the canonical work of Leo Marx, while

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nevertheless deviating from his work on canonical Northern authors such as Whitman, Melville and Hawthorne by transposing his study of the trope of the machine to specifically Southern contexts. Part One of this thesis, then, examined Jefferson’s attitude towards machines, concluding that, although his yeoman ideal was constructed on pastoral lines, he was not particularly perturbed by the presence of machines so long as that they did not threaten to contribute to the creation of a more troubling factory system. Then, in Part Two, the thesis considered the way that the Southern conceptualization of machinery changed during the antebellum period, becoming more of a problem as, due to increasing pressure from Northern abolitionists, Southerners aimed to defend the institution of slavery. Part Three, however, investigated how mechanization provoked two very different reactions from Southerners in the aftermath of the Civil War. While machines had been objects of rather troubling figuration in novels such as John Pendleton Kennedy’s *Swallow Barn*, it is instructive to note that, in the postbellum period, they almost completely disappear from novels like Mary Tucker Magill’s *The Holcombes*, really registering only at an unconscious level. By contrast, machinery and mechanization are more (albeit not completely) positively rendered in *Life on the Mississippi*, as Twain often identifies them as important forces in preparing the South for the modern world.

This thesis has also examined the way in which Jeffersonian ideals (and, in particular, the pastoral that underlies them), so often heralded by US statesmen, mutated in response to specific political concerns during the nineteenth century, particularly in Virginia (Jefferson’s own home state) and elsewhere in the South. Firstly, what was meant by the yeoman ideal was considered in the first part of the thesis, and it was established that Jefferson’s political philosophy was built on a system of smallholding farmers and the belief that a society in which land was reasonably equitably distributed would be self-sustaining, as each member would have a vested interest in it. Then, in the section dealing with the antebellum period, we saw how this idea came into conflict with two other powerful forces in the South. The first was economic, which saw the holders of large plantations dominate ownership of Southern acreage, meaning that many poor white Southerners actually had very little financial stake in the land itself. The second was ideological, and saw the ideal of a republic of equal yeomen endangered by thoughts of romance and a fiction of aristocracy, which underscored the dominance of the large-scale planter by making a vice of the field labour performed by smallholding farmers. We subsequently saw how, after the Civil War, the romantic ideals of Southern aristocracy were still potent and how, particularly in the work of such a conservative writer as Magill, the Old South was still glamorized. However, discussion also focused upon how ideas of labour were rehabilitated by some Southern writers in the aftermath of the conflict, and how more progressive figures (like Twain) also imagined a more egalitarian South, as Jefferson had intended, perhaps even going beyond the enlightened attitudes of Jefferson thanks to more advanced outlooks on subjects where he was far more conservative, notably race. As we have seen, Twain had his own blind spots on this issue, yet it is undeniable that his fiction represents a pointedly more equal model of racial
politics than that posited by Jefferson. Something that has been identified in the work of each of the Southern authors discussed here, regardless of their respective progressive credentials, is the recurrence to varying effect of three ‘specifically pastoral motifs: the urge to celebrate the simplicities of a natural order; the urge to idealize a golden age […] and the urge to criticize a contemporary social situation according to an earlier and purer set of standards’. 5

An important concern of this thesis has been the interaction between pastoral and the Southern institution of slavery. In the section dealing with Jefferson’s political philosophy, the tensions and contradictions caused by the colour-coding of his yeoman ideal were scrutinized, together with the way in which these incongruities would in turn help to shape political dogma on both sides of the slavery issue. The thesis has also identified, in both antebellum and postbellum sections, a recurring theme of the more negative aspects of pastoral (as articulated by critics such as Terry Gifford), working to obscure the labour executed by slaves in representations of the South. Although the South in the literary work under discussion is a constructed landscape, a ‘garden’ which is pastoral and not primitive in nature, the labour that goes into making such a landscape is, even in the work of Twain, the most progressive Southern writer that this thesis examines, often completely erased. Aside from this repeated pastoral trait of celebrating ‘a landscape as though no one sweated to maintain it on a low income’, and thus pushing to the edges those most vulnerable in society, another noteworthy observation has been that, as Southern ideology mutated under external pressures during the nineteenth century, pastoral influences always survived while other important inspirations, even those that share pastoral roots such as the Jeffersonian yeoman ideal, were variously abandoned, recalled or reimagined according to political expediency. 6 The Southern myth of a homeland as garden proved to have much more pull than the political philosophy of (or even affection for) a revolutionary hero such as Jefferson.

There are a number of ways in which one could expand on the lines of inquiry established by this thesis. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, would be to focus on a different time period in Southern literary production. Many of the ideological constructions that are visible in the texts studied here continue into the twentieth century, and it would be of interest to consider whether, and how, more recent stimuli, such as World War One and the Great Depression of the 1930s, have led to mutations in the way that the South has presented itself as a pastoral idyll. 7 One possible approach


7 For an example of such work with a twentieth-century orientation, consider Christopher Rieger’s study, *Clear-Cutting Eden: Ecology and the Pastoral in Southern Literature* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009).
here could be an investigation of the ‘mock pastoral if not anti-pastoral’ of William Faulkner.\textsuperscript{8} Alternatively, to uncover actively anti-pastoral Southern writing, one might explore the ‘more realistic microcosm of the perceptual experience of place’ that Kelly Sulzback suggests we find in Eudora Welty’s \textit{Delta Wedding} (1946).\textsuperscript{9} Another revealing way of widening the scope of this examination would be to identify and explore other Southern texts of the period under discussion that have been relatively neglected by critics to date. Our understanding of writers such as William Gilmore Simms (‘the most widely read of the authors of the Old South’\textsuperscript{10}), Joel Chandler Harris and George Washington Cable would benefit from more sustained study with a distinctly pastoral focus, not to mention the critical sense we have of significantly less well-studied figures such as Thomas Nelson Page, Augusta Jane Evans and Caroline Lee Hentz, all of whom can be considered writers of plantation romances (or of romance more broadly) or proponents of Southern ‘local color’ writing. There were many novelists considered for inclusion in this thesis that were, for reasons of economy and concentration of focus, ultimately overlooked, and by broadening the discussion to include some of their work we would add to the work done here and produce a still fuller picture of Southern pastoral. It would be especially valuable to extend study that combines authors from different regions of the South. Much as this thesis has attempted to offer extensive geographical coverage (with oppositions between authors from Maryland/Virginia and Virginia/Missouri), any work which problematizes the idea of a stable South by looking to multiple Southern regions is clearly an important endeavour.

Of course, it is not necessary to build on the work done here by using the transatlantic method that I have employed. A scholar might operate at a more local or \textit{intra}-national level, for example, perhaps by studying contrasts between Northern and Southern forms of pastoral. Alternatively, it would be equally valid to consider the South in more extensively transnational terms, by positioning the region not primarily in a relationship with Britain, and the Northern States, but instead as part of a wider Atlantic community that might include the Caribbean islands and France (to give just two examples). Broadening the focus to include the Caribbean, another area where the economy was built on slavery, might reveal both commonalities and differences across the New World; while considering contact zones between the American South and France would not only give us another

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Kelly Sulzback, ‘The Chiasmic Embrace of the Natural World in Eudora Welty’s \textit{Delta Wedding},’ \textit{The Southern Literary Journal}, 42, 1 (2009), 88-101 (p. 91).
\end{itemize}
Old World voice besides that of Britain, but be highly productive for studies of colonial and postcolonial dynamics in regions such as Louisiana.11

There are, however, other ways of extending this research without significant changes in focus or methodology. The texts that have been discussed here still offer a number of significant areas for further research, some of which were considered for development before concerns of space prohibited their inclusion. For example, since *The Holcombes*’ primary focus is, as the subtitle of the novel suggests, upon Virginia home-life, there is not the same examination of working life that we encounter in novels that spend more time considering events outside the home. However, household work is at the forefront of *The Holcombes*, and the novel thereby provides some support for those critics who have recently disputed the notion that the wife of an antebellum Southern gentleman would live in idleness, since having a spouse who did not have to work was a marker of success and gentility.12 It would seem that, if there is any authorial judgement in Magill’s text on the subject of women’s work, it is not aimed at the very idea of a woman working, but rather at any women who would choose inactivity over work and thus give up the kind of life one could enjoy on a rural Virginian estate; as Mr. Holcombe asserts to Jean, ‘you are not accustomed to our Virginia country-life, and you would be lost in the maze of things to be done.’13 Although, traditionally, Southern authors may have given greater consideration to outdoor spheres of masculine activity, household skills and work within the home are greatly respected and valued in Magill’s novel. While it would be suggestive to consider the ideal of the yeoman in connection with this postbellum interest in women’s work, it was eventually decided that such study of gendered labour patterns in the South was too important for the limited space it could be offered here, and that it would be better to pursue it more fully in future work than to attempt to combine it with what we might consider to be the more masculinized forms of Southern pastoral that have been considered in this thesis.

Pastoral, finally, has been shown to have a central role in Southern literature of the nineteenth century. It occurs repeatedly, and must be considered when we begin to consider the ideological underpinnings of both antebellum and postbellum Southern texts. However, exactly what pastoral is in these texts is harder to pin down, because the mode is flexible, often shifting according to situation and mood. We have seen, across the three principal chapters of this thesis, how pastoral has been used, alternately, to create, resist, and then reclaim the Jeffersonian yeoman ideal. At times, writers have even used ideas of the South as a pastoral idyll against the region, by reconstructing the vision of

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11 Consider such explorations of these subject areas as Matthew Pratt Guterl, “‘I Went to the West Indies”: Race, Place and the Antebellum South’, *American Literary History*, 18, 3 (2006), 446-67, and William Donaghue, *Enlightenment Fiction in England, France, and America* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002).
Eden and showing that it is built on hollow foundations. This will become more apparent during the twentieth century, when authors like Faulkner and Tennessee Williams will demolish the conceits of Southern romance, but we can already identify the beginnings of this demystification of pastoral in Twain, both in the tonal shift from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and in the rotten underbelly of some Southern towns that is revealed in *Life on the Mississippi*. Even Twain, though, is still occasionally at the mercy of pastoral’s nostalgic charms. Like Twain, John Pendleton Kennedy was also able to use pastoral tropes to critique the South while simultaneously showing signs of beguilement. However, their versions of pastoral are greatly removed from the propaganda tool as used by Beverley Tucker, and equally so from the symbolic refighting of the Civil War that we can see in the work of his great-niece, Mary Tucker Magill. Ultimately, the most notable thing about Southern pastoral is the extent of its malleability. Its employment by writers with polar-opposite political positions means that Southern pastoral appears to have a Janus-face on the issues that defined the region, so much so that our study of these formations must surely be far from exhausted.
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